Activities Parents Can Do With Their Babies - MONTHS 1 and 2

**Directions:** Use these handy charts to coach parents on activities they can do to foster their baby’s development. Use the Tell/Show/Watch approach to help caregivers learn each activity. The letter(s) next to each activity indicate what area or areas of development are affected. C = cognitive, L = language, S = social, G = gross motor, and F = fine motor.

**Month 1**

- When baby is fussy, try to find out why and fix the cause. **C, S**
- Respond immediately when your baby cries. It’s his only way of telling you he has a problem. **S**
- Rock and cuddle your baby to soothe him. **S**
- Develop routines that baby can count on for bath-time, feeding time, naptimes, and bedtimes. **S**
- Place your baby on her stomach for “tummy time” during her waking hours even if you start by doing so for just a few minutes each time. **G**
- Hang a mobile over baby’s crib so she can watch it. **C, G**
- Gently shake a colorful rattle or small stuff toy about 12 inches in front of baby’s face. Slowly move it sideways so she can track its movement with her eyes. **C, G, F**
- Place small objects in baby’s hand so she can grasp them. **F**
- Gently rub a stuffed toy or a soft blanket against baby’s cheek or hand so she can feel different textures. **C**
- Talk, sing, and read to your baby a lot! Show lots of happy emotion when you talk with your baby. Sing, smile, and talk to your baby as you take care of him. **C, L, S**

**Month 2**

- Continue to respond to baby’s cries immediately. When baby is fussy, try to figure out why and fix it. This builds trust. **C, S**
- Change baby’s position every so often. Place baby on his tummy every day to help build neck muscles and upper body strength. **G**
- Read nursery rhymes, simple poems, and short books to baby every day. Use books that have pictures of other babies or common things she sees. Make it part of baby’s routine before or after naps, or before bed. Point out objects as you read. (“Look, there’s the kitty.”) **C, L, S**
- Continue to talk to baby frequently. Talk about what you are doing. Make eye contact with her. Call her by name. **C, L, S**
- Play a “game” with baby by watching her expressions and listening to her sounds. Then imitate her! Then make sounds and see if she can imitate you. **C, L, S**
- Show baby brightly colored objects such as blocks or stuffed toys. Let baby feel / touch them. **C, F**
- Listen and sing to gentle, soft music together. It relaxes both baby and caregiver. **C, L, S**
Activities Caregivers Can Do With Their Babies –
MONTHS 3 and 4

Month 3

- Cuddle and hold baby. S
- Play “talking back and forth” with baby. Baby makes a sound and caregiver repeats it. Caregiver then makes the sound for baby to repeat. This can go on many times. C, L, S
- Place baby onto back and let her reach for toys hanging from side of crib or playpen. C, G, F.
- Place baby on tummy (every day!) and let her reach for toys placed just at the edge of her reach. Show her how to reach for the objects. G, F
- Play “peek-a-boo” using hands or a blanket. C, L, S
- Continue talking with baby and reading to baby – a lot! Point out and name objects in books or objects baby touches. “Your blanket is soft.” “Feel the soft blanket.” Make sounds to imitate animals you’re reading about. C, L, S
- If weather permits, take baby outside. Let her watch birds flying, leaves fluttering, and the shifts of light and shadow. Identify sounds baby can hear (“Hear the leaves in the trees.” “Listen to the airplane.”) C, L, S
- Hold a rattle and move it slowly from side to side. Encourage baby to track the rattle with her eyes. Let her grasp rattle, shake it, and mouth it. C, G, F
- “Show” baby how to roll by placing hands under her shoulders when she’s on her back. Gently rock baby back and forth, talking to her while rocking her. L, S, G

