



Age Appropriate Toys and Play

4 Months

First Toys

A *rattle* is a great toy for your baby. The sounds will be exciting for him to make and hear when he shakes it. With the rattle, your baby can also learn about cause and effect—when he **causes** it to shake, the **effect** is that it makes a fun noise. The rattle also supports fine motor skills because your baby can grasp it, let it go, and move it between his hands. You can use a rattle to play “tracking games.” Meaning you can move that rattle around and watch as your little one keeps his eye on it no matter where you move it.

A *round grasping toy* can be put slightly out of your baby’s reach so he has to work to get to it. Learning to move on his own is the development of a gross motor skill, and reaching for it with his hands and fingers is a fine motor skill. Make sure not to challenge your baby too much though, so that he doesn’t become frustrated.

A *squish toy* can be dangled above your baby’s head and can provide entertainment as he begins to sit up and play with you.

Your baby may also enjoy playing “hiding” games with you. Putting items under blankets or sheets is a fun idea, as your baby is still excited by things that disappear.

Note: Whenever you can, try to let your baby decide what to play and explore. Your baby is still too young to be forced to learn.

6 Months

Age-Appropriate Toys

- Foam blocks
- First blocks
- Tupperware (“to-go” containers)
- Large ball to push and crawl to and roll back and forth with
- Jack in the box (pop up toy)
- Bath toys

Why

Your baby is about to become super curious. Babies this age will mouth everything (be careful of choking hazards), will want to build and knock down blocks, and will love putting things in and out of boxes. Babies play will often include the gross motor stage, which means your baby is working on moving to crawl, pulling up to stand, and then walking!

If you have concerns about chemicals in toys you can check out: www.healthytoys.org

Remember, if it needs batteries, it probably requires less creativity on your baby’s part. Keep it simple. Your baby will learn more from exploring and playing with blocks than from a complicated, battery-operated toy!

Watch out for “educational” toys that claim to provide extra learning opportunities for language, reading/writing, and math. Many of these toys don’t require any creativity to play with and are “adult centered”. Something that seems very simple is often the most stimulating for an infant.

If possible, organize your baby’s toys by type (for example, blocks, animals, music, books, dolls, wooden). This will help your baby to sort objects later on and be able to easily choose what to play with!

Activities:

- Play games like the itsy bitsy spider using all the hand motions that help babies work on fine motor skills and touch.
- Make a family and friends photo album. Your baby will love to get to know different faces and practice telling them apart. As an added bonus, your baby will also come to recognize loved ones who cannot be close by.
- Put a blanket or burp cloth over a favorite object and ask where it is. Help your baby look for it. Lift up the blanket and say “there it (fill in object) is!” You can do the same thing with peek-a-boo by covering your face and saying “peek-a-boo!” as you remove the cover.
- Introduce plastic to-go containers during bath time. Fill the bowls with water and pour them out on your baby. Babies love to experience how incredible water is and you will probably see that your baby tries to “catch” the water in their hands.
- Introduce cheerios and put them on the counter for your baby to practice picking up. (Keeping a watchful eye in the beginning).
- Kiss different body parts on your baby and label them. You can make up your own words or use a poem (for example, “on your face you have a nose. And way down here you have ten toes. Two eyes that blink and a head to think. You have a chin and very near, you have two ears to help you hear. Arms go high and arms go low and a great big hug to say hello!”)
- Start a nap or bedtime ritual with a poem or song. For example, put your baby on your lap, wrap your arms around him and say (in your silly and excited voice):

“A wonderful woman lived in a shoe. She had so many children she didn’t know what to do. She held them, she rocked them and tucked them into bed. I love you, I love you is what she said.”

*** When you say the lines, add hand movements and use the words to guide you.*

9 Months

Age-Appropriate Toys

- Baby dolls (anything they can pretend to feed and take care of)
- Pull-pull toys
- A stacking toy or a toy where they can put things in and out
- Nesting cups or boxes (cups or boxes that fit inside each other)
- Finger puppets (animal puppets are great for learning animals!)
- Books

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