


Sitting, Turning, and Reaching



You're reaching high!

Hold toys in various positions to encourage your baby to stretch and reach for the toys.

Your baby will practice using his hands and body to reach objects and will gain better balance for sitting.



You're reaching to the side!

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Why this is important

Providing an interesting object for your baby to reach encourages him to stretch and balance himself while also learning to sit alone. Once he can comfortably sit alone, he will not need his hands for support. Instead, he can use his hands to explore his surroundings. Seeing objects out of reach will eventually inspire him to try new ways to get them, such as crawling.

What you do

- Begin the game with your baby sitting securely on your lap with your arm wrapped around his waist.
- Hold a noise-making or favorite toy in front of him—just far enough that he needs to lean forward slightly and stretch his arms to reach it. *Can you reach the rattle? Look how you can stretch!*
- Offer encouraging words and hugs when he reaches the toy, while allowing him to play with the object.
- Repeat the game, moving the toy to a new location just within his reach. Be sure to support his body as needed.
- Try moving the toy to his side and observe how he tries to reach it. Does he move his arms and trunk? Does he try to use only one arm? Encourage him to move in a variety of ways by moving the toy to different positions around his body.

Ready to move on?

Try the game with the baby seated on the floor. If necessary, place pillows around him for support. Let him practice reaching in different directions for the toy by placing it in a variety of locations just within his reach.

Let's read together!

Baby Love
by Sandra Magsamen

Naming With a Mirror

*Cheek! I'm touching
your cheek.*

Touch and name parts
of your baby's face as she
looks in the mirror.

Your baby will gradually
begin to recognize herself
and her body parts as you
point them out to her.

Where's your nose?



Why this is important

Feeling the touch of your finger on her mouth at the same time that she sees it happen in the mirror gives her a better understanding of the word *mouth*. At first your child will not understand that she is the baby in the mirror. Over time as you play this game with your baby, she will begin to understand that the mirror shows her image. With your help she will learn to recognize the names of body parts. Learning about herself helps her develop a positive sense of self.

What you do

- Sit with your baby or stand holding her in front of a mirror. Talk to your baby while she looks at her reflection. *See the baby? See Annie in the mirror?*
- If your child has not had many experiences with the mirror, she may be surprised to see you in two places. Acknowledge the new experience. *Yes, Mommy is holding you and you see Mommy in the mirror.*
- Touch your child's mouth and say, *Mouth*.
- Try the game with different body parts, especially parts of her face, to help her recognize each one.

Ready to move on?

After many days of this game, alter it by no longer touching her mouth as you speak. Say the word *mouth* or ask, *Where is your mouth?* Allow your baby time to find her mouth. If she does not find it or does not try to find it, gently guide her hand to her mouth.

Let's read together!

Pretty Brown Face
by Andrea & Brian Pinkney

Reading Pictures and Books

Banana. Yum!



Notice what your baby is looking at in a book and name that picture.

When you name the picture at the moment he is showing interest in it, he will begin to understand more of your words.



Why this is important

Seeing the pictures and hearing the names of objects on the page help your baby to connect pictures and words. When you place an object next to its picture, you deepen your child's understanding that pictures represent real things. A positive introduction to pictures and books is an important step in your child's literacy development.

What you do

- Collect cards or board books with one simple picture on each page.
- Show a card or picture book to your child and name the object on the page at the moment he looks at it.
- Tell him in simple words about its color, shape, or use: *This is a shoe. A red shoe. You wear it on your foot.*
- Give him the picture to hold and explore, and continue to talk to him about the picture.

Another idea

Pair a picture with an object the baby is familiar with. For example, if you have a picture of a cat, invite him to hold his toy cat as you show him the picture. Talk to him about the object in the picture and the object in your hand: *That's a cat. The cat is furry. You have a toy cat. Acknowledge his attempts to talk about the picture. I hear you talking about that cat.*

Let's read together!

Good Morning, Sun
by Lisa Campbell Ernst

Making Da-Da-Da Sounds

Da-da-da-da.



Da-da-da!

Imitate sounds that your baby makes, especially repeated sounds like *da-da-da* or *ma-ma*.

Soon, some of these repeated sounds may turn into your baby's very first words: *mama*, *dada*, or *bye-bye*.



Why this is important

When your baby begins to make sounds, both purposely and accidentally, you can encourage her to repeat those sounds. After practicing a sound, she will later be able to recall the sound and distinguish it from others. Repeating sounds develops the skill that will enable her to eventually repeat words. Oral language development (learning to talk and understand the words they hear) is an important part of early literacy development for young children.

What you do

- Hold your baby so she can see your face.
- Repeat a sound back to her that you have heard her make. Move your lips distinctly and make the sound clear: *Da-da-da*.
- Observe her watching your mouth move. She may move her lips and tongue as she attempts to use her voice. Wait for her to make the sound again.
- Encourage her by giving her plenty of time to respond and by repeating the sound.
- Acknowledge her attempts to make the sound back to you. *You're talking!* Take turns with your baby in saying the sound.

Another idea

Try the many different sounds you've heard your baby make, such as *da, ma, bi, bu, and me*. Be sure to focus on one sound at a time. Making the sound into a song by changing your voice pitch or the tempo of the syllables keeps your baby interested longer.

Let's read together!