Month 4

- Cuddle and hold baby. S
- Let baby sit propped up on pillows – even if she can only do it for short periods at first! G
- Lay baby on tummy or back. Place toys just beyond his reach to encourage him to wiggle and reach for the toy. Place toy in his grasp if he isn’t able to get it after a few seconds of trying. G, F.
- As needed, continue to encourage baby to roll over. Spread a baby blanket and lay baby on her stomach at one edge. Gently lift the blanket so she will roll onto her back. Praise her and reward her with a hug and kiss. L, S, G
- Prop an unbreakable mirror up next to baby as he lies in front of it. Let him look at himself. Point out his eyes, nose, mouth. Lay next to him and smile into the mirror. C, L, S
- Take baby different places such as the library, the store, and the park. Let him see and hear different things. Talk to him about what you are seeing and doing. C, L, S
- Make sure baby has toys to play with, hold, and place in his mouth. This is how babies learn about their world, C, G, F
- Continue to play “talking back and forth” with baby, imitating her sounds and encouraging her to repeat sounds you make. C, L, S
## Activities Caregivers Can Do With Their Babies – MONTHS 5 and 6

### Month 5

- Continue to cuddle and hold baby. Keep routines going for feeding, bathing, naptime, and bedtime. Cuddle baby before naps and bedtime and during feeding times. **S**
- Talk to baby. Talk about the toys baby is playing with. Show baby how to use the toys. Use complete sentences. **C, L, F, G**
- Hide toys under a blanket (with baby watching toy being hid). Encourage baby to look for toy. **C, L**.
- Place favorite toys just beyond reach to encourage baby to wiggle toward toy or reach for toy. **C, L, G, F**
- Make sure baby has plenty of time to play on the floor to strengthen muscles as he rolls, wiggles, and reaches for things. **G**
- Hold baby in front of the mirror. Point out baby and caregiver in the mirror. **C, S**
- Hand baby a toy. After placing the toy in one hand, move it to the other. Baby will learn to transfer the toy from hand-to-hand. **C, F**
- Help baby stand by holding her under her armpits. **G**
- Read short stories to baby. Sing songs, and recite rhymes about his eyes, nose, and mouth. **C, L, S**
- Continue letting baby sit up propped by pillows. Place toys just beyond reach to encourage movement. **G, F**

### Month 6

- Let baby play with pots and pans from the kitchen. Give her lids to fit onto pots and smaller pots to fit within bigger pots. **C, G, F**
- Make sure baby gets lots of time on the floor so she can learn to creep and crawl. Play on the floor with her. **S, G**
- Continue to help baby stand by holding her under her armpits and letting her feet touch the floor. **G**
- Prop baby into a sitting position. Roll a soft ball toward her. Clap and praise her when she rolls it back to you. **L, S, G, F**
- Give baby two plastic cups or large spoons. Show her how to bang them together or on the floor. **C, G, F**
- Play “naming games” with baby. Point to her nose and say “nose.” Do the same thing with her eyes, mouth, ears, and toys. **C, L, S**
- Place several empty plastic cups, spoons, or other safe objects into a shoe box. While baby watches, take them out one-by-one. Then put them back. Baby will eventually imitate you. **C, G, F**
- Play “pat-a-cake,” “teensy-weensy spider,” or “piggy” with baby. **C, L, S**
- Read, read, and read. Make sure reading is part of every day. Re-read favorite books over and over. Get new books from the library. **C, L, S**
Activities Caregivers Can Do With Their Babies –
MONTHS 7 and 8

Month 7

- Continue offering lots of floor time to baby. Create a “safe” cabinet in the kitchen that contains items she can play with – plastic cups, pots, lids, etc. Encourage her to remove things from the cupboard and put them all back. C, G, F

- Continue to help baby stand by holding her under her armpits and letting her feet touch the floor. G

- Help baby sit. Allow her to try sitting without propping. Place pillows around her to cushion falls. G

- Give baby two plastic cups or large spoons. Show her how to bang them together or on the floor. C, G, F

- Play “naming games” with baby. Point to her nose and say “nose.” Do the same thing with her eyes, mouth, ears, and toys. C, L, S

- Place several empty plastic cups, spoons, or other safe objects into a shoebox. While baby watches, take them out one-by-one. Then put them back. Baby will eventually imitate you. C, G, F

- Play “pat-a-cake,” “teensy-weensy spider,” or “piggy” with baby. C, L, S

- Read, read, and read. Make sure reading is part of every day. Re-read favorite books over and over. Get new books from the library. C, L, S

