

Activity ideas



You are your child's first 'playmate' and although we know that your child will develop at his/her own pace, there are ways you can encourage and support your child to learn new skills.

Listed below are some first play activity ideas that we hope will be helpful for you and your little one.

FACE PLAY

What to do:

- Sit with your child facing you and gently touch his/her facial features as you sing 'Here is my nose, ears etc.'
- Sit so that you and your child are looking in a mirror. Wave and say "Hello baby".
- Sing 'Head, shoulders, knees & toes' and do the actions with your child
- Take photos of familiar people (family members / therapists etc.) on your Tablet and show the picture of Granny to your child and say "Granny's coming today etc. You could also show 2 pictures and say "Where's Granny?" etc.
- Peek a boo' using either hands or a sheer scarf.

LISTENING

What to do:

- Sing and talk to your child using exaggerated tones of voice. Watch your baby's facial expressions and see how he reacts to different pitches. If he/she copies you reward him/her with more sounds. You could try this with Animal or Transport sounds (if your child is ready for this). A great time to do this is when you are looking at books with your child.
- Encourage your child to make happy sounds. Coos, gurgles & babble are their efforts to communicate. The more you talk to you child, the more motivated he/she will be to carry on the 'Happy Conversation'.
- Copy the sounds your child makes. He/she will be pleased you have heard him/her and will repeat the sounds.

Skills learned: Language development. These are lovely exercises to help your child with speech sounds and expression.

TRACKING

Materials needed: A small, soft, colourful toy, like a sponge ball or stuffed animal.

What to do:

- While your baby is lying on their back, hold the toy in front of her face and, if needed, wiggle it slowly or gently touch them with it to get their attention. Then move the toy from side to side, and encourage her to follow along with their eyes.

Skills learned: Visual tracking, visual development.

a few more...

OBJECTS OF REFERENCE (FOR DAILY ROUTINES)

What to do:

- Prepare your child for different activities in the day by showing / giving them a related object. For instance, when it is nappy change time, show or give them a nappy to hold before taking them to the changing mat. Get a plastic duck from the bathroom to show them when it is bath time. Spoon for breakfast, shoes for going out etc.

DANCING

What to do:

- Put on one of your favourite songs and, while holding your baby securely to your chest, gently move around together in time to the music.

Skills learned: Listening. This also encourages an interest in music and strengthens bonding with the parent, which is important for emotional development.

SINGING

What to do:

- Sing songs and nursery rhymes with your child. Support them in doing the actions to songs such as 'Row, row, row your boat' 'Twinkle, twinkle' etc.
- Introduce 'Objects of Reference' for each song e.g. Bus – for 'Wheels on the Bus', Spider –for 'Incey Wincey', Boat- for 'Row, row' etc. and give them a choice between 2 songs.
- Also you could start singing a song and then pause halfway through and see if your child tries to fill in the gaps (with babble or words).

Skills learned: Listening, imitation, choosing, speech sounds.

KICKING

Materials needed: Foil Survival Blanket.

What to do:

- Lay a foil survival blanket on the floor and place your child on it preferably with socks off. Wait to see if he/she will kick or pull the paper. You can encourage by rustling the paper or placing it in her hands.

Skills learned: Body awareness, cause and effect, visual sensory integration.

TAKING OUT / RELEASING OBJECTS

Materials needed: Large basket/saucepan, variety of toys that make a noise.

What to do:

- To remove: Place basket filled with toys in front of your child and encourage / support him/her to remove them. You could also hold out your hand and say "Ta for Mummy" as you encourage him/her to give the toy to you.
- To release: Place a saucepan in front of your child and demonstrate dropping a noisy toy i.e. a rattle into the pan. This might encourage your child to copy you.



and a few more...

