

Hiding and Finding



*Can you find
the toy?*

Invite your baby to look for an object that she watches you hide.

Because she sees you hide the object, over time she will understand that objects that are hidden can be found.





Why this is important

By hiding something while your baby watches, you help her understand that objects she no longer sees can still exist. This understanding is called object permanence. It will give her confidence and security to know that people and things exist even when they are out of her sight.

What you do

- Show your baby a special toy.
- Talk about the toy and let her explore it while you keep it in your hand.
- Hide the toy behind your back or in your pocket making sure she watches. Ask about the toy. *Where did the doggie go? Where is it? Can you see it?* If she does not look for the toy or looks only at the place where the toy was, show it to her again before partially hiding it from view.
- Offer positive feedback when she finds it and bring it out for her to hold. *You found the dog! He was hiding behind Mommy's back!*
- Repeat the game by hiding the toy in a new place.

Another idea

Find other times to play this game. As you care for her throughout the day, hide something briefly for her to find. *Where is your shoe? Can you find it?*

Let's read together!

Where's Nicky?
by Cathryn Falwell

Introducing Strangers



Help your baby meet new people by having them stand back and approach your baby gently, sometimes holding out a familiar toy.

Slowly introducing your baby to strangers may help him feel comfortable when meeting new people.

*Here's something
for you!*



Why this is important

Your child is curious about new people and objects in his environment. However, he has probably begun to express a preference for a few special adults. Most babies between 6 and 12 months may be uncomfortable with visitors, even close relatives. Often he will prefer to get to know a new person from the comfort and safety of your arms. By being supportive during these meetings, you build his confidence and comfort around others.

What you do

- Hold your baby securely when introducing him to a new person. Use your own friendly gestures and words to make your child feel comfortable. Shake hands with the stranger: *Hello. It's so nice to see you!*
- Help him touch the newcomer's hand for a moment, if your baby seems willing.
- Invite the visitor to hand your baby a familiar toy or an attractive object. Ask the visitor to stand back a little. If your child reaches out for the toy, he is making a choice to interact with the new person.
- Encourage your baby to show a favorite toy to the visitor, by handing it to your child. *Do you want to show Aunt Laura your bunny rabbit?*

Ready to move on?

When your baby is ready to go to a new adult, stay close so he can see you but do not try to maintain eye contact with your child. If you appear busy with something nearby your child will know you are close but he can focus his attention on the new person instead of on you. His first physical contact with a new person may last only a few seconds. Be ready to hold him again when he indicates he wants you.

Let's read together!

Is Your Mama a Llama?
by Deborah Guarino

Peek-a-Boo Mirror

Peek-a-boo!



Encourage your baby to remove a cloth from a mirror to see what is there.

Your baby will discover that he can make things happen, like causing his own reflection to appear.

Look at you!



Why this is important

Encouraging your baby to play in front of a mirror helps him practice finding his reflection. When you first pull the cloth away from the mirror, your baby may be surprised to see his image. At first he may touch the image and talk to the baby in the mirror, not recognizing his reflection. Over time he will begin to understand that he is the baby in the mirror. This helps him establish an understanding of himself.

What you do

- Attach a cloth to the top of a sturdy, unbreakable mirror. Hold your baby on your lap in front of the uncovered mirror.
- Point to the image and talk about the baby: *See the baby? That's you, Juan. Look at your smile!*
- Cover the mirror as you ask, *Where is Juan?* Wait to see what he will do. If he lifts the cloth or pulls at it, respond positively. *Peek-a-boo! You moved the cloth; look at you!* If he needs help, lift the cloth a little so he can see part of his face. Show surprise and pleasure as he sees himself. *I see something under there. It's you, Juan!*

Another idea

Sit with your baby on the floor with the unbreakable mirror in front of him. Play the game with him a few times before moving back and encouraging him to play by himself. Let him see you in the background through the mirror.

Let's read together!

The Big Book of Beautiful Babies
by David Ellwand

Dropping Objects

See the block fall?

Invite your baby to practice dropping things, especially things that make a noise when they land.

Picking up and dropping objects helps your baby gain more control of the muscles in her hands.





Why this is important

At this age, your baby can hold things very well but cannot always let them go when she wants. Opening her fingers is a different process from closing them, and learning to control the muscles in her hands will take her a lot of time and practice. Early hand control helps her manipulate objects during play. Later, she will need to control the muscles in her hands when she starts holding crayons and pencils for drawing.

What you do

- Show her a toy in your hand. When she looks at it, open your fingers and let the toy drop.
- Repeat the motion, saying *Drop* as it falls. Keep a short dropping distance so she'll be able to see your hand and the dropped object at the same time.
- Encourage her to try after you have shown her several times.
- Give an enthusiastic response with each attempt she makes. *Wow! You dropped the block by yourself!*
- Play again using a ball that bounces or a bell that makes a noise when it hits the floor. She may show more interest in a toy that produces a sound when dropped.
- Listen for any sounds she makes when she lets go of the ball. This is her attempt to imitate you when you say, *Drop*.