- Sit baby on the floor with several toys or objects such as a doll, a block, a spoon, a pan, and a ball. Hand each one to baby and name it. C, L, S

- Sit baby on floor and put a large container in front of him. Hold a small ball over the container and drop it in. Do it a few times and then give him the ball. C, G, F
Month 8

- Squeeze one of baby’s toys to make it squeak. Then hide it under a blanket while he watches. Let him try to find it. **C**

- Give baby one end of a towel or blanket. Then gently pull on the other end. **C, G, F**

- Cut out colorful pictures from a magazine and glue them onto pages to make a “book.” Sit with baby in your lap and talk about each picture, pointing at the picture while doing so. **C, L, S**

- Read, read, and read! Cuddle with baby while reading. **C, L, S**

- Sing songs, play peek-a-boo, be silly with him to make him laugh. **C, L, S**

- Continue playing floor games with baby. **C, S, G, F**
  - Roll a ball back and forth with baby. **G**
  - Place interesting objects around a room to encourage baby to crawl to them. **G**
  - Let baby crawl on things that have different textures such as carpet, a soft blanket, grass, or a beach towel. **C, G**
  - Take turns playing a crawling game. Say “I’m going to catch you” and chase baby. Then say “You catch me!” and crawl away slowly enough for baby to catch you. **L, S, G**
  - Make a stack of blocks for baby. Let her knock the stack down. Laugh with baby when the blocks fall down. **C, S**
Activities Caregivers Can Do With Their Babies – MOUTHS 9 – 12

**Months 9 - 12**

- Build a mountain for baby to climb by stacking pillows and blankets on the floor. Sit on the floor with baby so you can help steady him as he climbs. **G**
- Sing songs with your baby. CDs can be borrowed from the library. Dance with the music or do finger and arm motions that match the words of the songs. **C, L, S**
- Play hide-and-seek with people and objects. Ask baby, “Where’s_____?” **C, L, S**
- Ask baby questions, “What is that?” Wait a few seconds and then provide the answer. Pretty soon, baby will be able to give answers! **L**
- Keep playing the imitation game. Make a sound and encourage baby to repeat it. Listen to baby’s sounds and repeat them back to him. **L**
- Encourage baby to point out common objects and body parts. Say, “Where’s your nose?” and see if baby can point it out. **C, L**
- Keep up the reading. Make sure it’s a routine that occurs at regular times each day. Let baby help pick books from the library by showing her several. Read to her at the library. **C, L, S**
- Continue doing tower-building games with baby. Encourage them to place a block on the tower. **C, S, F**
- Talk to your baby and encourage baby to imitate you. **C, L**
- Find new songs, games, and books to share together. Keep things from getting boring for baby by changing things. Keep some of the old games and books; add new. **C, L, G, F**
- Let your baby explore the park or the outdoors. Help her climb baby-sized things; encourage her to touch different textures such as grass, dirt, leaves, bark, and water. **C, L, G**
- Give her Cheerios as a snack. Let her pick them up from her high chair tray. **G, F**
- Provide toys where baby can see cause and effect. (Pushing the button makes music play). **C, L, S**
- Continue playing floor games with baby. **C, S, G, F**
- Give your baby simple directions, “Come to mommy,” or “Come to daddy.” “Put the blocks in the basket.” Praise her when she follows your directions. **C, L, S**
- Use cardboard boxes to make tunnels and play areas by cutting out two sides and taping boxes together. **G**
- Place toys just beyond reach on a sofa or table. Encourage baby to reach for the object. **G, F**
- Cook together! As you make dinner, give baby a pot and a wooden spoon. When you empty a container, give it to baby and encourage him to imitate your pouring and stirring actions. Talk to him about what he’s doing. **C, L, S**
- Give baby a variety of stacking toys in different shapes and sizes. Encourage baby to stack and nest things together. **C, L, F**
- Play ball with your baby by rolling it across the floor to one another. **S, G**
Activities Caregivers Can Do With Their Babies –
MONTHS 12-24

