

## Activities for Infants 1–4 Months Old



<p>Talk softly to your baby when feeding him, changing his diapers, and holding him. He may not understand every word, but he will know your voice and be comforted by it.</p>	<p>When you see your baby responding to your voice, praise and cuddle her. Talk back to her and see if she responds again.</p>	<p>Take turns with your baby when he makes cooing and gurgling sounds. Have a “conversation” back and forth with simple sounds that he can make.</p>	<p>Sing to your baby (even if you don’t do it well). Repetition of songs and lullabies helps your baby to learn and listen.</p>	<p>With your baby securely in your arms or in a front pack, gently swing and sway to music that you are singing or playing on the radio.</p>
<p>Place a shatterproof mirror close to your baby where she can see it. Start talking, and tap the mirror to get her to look. The mirror will provide visual stimulation. Eventually your baby will understand her reflection.</p>	<p>Rock your baby gently in your arms and sing “Rock-a-bye Baby” or another lullaby. Sing your lullaby and swing your baby to the gentle rhythm.</p>	<p>Put a puppet or small sock on your finger. Say your baby’s name while moving the puppet or sock up and down. See whether he follows the movement. Now move your finger in a circle. Each time your baby is able to follow the puppet, try a new movement.</p>	<p>With your baby on her back, hold a brightly colored stuffed animal above her head, in her line of vision. See if she watches the stuffed animal as you move it slowly back and forth.</p>	<p>Make sure your baby is positioned so that you can touch his feet. Gently play with his toes and feet, tickling lightly. Add the “This Little Piggy Went to Market” rhyme, touching a different toe with each verse.</p>
<p>Rest your baby, tummy down, on your arm, with your hand on her chest. Use your other hand to secure your baby—support her head and neck. Gently swing her back and forth. As she gets older, walk around to give her different views.</p>	<p>Hold your baby in your lap and softly shake a rattle on one side of his head, then the other side. Shake slowly at first, then faster. Your baby will search for the noise with his eyes.</p>	<p>Place your baby on her tummy with head to one side, on a blanket/towel on carpeted floor. Lie next to her to provide encouragement. Until she has the strength, have her spend equal time facing left and right. Make “tummy time” a little longer each day. Closely watch your baby in case she rests her face on the floor, which could restrict breathing. As her strength grows, she will be able to lift her head and push up on her arms, leading to rolling and crawling.</p>	<p>Lay your baby on his back and touch his arms and legs in different places. Make a “whooping” sound with each touch. Your baby may smile and anticipate the next touch by watching your hand. When you make each sound, you can also name the part of the body you touch.</p>	<p>In nice weather, take your baby on a nature walk through a park or neighborhood. Talk about everything you see. Even though she might not understand everything, she will like being outside and hearing your voice.</p>
<p>Read simple books to your baby. Even if he does not understand the story, he will enjoy being close and listening to you read.</p>	<p>With white paper and a black marker, create several easy-to-recognize images on each piece of paper. Start with simple patterns (diagonal stripes, bull’s eyes, checkerboards, triangles). Place the pictures so that your baby can see them (8”–12” inches from her face). Tape these pictures next to her car seat or crib.</p>	<p>Lay your baby on his back on a soft, flat surface such as a bed or a blanket. Gently tap or rub your baby’s hands and fingers while singing “Pat-a-Cake” or another nursery rhyme.</p>	<p>Gently shake a rattle or another baby toy that makes a noise. Put it in your baby’s hand. See if she takes it, even for a brief moment.</p>	<p>Hold your baby closely, or lay him down on a soft, flat surface. Be close enough (8”–12”) so that he can see you. Face to face, start with small movements (stick out your tongue, open your mouth with a wide grin). If you are patient, your baby may try to imitate you. As he gets older, you can try larger body movements with your head, hands, and arms. You can also try to imitate your baby.</p>

