

Infant Development

ACTIVITY GUIDE



About This Guide



Before your child has the ability to walk, crawl, or even hold a toy, they are capable of learning through play. Your early efforts to introduce your child to the world around them will have a profound influence on their future ability to learn, love, and grow.

We created the Infant Development Activity Guide for parents of infants ages birth to 12 months in order to provide more developmental opportunities for Kansas City's littlest learners. This guide focuses on four domains of early childhood development: language and literacy, cognitive, sense of self and relationships, and motor skills.

This guide was created in partnership with Amy Milroy, MS Ed, Director of the Lee Ann Britain Infant Development Center at AdventHealth.

Domains of

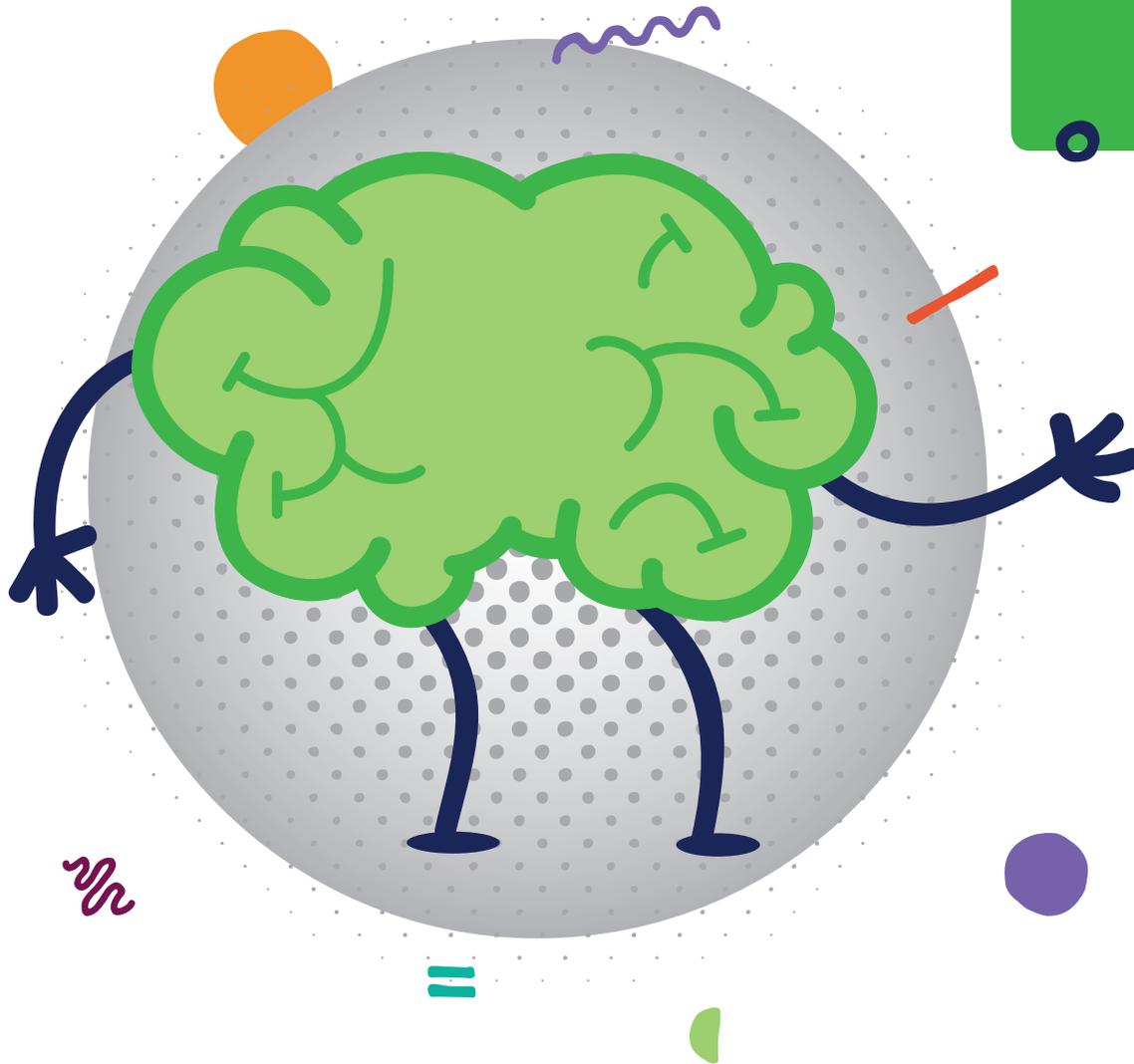
DEVELOPMENT





Language & Literacy

You may not think your tiny baby is capable of learning language and literacy, but there are a number of things you can do to establish pre-literacy learning that will enhance your child's future ability to communicate. Language and literacy activities are designed to lay the foundation for your child's speech skills and social engagement.



Cognitive Development

Your baby is learning about their world each time they look at their surroundings. Newborns can only see objects about 8-15 inches away—it takes about eight months for your baby to develop the visual range to recognize people and objects across the room. Activities at this stage are designed to help your baby develop visual skills like focusing, tracking objects, and eventually recognizing and anticipating visual cues.



Sense of Self & Relationships

The activities in this domain provide the basis for your baby's social skills. You can help your baby learn to express their feelings, wants, and needs by nurturing their growing self-concept. Though much of their learning at this age is at a subconscious level, these activities help your baby realize that cause and effect are tied to communication and that their behaviors cause others to react to them.



Motor Skills

Developing motor skills helps your baby learn how to use and control their body. This domain covers both gross motor (control of arms, legs, torso) as well as fine motor (fingers, hand/eye coordination). By practicing these skills early, you help lay the foundation for your baby's future ability to do things like catch a ball, tie their shoe, hold a pencil, and zip a zipper.

ACTIVITIES





Tummy Time (birth - 6 months)