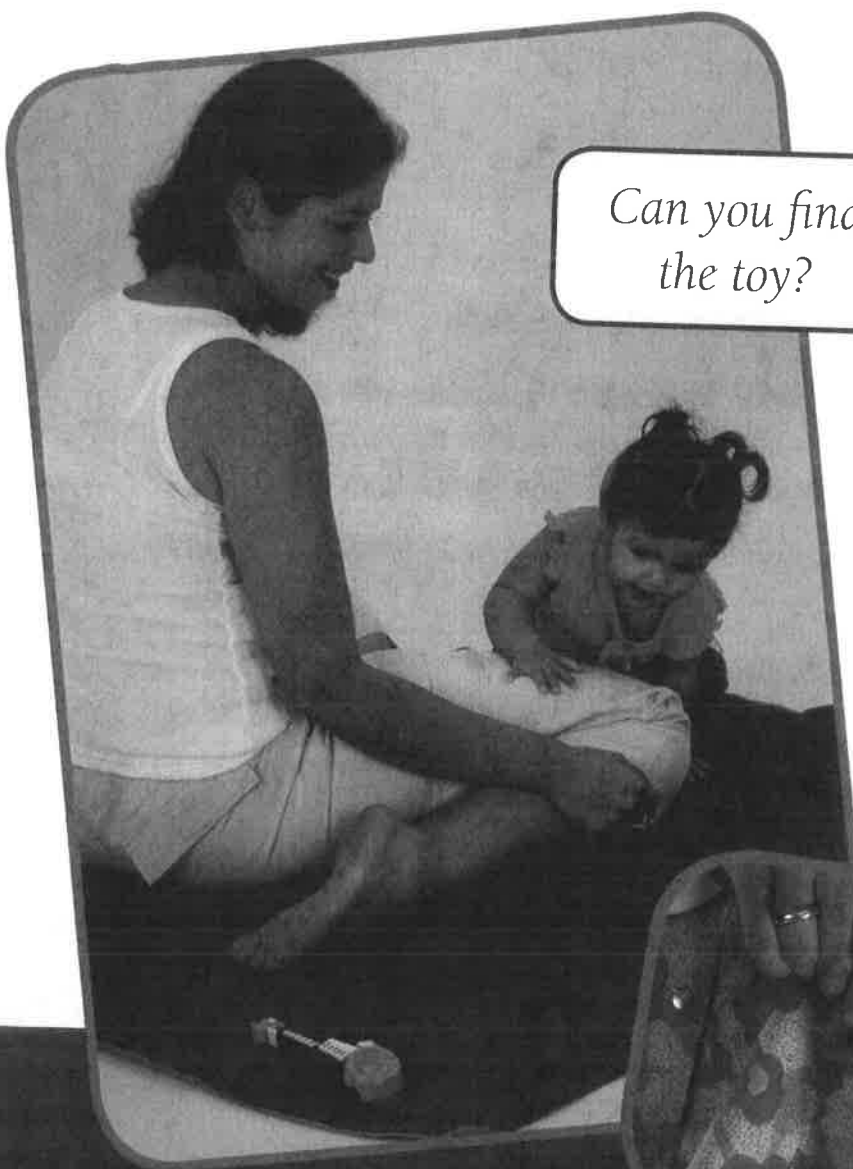
Baby Says
by John Steptoe

Hiding and Finding

Can you find the toy?

Invite your baby to look for an object that she watches you hide.

Because she sees you hide the object, over time she will understand that objects that are hidden can be found.





Why this is important

By hiding something while your baby watches, you help her understand that objects she no longer sees can still exist. This understanding is called object permanence. It will give her confidence and security to know that people and things exist even when they are out of her sight.

What you do

- Show your baby a special toy.
- Talk about the toy and let her explore it while you keep it in your hand.
- Hide the toy behind your back or in your pocket making sure she watches. Ask about the toy. *Where did the doggie go? Where is it? Can you see it?* If she does not look for the toy or looks only at the place where the toy was, show it to her again before partially hiding it from view.
- Offer positive feedback when she finds it and bring it out for her to hold. *You found the dog! He was hiding behind Mommy's back!*
- Repeat the game by hiding the toy in a new place.

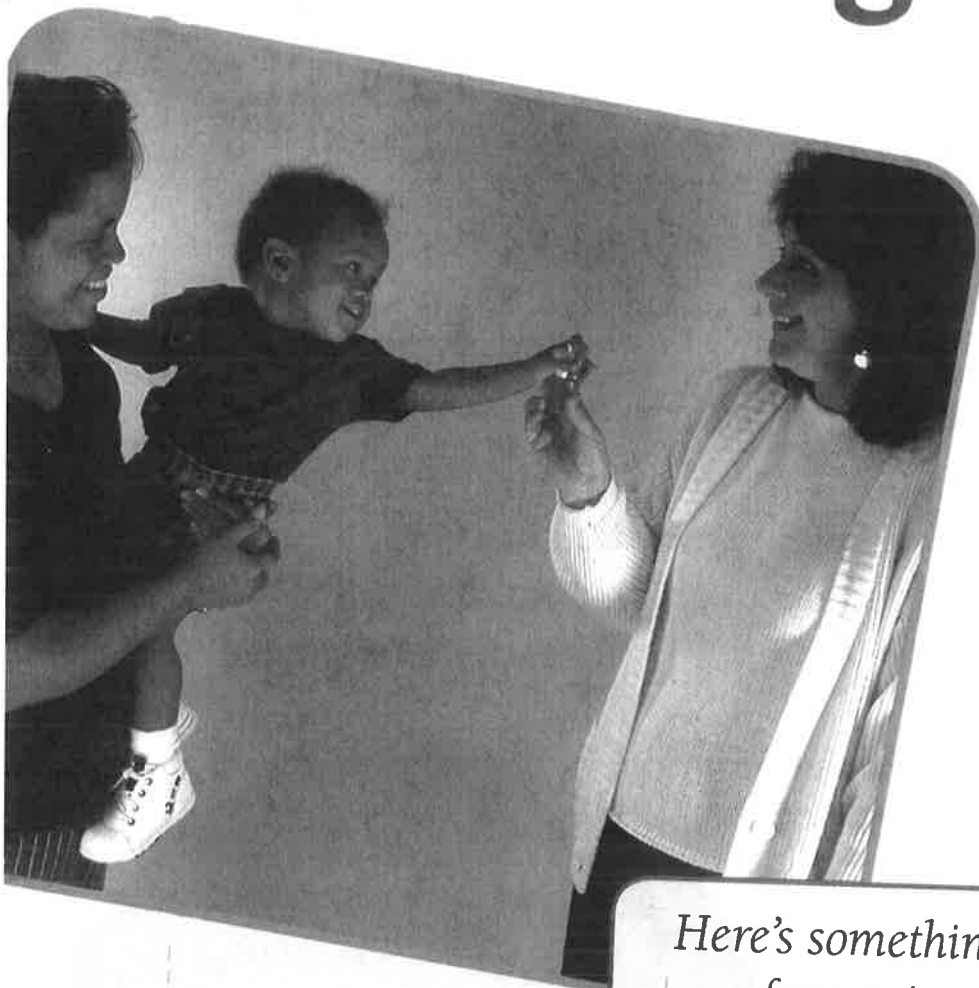
Another idea

Find other times to play this game. As you care for her throughout the day, hide something briefly for her to find. *Where is your shoe? Can you find it?*

Let's read together!

Where's Nicky?
by Cathryn Falwell

Introducing Strangers



Help your baby meet new people by having them stand back and approach your baby gently, sometimes holding out a familiar toy.

Slowly introducing your baby to strangers may help him feel comfortable when meeting new people.