## Activities for Infants 4–8 Months Old



<p>Put a windup toy beside or behind your baby. Watch to see if your baby searches for the sound.</p>	<p>Give your baby a spoon to grasp and chew on. It's easy to hold and feels good in the mouth. It's also great for banging, swiping, and dropping.</p>	<p>While sitting on the floor, place your baby in a sitting position inside your legs. Use your legs and chest to provide only as much support as your baby needs. This allows you to play with your baby while encouraging independent sitting.</p>	<p>Gently rub your baby with a soft cloth, a paper towel, or nylon. Talk about how things feel (soft, rough, slippery). Lotion feels good, too.</p>	<p>Let your baby see herself in a mirror. Place an unbreakable mirror on the side of your baby's crib or changing table so that she can watch. Look in the mirror with your baby, too. Smile and wave at your baby.</p>
<p>Common household items such as measuring spoons and measuring cups make toys with interesting sounds and shapes. Gently dangle and shake a set of measuring spoons or measuring cups where your baby can reach or kick at them. Let your baby hold them to explore and shake, too.</p>	<p>Play voice games. Talk with a high or low voice. Click your tongue. Whisper. Take turns with your baby. Repeat any sounds made by him. Place your baby so that you are face to face—your baby will watch as you make sounds.</p>	<p>Fill a small plastic bottle (empty medicine bottle with child-proof cap) with beans or rice. Let your baby shake it to make noise.</p>	<p>Make another shaker using bells. Encourage your baby to hold one in each hand and shake them both. Watch to see if your baby likes one sound better than another.</p>	<p>Place your baby on her tummy with favorite toys or objects around but just slightly out of reach. Encourage her to reach out for toys and move toward them.</p>
<p>Fill an empty tissue box with strips of paper. Your baby will love pulling them out. (Do not use colored newsprint or magazines; they are toxic. Never use plastic bags or wrap.)</p>	<p>Safely attach a favorite toy to a side of your baby's crib, swing, or cradle chair for him to reach and grasp. Change toys frequently to give him new things to see and do.</p>	<p>Place your baby in a chair or car seat, or prop her up with pillows. Bounce and play with a flowing scarf or a large bouncing ball. Move it slowly up, then down or to the side, so that your baby can follow movement with her eyes.</p>	<p>With your baby lying on his back, place a toy within sight but out of reach, or move a toy across your baby's visual range. Encourage him to roll to get the toy.</p>	<p>Play Peekaboo with hands, cloth, or a diaper. Put the cloth over your face first. Then let your baby hide. Pull the cloth off if your baby can't. Encourage her to play. Take turns.</p>
<p>Place your baby in a chair or car seat to watch everyday activities. Tell your baby what you are doing. Let your baby see, hear, and touch common objects. You can give your baby attention while getting things done.</p>	<p>Place your baby on your knee facing you. Bounce him to the rhythm of a nursery rhyme. Sing and rock with the rhythm. Help your baby bring his hands together to clap to the rhythm.</p>	<p>Your baby will like to throw toys to the floor. Take a little time to play this "go and fetch" game. It helps your baby to learn to release objects. Give baby a box or pan to practice dropping toys into.</p>	<p>Once your baby starts rolling or crawling on her tummy, play "come and get me." Let your baby move, then chase after her and hug her when you catch her.</p>	<p>Place your baby facing you. Your baby can watch you change facial expressions (big smile, poking out tongue, widening eyes, raising eyebrows, puffing or blowing). Give your baby a turn. Do what your baby does.</p>

## Activities for Infants 8–12 Months Old



<p>Let your baby feed himself. This gives your baby practice picking up small objects (cereal, cooked peas) and also gives him experience with textures in his hands and mouth. Soon your baby will be able to finger feed an entire meal.</p>	<p>Your baby will be interested in banging objects to make noise. Give your baby blocks to bang, rattles to shake, or wooden spoons to bang on containers. Show your baby how to bang objects together.</p>	<p>A good pastime is putting objects in and out of containers. Give your baby plastic containers with large beads or blocks. Your baby may enjoy putting socks in and out of the sock drawer or small cartons (Jell-O, tuna or soup cans) on and off shelves.</p>	<p>Mirrors are exciting at this age. Let your baby pat and poke at herself in the mirror. Smile and make faces together in the mirror.</p>	<p>Your baby will begin using his index fingers to poke. Let your baby poke at a play telephone or busy box. Your baby will want to poke at faces. Name the body parts as your baby touches your face.</p>
<p>Put toys on a sofa or sturdy table so that your baby can practice standing while playing with the toys.</p>	<p>Find a big box that your baby can crawl in and out of. Stay close by and talk to your baby about what she is doing. "You went in! Now you are out!"</p>	<p>Read baby books or colorful magazines by pointing and telling your baby what is in the picture. Let your baby pat pictures in the book.</p>	<p>Play hide-and-seek games with objects. Let your baby see you hide an object under a blanket, diaper, or pillow. If your baby doesn't uncover the object, just cover part of it. Help your baby find the object.</p>	<p>Play ball games. Roll a ball to your baby. Help your baby, or have a partner help him roll the ball back to you. Your baby may even throw the ball, so beach balls or Nerf balls are great for this game.</p>
<p>Turn on a radio or stereo. Hold your baby in a standing position and let your baby bounce and dance. If your baby can stand with a little support, hold her hands and dance like partners.</p>	<p>Play imitation games like Peek-a-boo and So Big. Show pleasure at your baby's imitations of movements and sounds. Babies enjoy playing the same games over and over.</p>	<p>Let your baby play with plastic measuring cups, cups with handles, sieves and strainers, sponges, and balls that float in the bathtub. Bath time is a great learning time.</p>	<p>Play Pat-a-Cake with your baby. Clap his hands together or take turns. Wait and see if your baby signals you to start the game again. Try the game using blocks or spoons to clap and bang with.</p>	<p>Your baby will play more with different sounds like "la-la" and "da-da." Copy the sounds your baby makes. Add a new one and see if your baby tries it, too. Enjoy your baby's early attempts at talking.</p>
<p>Make a simple puzzle for your baby by putting blocks or Ping-Pong balls inside a muffin pan or egg carton.</p>	<p>You can make a simple toy by cutting a round hole in the plastic lid of a coffee can. Give your baby wooden clothes pins or Ping-Pong balls to drop inside.</p>	<p>Say "hi" and wave when entering a room with your baby. Encourage your baby to imitate. Help your baby wave to greet others. Waving "hi" and "bye" are early gestures.</p>	<p>Let your baby make choices. Offer two toys or foods and see which one your baby picks. Encourage your baby to reach or point to the chosen object. Babies have definite likes and dislikes!</p>	<p>New places and people are good experiences for your baby, but these can be frightening. Let your baby watch and listen and move at her own speed. Go slowly. Your baby will tell you when she is ready for more.</p>