Another idea

Try playing the game during bath time. Dropping objects in the water makes a fun splash that may encourage her to continue practicing her new skill.

Let's read together!

Dear Zoo
by Rod Campbell

Showing What Comes Next

Keys. We're going to get in the car now.

Show your baby a familiar object and tell him what you are going to do with it.

Doing this makes it possible for your baby to think ahead to the next event.



Why this is important

Your baby will begin to understand what comes next when you first show him a related familiar object. As he associates objects with actions and words, he begins to make sense of his world. The social experience of showing someone something is good preparation for the time later when he will share and take turns with another person.

What you do

- Call to your baby from across the room.
- Show him an object related to what is going to happen next. The object could be a toy, a blanket, a bottle, or a diaper.
- Give him a chance to locate you in the room and turn toward you.
- Hold up the object again, name it, and talk about what is going to happen next. *Here is your bottle. Would you like me to feed you?*
- Try the game when dressing him or bathing him. *I have your lotion. It's time for your night-night massage.* Give him a moment to anticipate the next step before you do it.

Another idea

Expand the game beyond caretaking activities. Show him the vase before you pour water and place flowers into it, or show him a wind-up toy before you wind it up and make it go.

Let's read together!

Ten, Nine, Eight
by Molly Bang

Imitating Actions



*You're banging
on the pan!*

Do some actions that
your baby can copy.

This helps him use
an important type of
learning: imitation.

Bang, bang!



Why this is important

You can take advantage of your baby's natural interest in what you do and encourage him to copy your actions. Providing many opportunities for your child to copy your actions helps him begin to use imitation as a way of learning. Many actions, such as talking, eating with a fork, or driving a car, depend—in some way—on good imitation.

What you do

- Sit down with your child. Hold a spoon and pan, and offer your baby a spoon to hold. Hit the pan with the spoon while saying *Bang, bang, bang!*
- Invite your baby to hit the pan, too. He may bang the pan right away, or he might spend more time watching you before he tries it.
- Offer positive feedback when he tries to bang with the spoon, even if his movements are incomplete. *You did what I did! You're banging with the spoon!*
- Repeat the game with other motions such as tapping the pan with your hands, or using a different object instead of a spoon. Keep the movements simple, and use slow, exaggerated motions that he can follow.
- Try copying your baby when he makes a movement different than yours.

Another idea

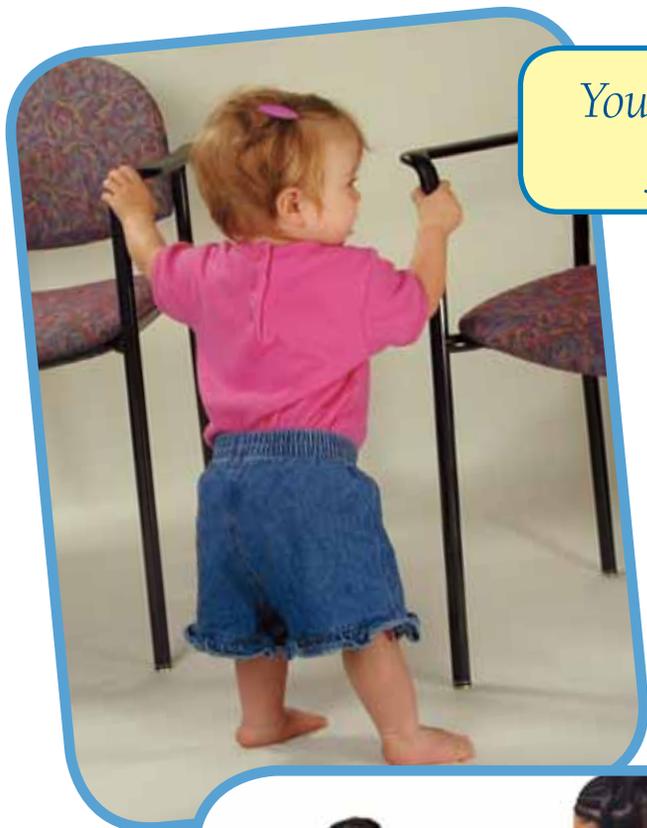
Try the game using songs and rhymes with hand motions such as "Pat-a-cake." You can clap your hands once while saying *clap*. You may also try spreading your arms wide and saying *big*. Think of other simple gestures your baby may want to imitate.

Let's read together!

Little Mister
by Randy Duburke

Stand Up and Move

*You're moving on
your own!*



Arrange furniture so your baby can pull up to a standing position and try taking a few steps while holding on.

Your baby will have the chance to practice with confidence when you give her objects to help her stand and take steps.





Why this is important

Moving while standing up and holding on to something comes before walking independently. Your baby first must learn to support her own weight and find her balance as she practices standing. As she takes sideways steps while holding on to furniture, she will feel excited and will want to try walking independently.

