



play time tactics

Playing is the way a child learns about the world around them. While banging blocks or playing peek-a-boo may seem silly to you, it is critical to the way your child learns. Developmental play can be fun for both you and your baby. Fill your child's world with toys that will stimulate their senses of sight, touch, sound, and smell. Your baby is very curious about the world and they need you to teach them that it is a safe and loving one.

Age Appropriate Activities

- Be sure that the activities and toys you choose for your child are appropriate for your baby's age, especially if they were born prematurely. As your child grows, their brain develops rapidly. Offer a wide variety of experiences for your child. However, watch for signs they have had enough. Every baby is different in how they respond to play.
- Find resources in books or on the internet that will help you understand child development and what activities are appropriate for each age. Talk to your pediatrician and childcare providers for more ideas on activities.

Playtime Positions

- Your baby will benefit greatly from playing in a variety of positions. All babies benefit from time spent on their tummies. This position improves a baby's body awareness, and it helps to strengthen their neck, back, hips, and shoulders. Tummy time should be offered for a least a few minutes every day. Be sure to supervise your child closely and have them do tummy time when they are awake and alert.

- Also, try having your baby lay on their side to play. It is a great position for early sensory and body awareness. It encourages your baby to bring their hands to their mouth. When your baby is old enough, try sitting. Begin by propping your child up with pillows or cushions. As they learn better head control and strengthen their muscles, reduce the use of props and it will help them learn to sit on their own. It is important for your baby's developing visual skills to see the world from an upright position. Change your baby's position often during the day.

Hand and Leg Skills

- Babies love to put anything they can grasp into their mouths. In the beginning, babies' hand and leg movements are random but quickly they begin to learn to control their movement.
- Encourage your baby to play with their fingers and bring their hands to their mouth. Offer your child toys with different textures, shapes, sizes, colors, and weights. These may include rattles or musical toys. Dangle objects over your baby and let them try to swat at them.
- Encourage your baby to kick their legs by gently grasping them and peddling them like a bicycle. Offer toys that will respond when kicked or tapped with their feet. When your child is old enough to practice standing, help them pull up by holding on to your fingers.
- Babies that are kept in strollers, highchairs, or bouncy seats for extended periods of time have little opportunity to build their muscles and learn how their bodies work.