*Here's something
for you!*



Why this is important

Your child is curious about new people and objects in his environment. However, he has probably begun to express a preference for a few special adults. Most babies between 6 and 12 months may be uncomfortable with visitors, even close relatives. Often he will prefer to get to know a new person from the comfort and safety of your arms. By being supportive during these meetings, you build his confidence and comfort around others.

What you do

- Hold your baby securely when introducing him to a new person. Use your own friendly gestures and words to make your child feel comfortable. Shake hands with the stranger: *Hello. It's so nice to see you!*
- Help him touch the newcomer's hand for a moment, if your baby seems willing.
- Invite the visitor to hand your baby a familiar toy or an attractive object. Ask the visitor to stand back a little. If your child reaches out for the toy, he is making a choice to interact with the new person.
- Encourage your baby to show a favorite toy to the visitor, by handing it to your child. *Do you want to show Aunt Laura your bunny rabbit?*

Ready to move on?

When your baby is ready to go to a new adult, stay close so he can see you but do not try to maintain eye contact with your child. If you appear busy with something nearby your child will know you are close but he can focus his attention on the new person instead of on you. His first physical contact with a new person may last only a few seconds. Be ready to hold him again when he indicates he wants you.

Let's read together!

Is Your Mama a Llama?
by Deborah Guarino

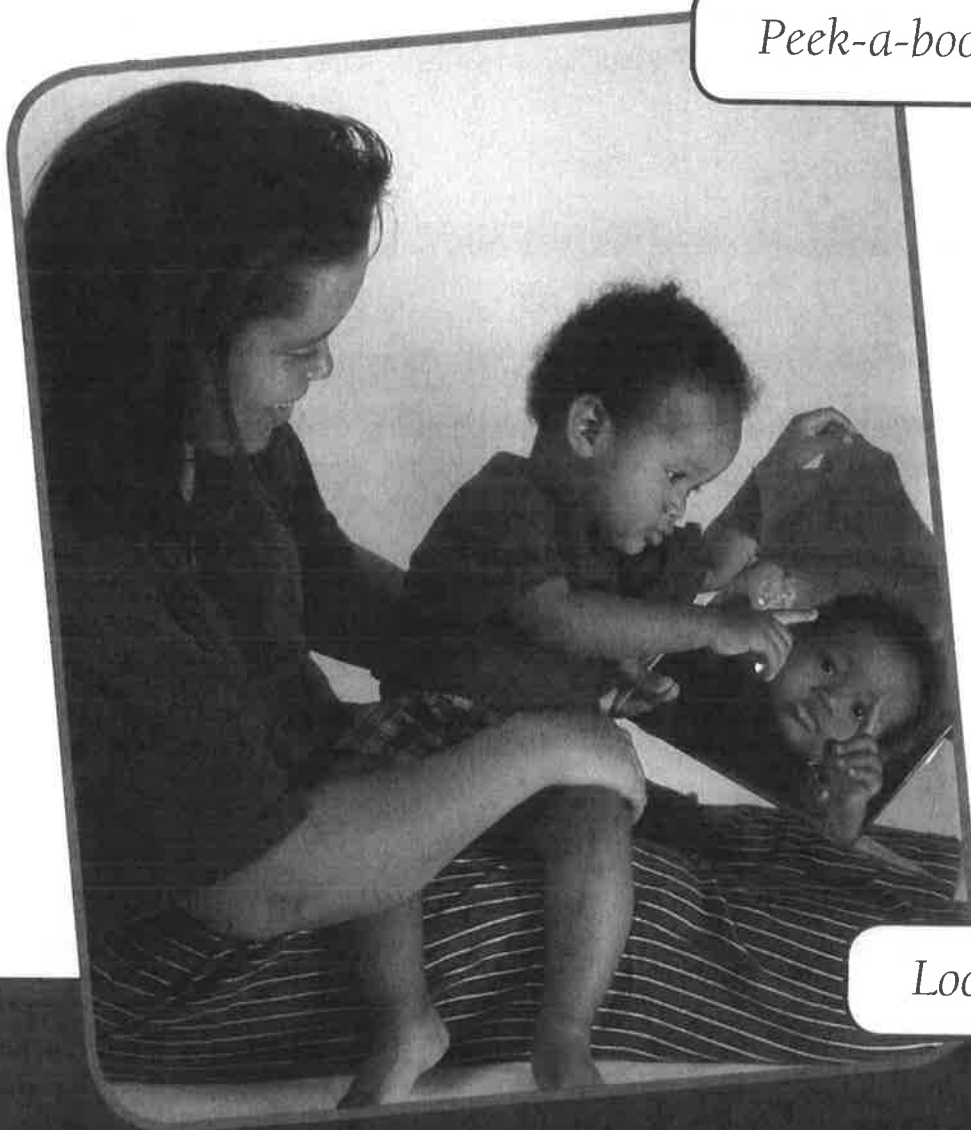
Peek-a-Boo Mirror

Peek-a-boo!

Encourage your baby to remove a cloth from a mirror to see what is there.

Your baby will discover that he can make things happen, like causing his own reflection to appear.

Look at you!





Why this is important

Encouraging your baby to play in front of a mirror helps him practice finding his reflection. When you first pull the cloth away from the mirror, your baby may be surprised to see his image. At first he may touch the image and talk to the baby in the mirror, not recognizing his reflection. Over time he will begin to understand that he is the baby in the mirror. This helps him establish an understanding of himself.

What you do

- Attach a cloth to the top of a sturdy, unbreakable mirror. Hold your baby on your lap in front of the uncovered mirror.
- Point to the image and talk about the baby: *See the baby? That's you, Juan. Look at your smile!*
- Cover the mirror as you ask, *Where is Juan?* Wait to see what he will do. If he lifts the cloth or pulls at it, respond positively. *Peek-a-boo! You moved the cloth; look at you!* If he needs help, lift the cloth a little so he can see part of his face. Show surprise and pleasure as he sees himself. *I see something under there. It's you, Juan!*

Another idea

Sit with your baby on the floor with the unbreakable mirror in front of him. Play the game with him a few times before moving back and encouraging him to play by himself. Let him see you in the background through the mirror.

Let's read together!

The Big Book of Beautiful Babies
by David Ellwand

Dropping Objects



See the block fall?

Invite your baby to practice dropping things, especially things that make a noise when they land.

Picking up and dropping objects helps your baby gain more control of the muscles in her hands.



