

Simple Ways to Entertain & Boost Your Baby's Development at Home

During social distancing to slow the spread of COVID-19, you may be looking for new ways to entertain and play with your young child. Thankfully, all you need is loving attention and some basic household items.

Try these time-tested activities, suggested by age, and let the fun happen!

Newborn to 3 Months

- **Puppet Play.** Make a hand puppet using a sock. Move it up and down and back and forth where your baby can see it, doing a silly dance and singing silly songs. You can even have the puppet give her kisses!
- **Footloose.** Gently dance with your baby positioned over your shoulder. She will enjoy the movement and at the same time will learn to tolerate the slight pressure against her tummy.
- **Pat-a-Cake.** Hold your baby's hands and gently clap them together to play a game of pat-a-cake:

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man (Take baby's hands through the motions)

Bake me a cake as fast as you can

Roll it (Roll her hands around each other) and pat it (Clap)

and mark it with a B (Guide her finger to write a B in the air)

And put it in the oven for baby and me (Kiss your baby!)

- **Can't Smile Without You.** Lie down on the floor, tummy down facing your baby. Try to get her to smile by sticking out your tongue, smiling at her, and making other funny faces. You may even hear your infant's first giggle!

4 to 6 months

- **Little Piggy Game.** Hold your baby's foot up and wiggle each toe while teaching the classic "This Little Piggy" poem in an animated, singsong way. Don't forget to give your infant a tickle at the end!

This little piggy went to market (big toe)

This little piggy stayed home (second toe)

This little piggy had roast beef (third toe)

This little piggy had none (fourth toe)

And this little piggy went wee wee wee all the way home (little toe)

- **Mustang Sally.** Sit on the floor with your baby sitting on your raised knees. While holding on to her, slowly move your legs side to side and sing "Ride a Little Horsey." When you say, "don't fall down," slide your feet forward!

Ride a little horsey

Down to town

Oops, little horsey

Don't fall down!

- **Crocodile Rock.** Hold your baby securely, tummy down on your chest. Rock your body from side to side and sing a song like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."

- **Free Fallin'.** Stack up some blocks and encourage your baby to bat at and reach for them. Most infants absolutely love to see and hear the blocks tumble to the ground! (**Homemade Toy: Stacking Baby Blocks**—Collect different-sized clean milk cartons, small boxes and toilet paper rolls. Stuff each with newspaper or tissue paper. Fold the ends down to create blocks and cylinders, then close them with masking or duct tape. Use a variety of fun colors of contact paper or duct tape to cover each block.)

7 to 9 months

- **Fly Me to the Moon.** Carefully lift your baby up over your head and back down while playing or singing a song like, "Fly me to the moon!" If your child seems fearful, move more slowly and talk in a calm, soothing voice.
- **See You Later, Alligator.** With your baby seated in front of you, hide a rattle under a blanket or behind your back. Shake the rattle while hiding it and see what happens. If your baby loses interest once it's hidden, reveal part of the rattle and ask, "Where's the toy?"
- **If the Hat Fits.** Sit just in front of baby, place a colorful hat on your head and say, "Look! The hat is on my head." Then remove it and say, "Now the hat is off." Next, put the hat on and off your infant's head! Encourage your baby to reach for the hat for more play.
- **The Humpty Dance.** Sit your infant on your lap, either sitting up or tummy down, and gently bounce your legs up and down. For more fun, do this while using a rocking chair!

10 to 12 months

- **Be-Bop Baby.** Seat your baby upright on the floor, legs separated just enough to place a medium-sized ball between them. Show your baby how to roll the ball in your direction, then roll the ball back. Continue taking turns.
- **Marching On.** While seated, stand your baby on your thighs. Hold your baby's hips and slowly make stepping motions by moving your legs up and down, one side at a time. Sing your favorite song.
- **You Light Up My Life.** Shine a flashlight on the wall. Once your baby sees the light, move it slowly from one side of the room to the other and up and down to encourage visual tracking.
- **Beat It.** Show your baby different ways to tap a drum using the palms of your hands, your fingertips, or a baby spoon. See if your baby can imitate you. (**Homemade Toy: Baby Drums**—Cover an oatmeal box or coffee can with colorful contact paper and use plastic baby spoons as drumsticks. Or, simply give your child a saucepan and a short wooden spoon.)

12-24 months

- **The Big Squeeze.** Take colorful kitchen sponges and cut them into fun sizes and shapes to fit into your child's hand at bath time. Show your little one how to sink a sponge underwater, watch it fill up, then hold it up and squeeze the water out.

- **Mr. Tambourine Man.** Show your little one how to shake and tap a tambourine to make noise. Add more ways, like tapping it against your hip, over your head, and in various directions. (**Homemade Toy: Toddler Tambourine**—Tape two sturdy paper plates securely together halfway around using colorful duct tape. Fill the tambourine half-full of dry cereal, tape the paper plates together the rest of the way, and shake!)
- **Poking Fun.** Show your baby how to press numbers on an old phone or peck on an old keyboard. Glue different textures of fabric at the bottom of each section of an egg carton or old ice tray. Let your baby feel the various textures.

Remember

You have the knowledge and tools to make play a fun and stimulating part of your baby’s daily routine. Keep it simple, be flexible, and do what works for you and your child.

Stay informed

Families are encouraged to stay up to date about this situation as we learn more about how to prevent this virus from spreading in homes and in communities.

For more parenting information from the AAP, visit www.HealthyChildren.org.

For the latest developments from the CDC, including travel warnings, new cases, and prevention advice, visit www.cdc.gov.

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