Normalize tummy time by making it a regular part of your infant’s routine, not just a working session. Your baby receives important benefits from experiencing life on their tummy—the stimulation to their face and jaw while on their tummy creates the basis for their speech skills and their movements in this position strengthen their neck, legs, hips, and back. Your baby spends so much of their day on their back—allowing them to see the world from a new viewpoint will strengthen their visual skills and help them understand their world better. All of these positions count as tummy time:

- Recline with baby on your chest
- While holding baby, transfer them to their tummy, supported by your arm
- Lay baby on tummy next to a mirror to keep them interested

Early Reading & Vocabulary (birth - 12 months)



It may feel silly to speak to your baby in sentences and name objects before they can even hold their head up, but the amount of words babies hear daily can affect their later academic success. Read to your baby, talk to them, name things—allow them to hear lots of words. This will introduce them to vocabulary as well as the ability to recognize differences in sounds and inflection.

Beginning at six months, introduce your baby to books. Look for board books with simple images that name things. Pre-literacy learning involves understanding what to do with a book (hold it, turn its pages, look at pictures and words).



Practicing Visual Attention (birth - 12 months)



Language
& Literacy



Cognitive
Development



Sense of Self
& Relationships

Get close enough for your baby to see your face—depending on their age, their visual range could be as little as eight to fifteen inches. You want your baby to be able to focus clearly on your face and the expressions you make. This will lay the foundation for their social engagement and allow them to become familiar with the details of your face until they develop the visual range to see you clearly from across the room.

Sensory Play (birth - 12 months)



Cognitive
Development



Motor
Skills

Beginning at birth, your baby will use their senses to explore the world and learn new information. Sensory activities involve touching, tasting, seeing, smelling, and movement. Introducing your baby to different textures, viewpoints, scents, and tastes will help them build up their memory bank of experiences, which is very important for future growth. Encourage your baby to explore the food they are eating with their hands while in the highchair. Getting messy is good!