Why this is important

At this age, your baby can hold things very well but cannot always let them go when she wants. Opening her fingers is a different process from closing them, and learning to control the muscles in her hands will take her a lot of time and practice. Early hand control helps her manipulate objects during play. Later, she will need to control the muscles in her hands when she starts holding crayons and pencils for drawing.

What you do

- Show her a toy in your hand. When she looks at it, open your fingers and let the toy drop.
- Repeat the motion, saying *Drop* as it falls. Keep a short dropping distance so she'll be able to see your hand and the dropped object at the same time.
- Encourage her to try after you have shown her several times.
- Give an enthusiastic response with each attempt she makes. *Wow! You dropped the block by yourself!*
- Play again using a ball that bounces or a bell that makes a noise when it hits the floor. She may show more interest in a toy that produces a sound when dropped.
- Listen for any sounds she makes when she lets go of the ball. This is her attempt to imitate you when you say, *Drop*.

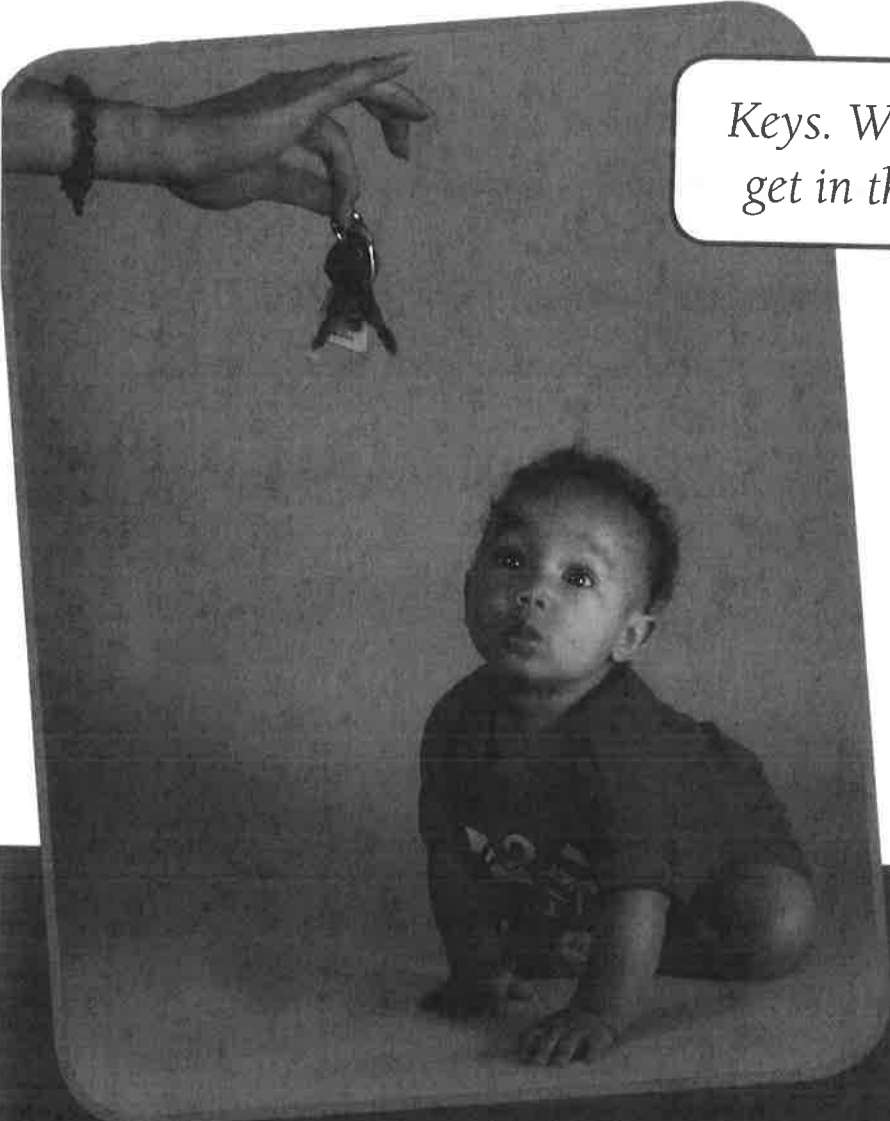
Another idea

Try playing the game during bath time. Dropping objects in the water makes a fun splash that may encourage her to continue practicing her new skill.

Let's read together!

Dear Zoo
by Rod Campbell

Showing What Comes Next



Keys. We're going to get in the car now.

Show your baby a familiar object and tell him what you are going to do with it.

Doing this makes it possible for your baby to think ahead to the next event.



Why this is important

Your baby will begin to understand what comes next when you first show him a related familiar object. As he associates objects with actions and words, he begins to make sense of his world. The social experience of showing someone something is good preparation for the time later when he will share and take turns with another person.

What you do

- Call to your baby from across the room.
- Show him an object related to what is going to happen next. The object could be a toy, a blanket, a bottle, or a diaper.
- Give him a chance to locate you in the room and turn toward you.
- Hold up the object again, name it, and talk about what is going to happen next. *Here is your bottle. Would you like me to feed you?*
- Try the game when dressing him or bathing him. *I have your lotion. It's time for your night-night massage.* Give him a moment to anticipate the next step before you do it.