- **Texture book** Make a texture book using different textures – like wall paper, sand paper, bubble wrap, washing scourers, foam wash cloth etc
- **Smell tour** Take a ‘smell tour’ past places like the fishmongers, fish and chip shop, the body shop/Lush soap shop, pet shop, etc
- **Borrow equipment** If you need equipment during the holidays, ask your nursery or children centres if you can borrow equipment from them, rather than hiring/buying.
- **Foil play mat** Use a foil emergency blanket as play mat. Great for sensory stimulation.
- **Dress yourself** Using either a large piece of card or lining paper, draw around each other to create life-size figures. Then cut up old clothes to dress your portraits up.
- **Ideas book** Roma Lear has written a range of books full of ideas of activities for people with special needs, look out for her on Amazon.
- **Sensory flour games** Mix cornflour and water together and it makes a great sensory play tool. Also put flour into a plastic bag and seal it with some food colouring. As it gets squished round it will change colour.
- **Substitute sand** Moonsand, for indoor play, made by Spin Master Ltd TM is available at most toy stores, including the Early Learning Centre. It’s a soft medium that trickles like normal sand, but moulds like dough. Lots of colours. Great fun!
- **Home skittles** Use guttering to make a chute to play skittles, make your own skittles by filling plastic bottles with different things: sand, water, glitter, feathers etc.
- **Sensory tent** Kit out a play tent with everyday items, such as old CDs, tinsel, fairy lights – for a great sensory space.
- **Sensory indoor tray play** Use a plastic box, filled with different things, like dried beans, sand, shaving foam, even toothpaste, for sensory play.
- **Matching pairs game** Use a digital camera to photograph and make your own matching pair cards, eg: your dog, your home, family.
- **Aromatherapy** Put on some relaxing music and have a home-made aromatherapy session. Dilute aromatherapy oils in a special carrier massage oil. Different people like different pressure so experiment a bit according to personal sensory needs.
- **Sensory bottles** collect different size plastic bottles, fill with different things, water, dry beans, glitter, feathers, buttons etc.
- **Favourite memories scrapbook** Use a camcorder, camera phone or ipad and make a scrapbook to record special moments when you are out and about, that you can look at together at the end of the day. Use a scrapbook to tell other people about favourite days out.
- **Smelly socks game** Use old socks or buy some from a charity shop. Scent some cotton wool balls with different smells like tea, coffee, lemon, apple or tomato ketchup etc. When the cotton balls are dry, put them in the socks, tie them up with a ribbon, and play a game of ‘Guess the smell’.



Toy ideas

AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT AND EQUIPMENT

- **Language skills** Farm animal, interactive toys, pretend play food, Vtech talking book, hardback picture books, and nursery rhymes.
- **Fine Motor skills** Using mega duplo, stacking blocks, graded containers, barrel shape sorter, paper and pen, cutting and sticking, dry pasta. (Soft, squishy, stretchy, tennis ball etc)
- **Hand and eye coordination** Wave drum, bubbles, rainbow stick, coloured felt tip pen/pencil, peg puzzles, scissor control.
- **Gross motor** Standing and reaching, kicking/throwing football or balloon, 4 wheels push along walker and standing frame, gym ball
- **Social / emotional skills** Hand puppet, squeaky hedgehog, soft toys, turn taking games, play pots and spoons, sharing, praise and encouragement.

CAUSE AND EFFECT TOYS, SENSORY TOYS, TACTILE OBJECTS AND NOISE MAKERS

0 – 6 months

Parents / carers are baby's favourite playmate
Mobile toys for baby to grasp
Rattles and shakers (noise makers) rainbow drum or stick
Bath toys
Cloth or soft / picture books
Musical and chime toys
Floor gym
Koosh ball / scented balls
Cause and effect toys (push-button sound makes)

06 – 12 months

Simple shape sorter
Sensory Balls
Stacking toys / Graded containers/ cups
Squeeze / squeak toy
Cloth and cardboard books
Push and pull (Cause and effect toys button sound makes)
Mirror / hide and seek / organza cloth

12 – 24 months

Press and push-button sound makers
(Cause and effect toys / talking book)
Balls (hairy, spiky, gym fit, porcupine, stretch, massage ball and many more)
Building Block (wooden blocks, duplos)
Peg puzzle

notes

- All of these activities can be adjusted / extended to suit your child.
- Initially your child might need maximum support with the activity i.e. hand over hand, elbow support but eventually they may be able to carry out an activity with verbal prompts
- It is important to 'Reward' your child with praise i.e. clapping, cheering, high fives etc. for good looking, listening, copying etc. as this will motivate them to keep trying.
- Repetition, Repetition, Repetition – It is so important to practise activities with your child again and again (even if you think they have 'got it')
- Lastly – and most importantly of all – HAVE FUN