Vocalizing (3 - 6 months)



Language
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Cognitive
Development



Sense of Self
& Relationships

Take turns vocalizing with your child. If they are making noises on their own, try repeating their sounds back to them. See if they will repeat simple noises you make, like “oh” or “ah.” This back and forth vocalizing activity teaches them social engagement and helps them begin to understand that they are in a conversation.

Peek-a-boo / Pattycake (3 - 6 months)



Language
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Sense of Self
& Relationships

Social, repetitive games like peek-a-boo and pattycake help your baby learn how to initiate social play. These simple games introduce important concepts like taking turns, requesting and receiving a response, and anticipation. Play these games regularly or pair a playful song with routines like diaper changing and bath time, and over time you'll see your baby develop the ability to anticipate these activities based on your social cues.

Mirror Play (3 - 6 months)



Language
& Literacy



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Sense of Self
& Relationships

Set your baby in front of a mirror and watch as they engage with themselves. Since babies are naturally drawn to human faces at this stage, your baby will be extra interested in what they see in the mirror. Point to their nose, lips, tummy, etc. and name each feature. Eventually, your baby should be able to point to their own nose when you say, "Where's your nose?" Looking in a mirror will help your baby learn how to focus, track objects, and explore facial expressions.

Reaching & Grasping (4 - 6 months)



Cognitive
Development



Motor
Skills

From different positions (on tummy, sitting, on back, in a side-lying position), help your baby practice reaching for objects and grasping them. Make sure they are using both hands across planes—to the front, to the side, across their body, etc. This activity not only helps your baby develop their hand muscles, it also trains them to orient visually to an object, developing their ability to focus. By placing interesting objects out of reach, you also allow your baby to practice problem solving by learning how to move their body in order to grab the object. Be sure to play with objects that are safe for them to put in their mouth—this is how they will naturally explore objects at this stage.



Where Did It Go? (4 - 7 months)



Help your baby learn about object permanence by covering and revealing an object that has their attention. Object permanence is the understanding that things continue to exist even when they can't be seen, touched, or sensed in any way. Hold a toy in front of your baby until they focus on it. Then place the object behind your back, under a blanket, or inside a box. Ask your baby, "Where did it go?" Reveal the object and say, "There it is!"

Practice Transitioning into Positions (5 - 8 months)



Provide opportunities for your baby to learn how to move in and out of different positions. Instead of attending to them only by picking them up and putting them down, connect with your baby by sitting them up, placing them on their tummy, and encouraging them to move and twist.

Imitating Sounds (5 - 8 months)



See if your baby will repeat back to you some simple phonetic sounds—lip-smacking, mamama, bababa, papapa, dadada, etc. While they may not be ready to speak actual words, understanding how to form these simple sounds will lay the foundation for their speech skills.

Crawling Around & Over (9 - 11 months)



Provide opportunities for your baby to crawl on different surfaces and inclines. Create an obstacle course by placing pillows on the floor. If the weather allows, crawl around outside in the grass. This trains your baby not to feel defensive about different textures and helps to develop their sensory skills and integration skills.



RESOURCES





Resources



Along with supporting the Domains of Development through play, it's also important to monitor your baby's developmental milestones in order to determine if they need extra help. Download the [AdventHealth Infant Well-Check Guide](#) for detailed information about developmental milestones from birth to 18 months.

If you are concerned about your child's development for any reason, seek advice from your pediatrician.

Additional resources for infant developmental milestones and activities:

- **[Parents as Teachers](#)** – a free program offered in both Kansas and Missouri to provide parents with knowledge and support during early childhood development. Find a program in your area [here](#).
- **[Missouri First Steps](#)** – an intervention system that provides support to families with children birth – 3 years with disabilities or developmental delays.
- **[Kansas Tiny-K Alliance](#)** – An advocacy program that supports resource development and public policy for families of infants with developmental disabilities.
- **[The Lee Ann Britain Infant Development Center](#)** – an outreach program at AdventHealth that helps children with special needs and their families prepare for the challenges of the future.