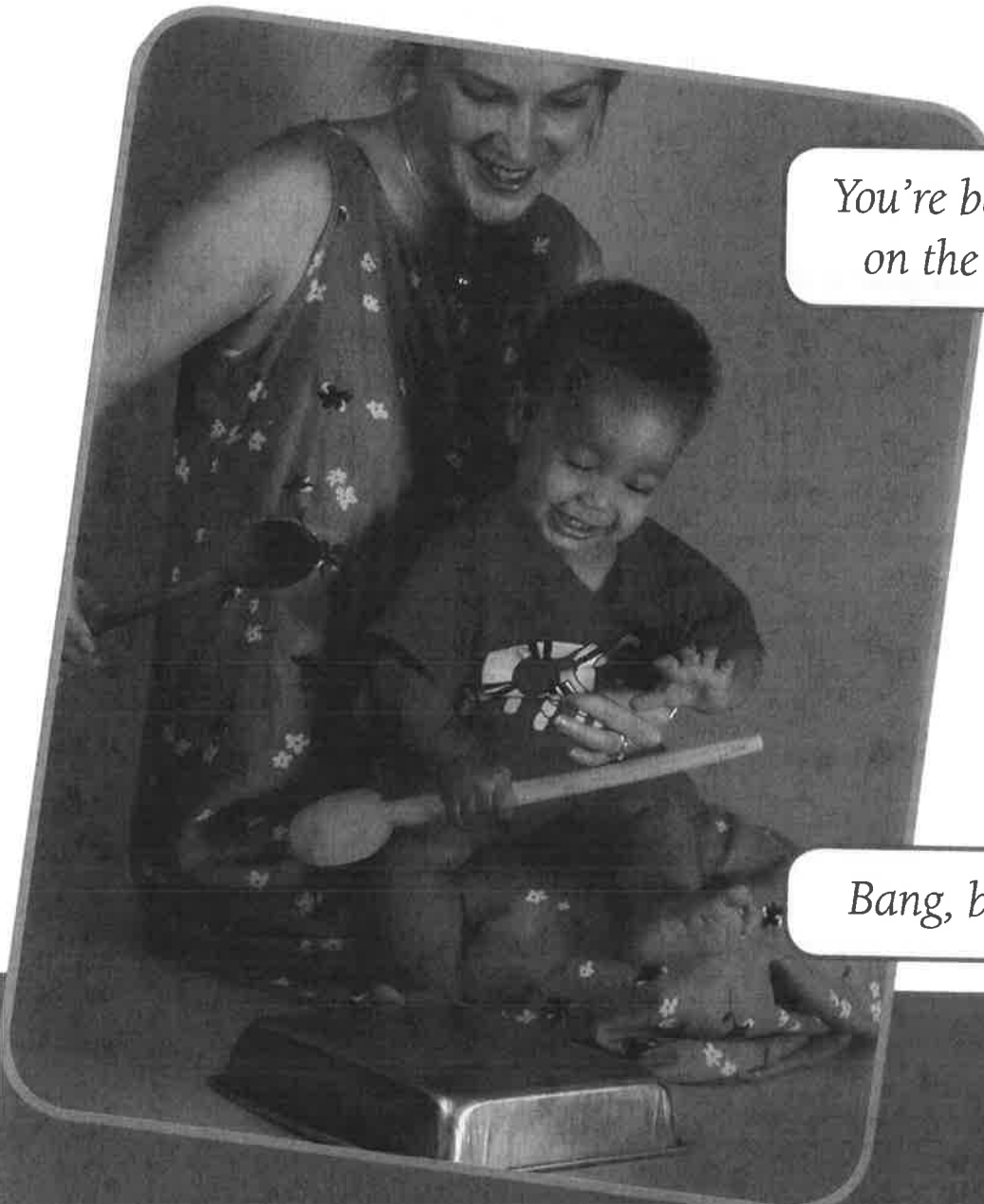
Another idea

Expand the game beyond caretaking activities. Show him the vase before you pour water and place flowers into it, or show him a wind-up toy before you wind it up and make it go.

Let's read together!

Ten, Nine, Eight
by Molly Bang

Imitating Actions

A black and white photograph of a woman and a baby. The woman is leaning over the baby, who is sitting on the floor. They are both smiling and playing with a xylophone. The woman is holding a mallet and hitting the xylophone. The baby is also holding a mallet and hitting the xylophone. The woman is wearing a floral dress and the baby is wearing a dark shirt.

*You're banging
on the pan!*

Do some actions that
your baby can copy.

This helps him use
an important type of
learning: imitation.

Bang, bang!



Why this is important

You can take advantage of your baby's natural interest in what you do and encourage him to copy your actions. Providing many opportunities for your child to copy your actions helps him begin to use imitation as a way of learning. Many actions, such as talking, eating with a fork, or driving a car, depend—in some way—on good imitation.

What you do

- Sit down with your child. Hold a spoon and pan, and offer your baby a spoon to hold. Hit the pan with the spoon while saying *Bang, bang, bang!*
- Invite your baby to hit the pan, too. He may bang the pan right away, or he might spend more time watching you before he tries it.
- Offer positive feedback when he tries to bang with the spoon, even if his movements are incomplete. *You did what I did! You're banging with the spoon!*
- Repeat the game with other motions such as tapping the pan with your hands, or using a different object instead of a spoon. Keep the movements simple, and use slow, exaggerated motions that he can follow.
- Try copying your baby when he makes a movement different than yours.

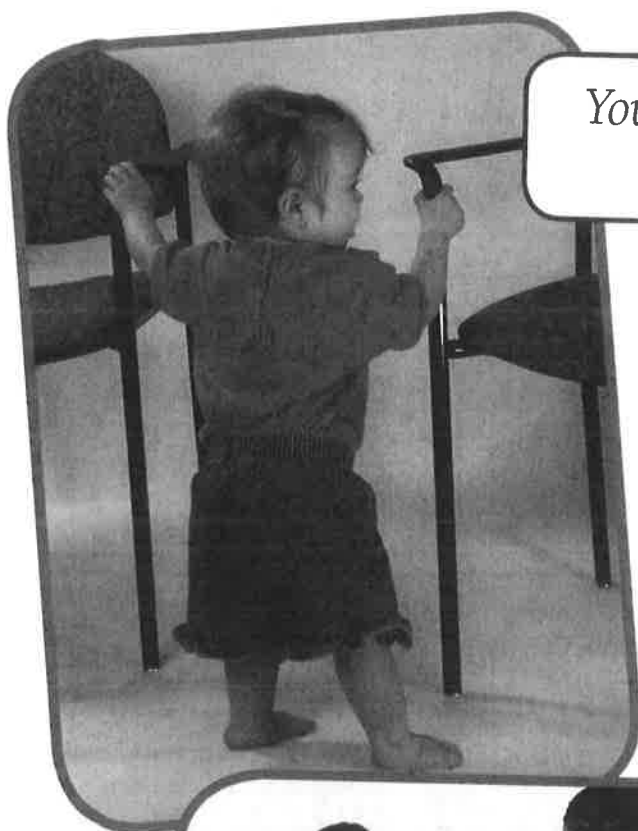
Another idea

Try the game using songs and rhymes with hand motions such as "Pat-a-cake." You can clap your hands once while saying *clap*. You may also try spreading your arms wide and saying *big*. Think of other simple gestures your baby may want to imitate.

Let's read together!

Little Mister
by Randy Duburke

Stand Up and Move



*You're moving on
your own!*

Arrange furniture so your baby can pull up to a standing position and try taking a few steps while holding on.

Your baby will have the chance to practice with confidence when you give her objects to help her stand and take steps.