What you do

- Once your baby can pull herself to a standing position, place a few chairs in a row, and put a toy on the first chair with your child standing in front of it.
- Put a second toy on the next chair after she plays with the first toy. Stand back and see if she will move from chair to chair.
- Do not make her stand again if she sits to play with the toy. Let her move at her own pace.
- Gradually move the chairs slightly apart as she gets better at the game.
- Pick her up and cuddle her when she finishes. Let her know you are happy for her accomplishment.

Ready to move on?

Let your baby move independently for a few steps with the support of a cardboard box. Stand your child beside the box and offer support while placing her hands on one edge for balance. Keep your hand on the box to steady it. She may move it accidentally at first as she shuffles her feet to maintain her balance. Offer encouragement for her new skill.

You're using the box to help you walk!

Let's read together!

I Love You Through and Through
by Bernadette Rossetti Shustak

Puzzle Play

Can you put the ball in the hole?



You can invent a first puzzle for your baby by letting him put items in a muffin pan.

A simple coordination game gives your baby the opportunity to practice fitting objects together.



Why this is important

By placing items in a muffin pan, your baby gains skill in judging sizes and shapes with his eyes and testing them with his hands. He will enjoy holding the ball and fitting it into the pan. Each time he practices picking up the items in this simple puzzle and moving them, he learns more coordination.

What you do

- Look for objects around the house that will fit into the cup of a muffin pan. The fit needs to be fairly snug so it feels like a puzzle. Apples, oranges, and balls work well.
- Sit with your child and encourage him to explore the pieces in front of him. *You're putting the apple in the hole!*
- Follow his cues to determine his interest level. Allow him to use the pieces in other ways. *You took the ball out of the pan and now you're rolling it on the floor.*
- Try counting the pieces, talking about colors and textures, and describing your child's actions.

Another idea

Look for other opportunities in your day to offer your baby a simple puzzle game. For example, he may enjoy putting a rubber stopper in the sink or fitting the telephone in its cradle.

Let's read together!

Funny Fingers Circus
by Karin Blume

Hi and Bye-Bye

Bye-bye!



Say *Hi* and *Bye-bye* (or *Good-bye*) to your baby, the same way you greet others.

Using standard greetings with your baby helps her learn to wave and say *Hi* and *Bye-bye*, too.



Why this is important

By waving and saying *Hi* and *Bye-bye* to your baby at appropriate times, you provide a model of conversational behavior. By responding joyfully to her attempts to communicate *Hi* and *Bye-bye*, you encourage her to try to repeat those actions. Because the gesture of waving is widely understood, it provides her with an opportunity to communicate with people outside of her immediate family.

What you do

- Smile and say *Hi* when you approach your baby or when she makes an *ah* sound (this may be her attempt at saying *Hi*). Wave to her to get her attention.
- Use greetings during daily routines, such as diaper changing, mealtime, and bath time. For example, when you baby makes the *ah* sound during a diaper change, pause, move closer to her face, smile, and say *Hi* in a gentle voice.
- Observe your baby. She will listen and watch you. She may smile back and then, over time, begin to imitate the sound and motion. Look for signs such as her fingers moving slightly in her lap. She will likely use the hand motion or the sound of *Hi* separately before putting the two together.
- Wave and say *Bye-bye* or *Good-bye* when leaving a room.
- Encourage others to greet her the same way, and help her wave her hand or wiggle her fingers to participate in this early form of conversation.

Another idea

You can help your baby practice greeting others throughout the day. Stand at the door and wave to people walking outside. Greet the cashier at the grocery store or the nurse in the doctor's office and encourage your child to do the same.

Let's read together!

Baby Says Bye-Bye
by Opal Dunn

Providing Two Ways

Can you drop it in?



Use a box with two holes to let your baby discover how to retrieve a toy that has gone out of reach.

Finding two ways to reach the toy gives her practice in solving problems with more than one solution.

You found it!





Why this is important

Solving a problem usually involves choosing from several possible solutions. Although your baby may not want to drop the toy at first, she will learn that it is not gone when she can no longer reach it. Her attempts at problem solving help her discover many solutions to finding the disappearing toy. This simple game serves as a model for solving more complex problems later in life.

What you do

- Cut a small hole in the top of a cardboard box and a larger hole low on the side of the box. Using one small object, show your child that it can be dropped through the hole in the top.
- Encourage her to look for the toy. *Can you see the toy? Where did it go?*
- Offer help if needed. If she tries to get the toy through the hole in the top, explain that the hole is too small for her hand and the toy is far away in the bottom of the box. If necessary, move the box slightly so she can see the toy through the side hole.
- Notice how she learns to look for the toy through the larger hole after playing the game several times. She may turn the box or crawl around it to find the larger hole.
- Limit the amount of help you offer each time you play. Give her a chance to drop the toy in and find it by herself.

Another idea

Add variety to the game by using different objects to drop in the box. Talk about the name of each object, along with the color or texture:
You're dropping the orange block!

Let's read together!

One Duck Stuck
by Phillis Root and Jane Chapman