## Activities for Infants 12–16 Months Old



<p>Babies love games at this age (Pat-a-Cake, This Little Piggy). Try different ways of playing the games and see if your baby will try it with you. Hide behind furniture or doors for Peekaboo; clap blocks or pan lids for Pat-a-cake.</p>	<p>Make puppets out of a sock or paper bag—one for you and one for your baby. Have your puppet talk to your baby or your baby's puppet. Encourage your baby to "talk" back.</p>	<p>To encourage your baby's first steps, hold your baby in standing position, facing another person. Have your baby step toward the other person to get a favorite toy or treat.</p>	<p>Give your baby containers with lids or different compartments filled with blocks or other small toys. Let your baby open and dump. Play "putting things back." This will help your baby learn how to release objects where he wants them.</p>	<p>Loosely wrap a small toy in a paper towel or facial tissue without tape. Your baby can unwrap it and find a surprise. Use tissue paper or wrapping paper, too. It's brightly colored and noisy.</p>
<p>Babies enjoy push and pull toys. Make your own pull toy by threading yogurt cartons, spools, or small boxes on a piece of yarn or soft string (about 2 feet long). Tie a bead or plastic stacking ring on one end for a handle.</p>	<p>Tape a large piece of drawing paper to a table. Show your baby how to scribble with large nontoxic crayons. Take turns making marks on the paper. It's also fun to paint with water.</p>	<p>Arrange furniture so that your baby can work her way around a room by stepping across gaps between furniture. This encourages balance in walking.</p>	<p>Babies continue to love making noise. Make sound shakers by stringing canning rims together or filling medicine bottles (with child-proof caps) with different-sounding objects like marbles, rice, salt, bolts, and so forth. Be careful to secure lids tightly.</p>	<p>This is the time your baby learns that adults can be useful! When your baby "asks" for something by vocalizing or pointing, respond to his signal. Name the object your baby wants and encourage him to communicate again—taking turns with each other in a "conversation."</p>
<p>Play the naming game. Name body parts, common objects, and people. This lets your baby know that everything has a name and helps her begin to learn these names.</p>	<p>Make an obstacle course with boxes or furniture so that your baby can climb in, on, over, under, and through. A big box can be a great place to sit and play.</p>	<p>Let your baby help you clean up. Play "feed the wastebasket" or "give it to Mommy or Daddy."</p>	<p>Make a surprise bag for your baby to find in the morning. Fill a paper or cloth bag with a soft toy, something to make a sound, a little plastic jar with a screw-top lid, or a book with cardboard pages.</p>	<p>Play "pretend" with a stuffed animal or doll. Show and tell your baby what the doll is doing (walking, going to bed, eating, dancing across a table). See if your baby will make the doll move and do things as you request. Take turns.</p>
<p>Cut up safe finger foods (do not use foods that pose a danger of your baby's choking) in small pieces and allow your baby to feed himself. It is good practice to pick up small things and feel different textures (bananas, soft crackers, berries).</p>	<p>Let your baby "help" during daily routines. Encourage your baby to "get" the cup and spoon for mealtime, to "find" shoes and coat for dressing, and to "bring" the pants or diaper for changing. Following directions is an important skill for your baby to learn.</p>	<p>Your baby is learning that different toys do different things. Give your baby a lot of things to roll, push, pull, hug, shake, poke, turn, stack, spin, and stir.</p>	<p>Most babies enjoy music. Clap and dance to the music. Encourage your baby to practice balance by moving forward, around, and back. Hold her hands for support, if needed.</p>	<p>Prepare your baby for a future activity or trip by talking about it beforehand. Your baby will feel like a part of what is going on rather than being just an observer. It may also help reduce some fear of being "left behind."</p>