Why this is important

Moving while standing up and holding on to something comes before walking independently. Your baby first must learn to support her own weight and find her balance as she practices standing. As she takes sideways steps while holding on to furniture, she will feel excited and will want to try walking independently.

What you do

- Once your baby can pull herself to a standing position, place a few chairs in a row, and put a toy on the first chair with your child standing in front of it.
- Put a second toy on the next chair after she plays with the first toy. Stand back and see if she will move from chair to chair.
- Do not make her stand again if she sits to play with the toy. Let her move at her own pace.
- Gradually move the chairs slightly apart as she gets better at the game.
- Pick her up and cuddle her when she finishes. Let her know you are happy for her accomplishment.

Ready to move on?

Let your baby move independently for a few steps with the support of a cardboard box. Stand your child beside the box and offer support while placing her hands on one edge for balance. Keep your hand on the box to steady it. She may move it accidentally at first as she shuffles her feet to maintain her balance. Offer encouragement for her new skill.

You're using the box to help you walk!

Let's read together!

I Love You Through and Through
by Bernadette Rossetti Shustak

Puzzle Play

*Can you put the
ball in the hole?*



You can invent a first puzzle for your baby by letting him put items in a muffin pan.

A simple coordination game gives your baby the opportunity to practice fitting objects together.



Why this is important

By placing items in a muffin pan, your baby gains skill in judging sizes and shapes with his eyes and testing them with his hands. He will enjoy holding the ball and fitting it into the pan. Each time he practices picking up the items in this simple puzzle and moving them, he learns more coordination.

What you do

- Look for objects around the house that will fit into the cup of a muffin pan. The fit needs to be fairly snug so it feels like a puzzle. Apples, oranges, and balls work well.
- Sit with your child and encourage him to explore the pieces in front of him. *You're putting the apple in the hole!*
- Follow his cues to determine his interest level. Allow him to use the pieces in other ways. *You took the ball out of the pan and now you're rolling it on the floor.*
- Try counting the pieces, talking about colors and textures, and describing your child's actions.

Another idea

Look for other opportunities in your day to offer your baby a simple puzzle game. For example, he may enjoy putting a rubber stopper in the sink or fitting the telephone in its cradle.

Let's read together!

Funny Fingers Circus
by Karin Blume

Hi and Bye-Bye

Bye-bye!



Say *Hi* and *Bye-bye* (or *Good-bye*) to your baby, the same way you greet others.

Using standard greetings with your baby helps her learn to wave and say *Hi* and *Bye-bye*, too.



Why this is important

By waving and saying *Hi* and *Bye-bye* to your baby at appropriate times, you provide a model of conversational behavior. By responding joyfully to her attempts to communicate *Hi* and *Bye-bye*, you encourage her to try to repeat those actions. Because the gesture of waving is widely understood, it provides her with an opportunity to communicate with people outside of her immediate family.

What you do

- Smile and say *Hi* when you approach your baby or when she makes an *ah* sound (this may be her attempt at saying *Hi*). Wave to her to get her attention.
- Use greetings during daily routines, such as diaper changing, mealtime, and bath time. For example, when your baby makes the *ah* sound during a diaper change, pause, move closer to her face, smile, and say *Hi* in a gentle voice.
- Observe your baby. She will listen and watch you. She may smile back and then, over time, begin to imitate the sound and motion. Look for signs such as her fingers moving slightly in her lap. She will likely use the hand motion or the sound of *Hi* separately before putting the two together.
- Wave and say *Bye-bye* or *Good-bye* when leaving a room.
- Encourage others to greet her the same way, and help her wave her hand or wiggle her fingers to participate in this early form of conversation.

Another idea

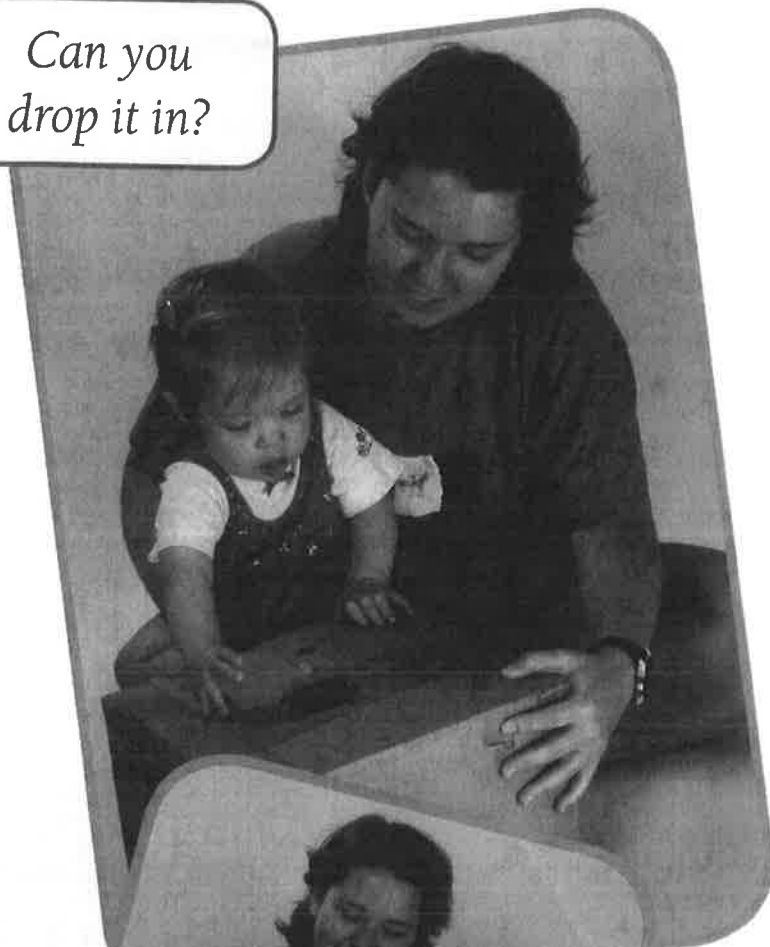
You can help your baby practice greeting others throughout the day. Stand at the door and wave to people walking outside. Greet the cashier at the grocery store or the nurse in the doctor's office and encourage your child to do the same.

Let's read together!

Baby Says Bye-Bye
by Opal Dunn

Providing Two Ways

*Can you
drop it in?*



Use a box with two holes to let your baby discover how to retrieve a toy that has gone out of reach.

Finding two ways to reach the toy gives her practice in solving problems with more than one solution.

You found it!



