



Teachers Resisting Unhealthy
Children's Entertainment

TRUCE GUIDE TO PLAYING WITH BABIES

This guide for families, teachers, and caretakers is filled with ideas for activities and games that will delight babies while enhancing their growth and development.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PLAYING WITH BABIES

- As you go about your day, **talk about what you are doing**, what you are seeing, hearing, and smelling. Tell them why you are changing their diaper or putting on a sweater. Point out interesting things—a flower, a dog, a truck, the mailman.
- **Present only a few toys or objects at a time.** Too many can become confusing or overstimulating. It is better to put out a few things and then put them away and bring out new ones.
- **Simple toys are best for baby's development.** Never choose toys that “do the playing” for a child at the touch of a button. Don't choose toys with flashing lights or loud sounds.
- **Babies need to interact with 3-dimensional objects** to make sense of their world. That means no screen-based devices, such as TV, iPads, iPhones, or toys with screens.
- Sometimes **babies need a break.**
 - ◇ Babies can get overstimulated or just plain tired after many minutes of enjoying the play. This can come on quickly.
 - ◇ Common signs that babies are ready to stop playing:
 - Turning their head away
 - Arching their back
 - Closing their eyes or falling asleep
 - Crying or fussing
 - Rubbing their eyes



ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH BABIES

Read together!

- It's good for babies to become accustomed to being read to from a very young age. Read books together every single day. Don't worry if they grab for the book or stick it in their mouths. At some point, they will begin to look at the pictures and to listen to your voice (which sounds different when reading vs. talking).
- Choose board books with bright, simple pictures and text or classics like *Pat the Bunny* and *Goodnight Moon* or "lift the flap books" like the Spot books.
- Avoid electronic books. These deprive children of the physical, concrete experience of being read to by a loving adult.



Introduce interesting objects

- Gather a basket of interesting household objects—for example, a spoon, a sock, a plastic bottle, some keys on a keychain, a ball, and an empty cereal box. Present the basket for endless exploration.
- On another day, gather a whole new selection of objects to explore.



Block tower

- Build a tower with soft blocks or plastic stacking cups. Your baby will love knocking down the tower over and over again.

Tummy time

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommended in the 1990s that babies sleep on their backs to avoid Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). However, it's important for *all babies*—even newborns—to spend some waking time on their tummies each day. Tummy time helps babies develop back, shoulder, and neck muscles and also avoids a flattened head. Remember "Back to sleep. Tummy to play."
- Some babies don't like tummy time at first. To help them get used to it, lie down facing your baby. Talk and sing to them. As they get older, introduce an interesting object to explore.



ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH BABIES

Recite or sing nursery rhymes

- Some “oldies but goodies” include “Baa, baa black sheep” or “London Bridge is falling down” or “To market, to market, to buy a fat pig” or “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall” or “The Noble Duke of York.” It doesn’t matter what you sing or say. Your baby will respond to the rhythm and repetition.



Look in the mirror together

- Point and say, “There’s Baby (use Baby’s name)” and “There’s (your name).”
- Point and say, “There’s Baby’s nose,” “There’s Baby’s ear,” etc.
- Ask “Where’s Baby?” Point at the reflection and say, “There’s Baby!”

Pots and pans

- Gather a few pots and pans and a wooden spoon from the kitchen.
- Show Baby how to bang on the pots to make a noise. Successful when they can sit by themselves for several minutes.



Explore texture

- Stuff some squares of fabric of different colors and textures (cotton, silk, corduroy, soft wool, satin) into a small container such as a baby wipe container. Let Baby pull them out.
- Talk about how they feel, “Does this red one feel soft?” “Is the blue one scratchy?”

Sing together!

- Sing with Baby! It doesn’t have to be just children’s songs. Sing lullabies, marches, popular tunes, old favorites (Home on the Range, Jingle Bells, Puff the Magic Dragon). Help Baby clap along as you sing.



Dance together!

- Play some fun music and dance together, bouncing Baby to the beat. Put on music you enjoy—rock and roll, blue grass, polka, classical—it doesn’t matter.

ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH BABIES

Peek-a-boo

- Use your hands or a cloth, blanket, or other object to cover your face. "Where is (your name)? Peek-a-boo!"
- Variation 1: play peek-a-boo with a puppet or stuffed animal. Hide the puppet. Say "Where's the doggie?" When the puppet peeks out, say "Peek-a-boo!"
- Variation 2: when your baby is a little older, hide a stuffed animal or toy inside a box or under a blanket and ask Baby, "Where is Teddy?" Then open the box or lift the blanket and say, "There's Teddy!" Once they get the idea, let them find the hidden Teddy by opening the box or lifting the blanket themselves.



Creep Mouse

- Use two fingers to creep all over Baby's body. The last words get louder and louder.
- "Creep mouse, creep mouse up and down, Creep mouse, creep mouse all around town, Creep mouse, creep mouse, creep mouse, creep mouse, CREEP MOUSE!"

Trot, trot to Boston

- "Trot, trot to Boston. Trot, trot to Lynn. Look out, baby. Don't fall in!"
- Hold Baby on your lap while bouncing your knees up and down. Dip Baby down as you say, "Don't fall in!"

Knock at the door

- "Knock at the door" (knock on her forehead with your knuckles). "Peek in" (peek into one of their eyes). "Press the button" (press on their nose). "And walk in." (put your finger in their mouth)



Tickling

- Infants love to be tickled or have you blow on their tummies. Just know when they have had enough and stop!

GAMES TO PLAY WITH BABIES

This Little Piggy

- Wiggle each of Baby's toes, starting with the big toe, as you say the rhyme. "This little piggy went to market. This little piggy stayed home. This little piggy had roast beef. This little piggy had none. And this little piggy went 'wee wee wee' all the way home."



The Copying Game

- When Baby makes a sound, copy it. Or if they stick out their tongue, cough, clap, or smile, do the same. This—at first—may surprise Baby and then delight them!

Row, row, row your boat

- Put Baby on your lap and rock back and forth while you sing the song: "Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, Life if but a dream."
- When Baby is able to sit alone, put Baby them in straddle position in front of you and hold their arms. Rock back and forth together as you sing the song.



How Big is Baby?

- Say "How big is Baby?" Lift up both arms and say, "Sooo big!"
- As they get older, they will respond by raising their arms when you say "How big is Baby?"

Find the Rattle

- Shake a rattle so you get Baby's attention. Continue shaking it as you hide it behind your back or under a blanket. Ask Baby, "Where's the rattle?" You may need to show them where it is at first, but soon they'll figure out to listen for the sound to find it.

Patty cake

- Clap to the rhythm, saying "Patty cake, patty cake, baker's man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can. Roll it (roll your hands) and prick it (prink with your fingers) and mark it with a 'B' (draw a B in the air) and put it in the oven for Baby and me."



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY IN BABY'S DEVELOPMENT

Babies love to play and playing is much more than having fun. Babies learn about the world around them through play. While playing, they are learning about interacting with others, practicing important skills, developing curiosity and creativity, and learning to solve problems.

Babies' brains will grow more during the first 12 months than at any other time in life.



As you sing, dance, rock, read, and play, your child's developing brain is growing more and more connections.

It is important for your baby's development to play together with parents and loving caregivers. At the same time, both you and your baby will have fun, too!

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFO AND RESOURCES ABOUT
INFANT & TODDLER PLAY AND TOYS, VISIT
WWW.TRUCETEACHERS.ORG**



TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment) is a national group of educators deeply concerned about how today's children's entertainment and toys are affecting the play, learning, and behavior of the children in our classrooms.

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