12 – 18 months

- Encourage baby to walk. If baby is not yet walking, help baby “practice” by holding her hands while she steps along. Make sure she has a safe place to “cruise” furniture (walking along while holding on to furniture for support). G
- Play ball with baby. Stand a few inches away and gently toss a soft ball to baby. Encourage baby to toss the ball back to you. As baby’s skills improve, gradually increase distance G
- Take baby on trips. Encourage her to explore each environment. Help her do physical things such as climb a slide, swing in a baby swing, jump, or run. Play with her rather than simply watching her play. If other children are around, include them in your games. C, L, S, G
- Encourage baby to tell you what she wants and needs. Prompt her to name things such as favorite foods, drinks, toys, and books. “Can you say juice?” “Can you say blanket?” L
- Visit people! Visit Grandma, an aunt, a playmate’s house, church. Talk about the visits and what activities will happen during the visit. L, S
- Let baby pick books to “read” to you. Let him select the books she wants you to read to him. Encourage him to point out objects and name objects. Have him make the sounds that things make (Cows go moo. Pigs go oink.) C, L
- Let baby help with simple pick up chores – “Let’s pick up our blocks.” “Let’s put away the books.” “Let’s put pillows on the couch.” (Be prepared for baby to take everything back out again!) C, G, F
- Provide baby with the appropriate-sized Lego blocks or building blocks. Encourage her to build things. Even better – build things together. Talk about what you’re building. C, L, F
- Play “Pretend” or “Imagine” games with baby. Pretend to cook, pretend to shop, pretend to wash dishes or clothes. Baby wants to imitate! C, L, S

18 – 24 months

- Let toddler help with simple pick up chores – “Let’s pick up our blocks.” “Let’s put away the books.” “Let’s put pillows on the couch.” Praise him when he cooperates C, L, G, F
- Provide toddler with the appropriate-sized Lego blocks or building blocks. Encourage him to build things. Even better – build things together. Talk about what you’re building. C, L, F
- Play “Pretend” or “Imagine” games with toddler. Pretend to cook, pretend to shop, pretend to wash dishes or clothes. Toddler wants to imitate and to come up with ideas of his own! C, L, S
- Show toddler how to use simple tools around the house – a broom, a spoon to mix things, a washcloth to wipe a table. C, G, F
- Point out colors and shapes. Tell toddler what they are and encourage them to name them back to you. C, L
- Provide a pan of water and a plastic cup or a sandbox and some plastic bowls and spoons. Allow toddler to pour things from one container to the next and to dig into the sand and make piles. G, F
- Talk to toddler before bedtime. Ask her about her day. Talk about what’s going to happen tomorrow. C, L, S
- Participate in story times at the library. Let toddler pick out books and music to check out of the library. C, L
Activities Caregivers Can Do With Their Babies –
MONTHS 24 – 36

Continue doing activities that you’ve already been doing. Consider adding these:

Month 24-36

- Read every day. Make reading time a special time of cuddling and talk. Select a wide range of books – books about animals, books about cars, books about people, and books about places. Include books that make toddler laugh and books that make toddler think about things. C, L, S
- Show toddler how to do things such as throwing a ball overhand, playing tag, or playing other simple games such as Duck, Duck, Goose. C, G
- Play matching games – match colors, match shapes, match like things (people, cars, soft stuff, cold stuff, hot stuff). C
- Encourage your child to tell you stories. Make up stories to tell her. C, L
- Encourage responsibility – give child jobs such as picking up toys, laying placemats on the table, carrying cup and plate to the counter. C, S, G, F
- Provide simple puzzles for child to put together. What they can’t do at 2, they may be able to do at 2 ½ or 3! C, F
- Give two-step directions: “Wash your hands and then sit down.” Praise your toddler when he can follow directions. Don’t get discouraged if they can only remember a single step at first. Keep encouraging them! C, L
- Encourage your toddler to talk to you about how things feel – hard, soft, sticky, hot, or cold. Help them learn adjectives for describing feelings and sensations. “Does your tummy feel wiggly inside?” “Is it a big hurt or a little hurt?” C, L