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Why this is important

Solving a problem usually involves choosing from several possible solutions. Although your baby may not want to drop the toy at first, she will learn that it is not gone when she can no longer reach it. Her attempts at problem solving help her discover many solutions to finding the disappearing toy. This simple game serves as a model for solving more complex problems later in life.

What you do

- Cut a small hole in the top of a cardboard box and a larger hole low on the side of the box. Using one small object, show your child that it can be dropped through the hole in the top.
- Encourage her to look for the toy. *Can you see the toy? Where did it go?*
- Offer help if needed. If she tries to get the toy through the hole in the top, explain that the hole is too small for her hand and the toy is far away in the bottom of the box. If necessary, move the box slightly so she can see the toy through the side hole.
- Notice how she learns to look for the toy through the larger hole after playing the game several times. She may turn the box or crawl around it to find the larger hole.
- Limit the amount of help you offer each time you play. Give her a chance to drop the toy in and find it by herself.

Another idea

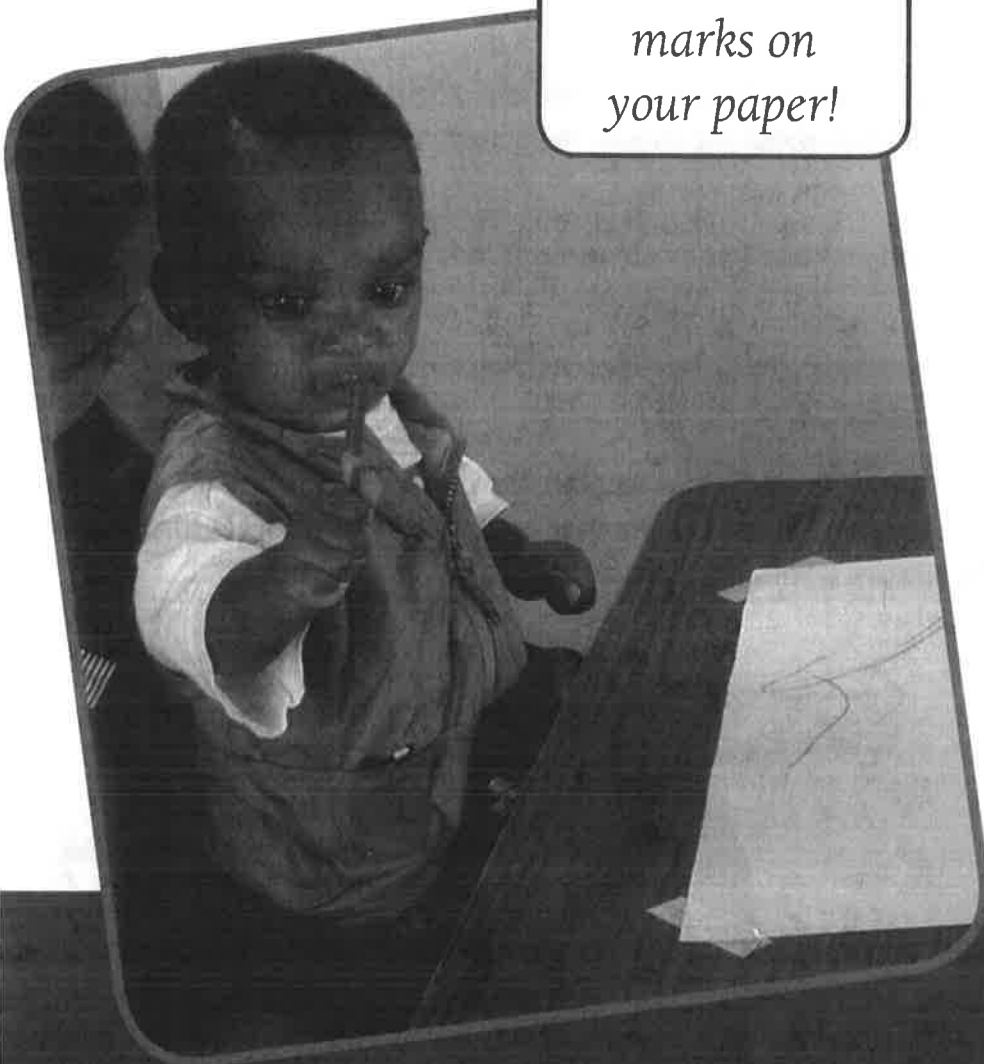
Add variety to the game by using different objects to drop in the box. Talk about the name of each object, along with the color or texture: *You're dropping the orange block!*

Let's read together!

One Duck Stuck
by Phillis Root and Jane Chapman

First Crayons

*You made red
marks on
your paper!*



Give your child a crayon and paper and talk about any marks he makes.

Playing with crayons and paper introduces your baby to using tools for drawing and writing. Your words let him know that this activity is important.



Why this is important

Crayons provide an easy introduction to writing tools. The simple act of putting a crayon to paper gives your baby a chance to freely explore some of the elements of drawing and writing. He will enjoy moving his arm and hand and seeing the result. Later he will learn to use crayons to express himself creatively.

What you do

- Tape a large piece of paper on the table. Seat your baby at the table and offer him one crayon. He may taste it, feel it, or show it to you. Talk about the crayon. *This is a red crayon. It is smooth and round.*
- Wait for him to make an accidental mark on the paper, or choose another crayon and make a small mark yourself.
- Offer positive encouragement when he makes a mark. *You made red lines with your crayon!* He may make long strokes or just poke at the paper.
- Give him a crayon only when he is seated in front of paper and can freely explore. **Do not leave your child alone with crayons or any other small objects that could be swallowed. Let him explore with crayons only while you are watching to make sure he uses them safely.**

Ready to move on?

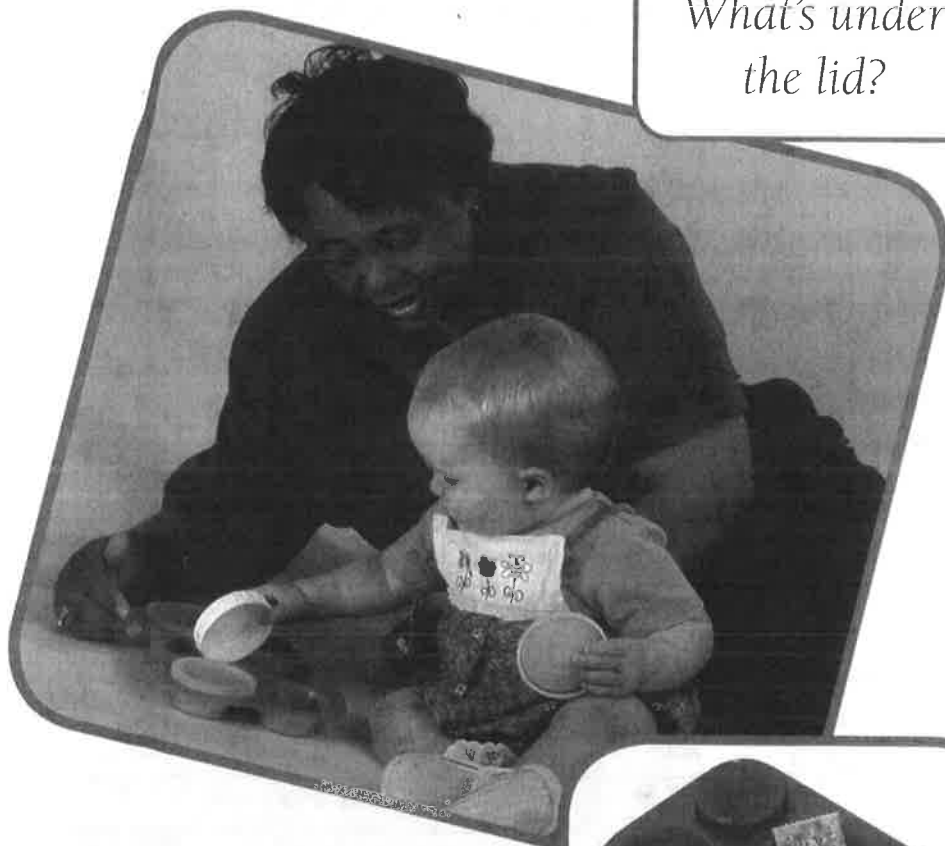
When he has practiced with a crayon many times, offer him a choice between two crayons. Eventually, he will be able to choose a crayon from a variety placed before him.

Let's read together!

The Shape of Things
by Julie Lacombe

Things to Taste

*What's under
the lid?*



Describe your baby's experiences as she touches and tastes things.

Your baby may connect your words to what her senses are telling her as she explores.





Why this is important

Babies put everything in their mouths because tasting is one of the ways they find out about new objects. After they have tasted and handled something, they decide whether or not they like it. This activity encourages your baby to practice using all of her senses together. Letting her choose from among several tastes establishes positive attitudes toward new eating experiences and helps her learn to make choices.

What you do

- Sit with your baby where she usually eats her meals.
- Encourage her to taste things by putting a few items within easy reach. Try a slice of banana, a spoon, a peeled and very thin apple slice, or a cracker. **Be sure to give only things you are confident your child will not choke on. If you are unsure, save specific foods or this entire activity until your child is older.**
- Let her choose what she wants and let her taste as long as she wants. She may not eat the item, but simply use her mouth to explore. Talk about her choice. *The spoon is smooth and cool. That's a sweet apple!*
- Describe her actions as she makes choices. With each item, she may drop it and try something else immediately or she may show interest in only a single item. *You really like the banana.*

Ready to move on?

When you see that she enjoys looking under objects, try this. Sit at the table with a cupcake pan filled with items of different textures and smells, such as a spoonful of pureed vegetable, a bit of ice pop, or a slice of seedless orange. Lay a lid over each cup. Encourage her to lift the lids and try the contents. Observe and describe her experience with words such as *sweet, cold, and wet.*

Let's read together!

My Food Mi Comida
by Rebecca Emberley


Find a Picture



Look at that cat.

Name a picture and then turn it away from your baby so he can try to find it.

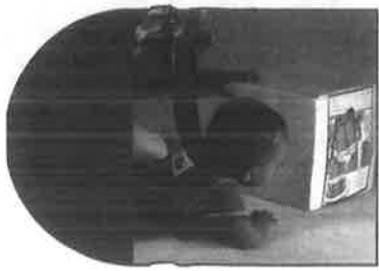
Using language to help your baby locate an item out of sight helps him remember the names of objects.



He's gone. Can you find the cat?

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Why this is important

Naming a picture before making it disappear helps your child to associate the words with the picture. Using language is one way to help your child remember what he is looking for. Hearing the words will bring to mind the picture if he has seen it a few seconds before. As his memory develops, more time can pass between seeing and recalling.

What you do

- Attach a large picture of something familiar to your child, such as a teddy bear, baby, or cat, to a cardboard box.
- Sit with your baby on the floor. Show him the box with the picture attached. Talk about the picture: *Look, it is a picture of a baby. The baby is smiling.*
- Encourage your child to explore the picture. Then turn the box to move the picture out of his sight. *Where is the baby?* If he does not look for the picture, repeat the game from the beginning.
- Offer positive feedback for his efforts. *You moved the box to find the baby!* He might reach toward the box and flip it over or crawl around it to see the other side.

Ready to move on?

After playing several times with the same picture, add another picture to the second side of the box. Now ask the child to find first one picture and then the other. After two or more pictures have been added, he must make a choice.

Baby. Find the baby.

Let's read together!

Where Is My Friend?
by Simms Taback

Making Useful Choices

Let's go for a walk. Do you want a hat or a towel?



Let your baby choose between two things during an everyday task, one that is useful and one that is not.

Your baby will have a chance to make choices and learn from the results.



It's time to eat. Would you like a spoon or a lid?

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Why this is important

Choosing between two objects on the basis of their usefulness is an early step in the process of learning how to evaluate. Adding a few safe choices to his day opens up new possibilities for him to have some control. Making these choices helps him to understand what an object can do and what is needed for a particular task. With practice he can choose the right tool for each job.

What you do

- Give your child two choices of objects to use when he needs to complete a task. For example, if he is ready to drink, let him choose between an empty cup and a full one. When he is ready to eat, offer him the choice of a spoon or a plastic lid. When it is time to wash hands, show him a block and a bar of soap. When it is time to take a walk, offer him a hat or a towel. Let him choose which item he wants.
- Let your child play with the item, even if he chooses the less useful option. Laugh with him as he enjoys the silliness of washing his hands with a block, for example.
- Show him the two choices again and give him a chance to choose more appropriately. *Do you want water? Which cup has the water?* At first, he may choose the less useful object, but with experience he will intentionally choose the more useful one.

Another idea

Add as many choices to his day as you can. Let him feel in control when there is no harm in either option. *Would you like to play with your truck or your fire engine?*

Let's read together!

Wibbly Pig Likes Bananas
by Mick Inkpen