

# First Crayons

*You made red  
marks on  
your paper!*



Give your child a crayon and paper and talk about any marks he makes.

Playing with crayons and paper introduces your baby to using tools for drawing and writing. Your words let him know that this activity is important.



## Why this is important

Crayons provide an easy introduction to writing tools. The simple act of putting a crayon to paper gives your baby a chance to freely explore some of the elements of drawing and writing. He will enjoy moving his arm and hand and seeing the result. Later he will learn to use crayons to express himself creatively.

## What you do

- Tape a large piece of paper on the table. Seat your baby at the table and offer him one crayon. He may taste it, feel it, or show it to you. Talk about the crayon. *This is a red crayon. It is smooth and round.*
- Wait for him to make an accidental mark on the paper, or choose another crayon and make a small mark yourself.
- Offer positive encouragement when he makes a mark. *You made red lines with your crayon!* He may make long strokes or just poke at the paper.
- Give him a crayon only when he is seated in front of paper and can freely explore. **Do not leave your child alone with crayons or any other small objects that could be swallowed. Let him explore with crayons only while you are watching to make sure he uses them safely.**

## Ready to move on?

When he has practiced with a crayon many times, offer him a choice between two crayons. Eventually, he will be able to choose a crayon from a variety placed before him.

### Let's read together!

*The Shape of Things*  
by Julie Lacombe

# Things to Taste

*What's under  
the lid?*



Describe your baby's experiences as she touches and tastes things.

Your baby may connect your words to what her senses are telling her as she explores.





## Why this is important

Babies put everything in their mouths because tasting is one of the ways they find out about new objects. After they have tasted and handled something, they decide whether or not they like it. This activity encourages your baby to practice using all of her senses together. Letting her choose from among several tastes establishes positive attitudes toward new eating experiences and helps her learn to make choices.

## What you do

- Sit with your baby where she usually eats her meals.
- Encourage her to taste things by putting a few items within easy reach. Try a slice of banana, a spoon, a peeled and very thin apple slice, or a cracker. **Be sure to give only things you are confident your child will not choke on. If you are unsure, save specific foods or this entire activity until your child is older.**
- Let her choose what she wants and let her taste as long as she wants. She may not eat the item, but simply use her mouth to explore. Talk about her choice. *The spoon is smooth and cool. That's a sweet apple!*
- Describe her actions as she makes choices. With each item, she may drop it and try something else immediately or she may show interest in only a single item. *You really like the banana.*

## Ready to move on?

When you see that she enjoys looking under objects, try this. Sit at the table with a cupcake pan filled with items of different textures and smells, such as a spoonful of pureed vegetable, a bit of ice pop, or a slice of seedless orange. Lay a lid over each cup. Encourage her to lift the lids and try the contents. Observe and describe her experience with words such as *sweet, cold, and wet.*

### Let's read together!

*My Food Mi Comida*  
by Rebecca Emberley

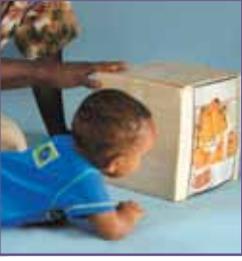
# Find a Picture

*Look at that cat.*

Name a picture and then turn it away from your baby so he can try to find it.

Using language to help your baby locate an item out of sight helps him remember the names of objects.

*He's gone. Can you find the cat?*



## Why this is important

Naming a picture before making it disappear helps your child to associate the words with the picture. Using language is one way to help your child remember what he is looking for. Hearing the words will bring to mind the picture if he has seen it a few seconds before. As his memory develops, more time can pass between seeing and recalling.

## What you do

- Attach a large picture of something familiar to your child, such as a teddy bear, baby, or cat, to a cardboard box.
- Sit with your baby on the floor. Show him the box with the picture attached. Talk about the picture: *Look, it is a picture of a baby. The baby is smiling.*
- Encourage your child to explore the picture. Then turn the box to move the picture out of his sight. *Where is the baby?* If he does not look for the picture, repeat the game from the beginning.
- Offer positive feedback for his efforts. *You moved the box to find the baby!* He might reach toward the box and flip it over or crawl around it to see the other side.

## Ready to move on?

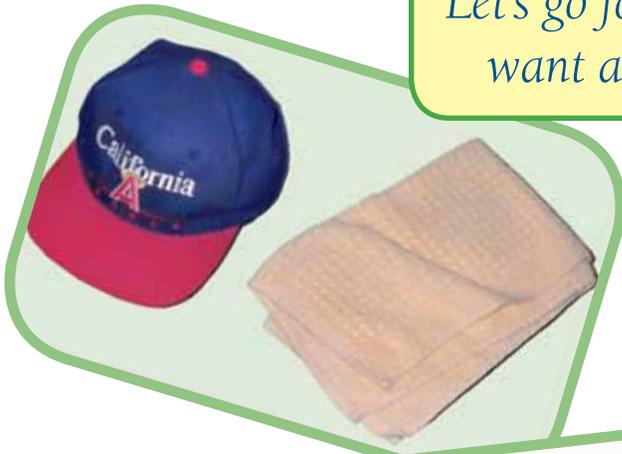
After playing several times with the same picture, add another picture to the second side of the box. Now ask the child to find first one picture and then the other. After two or more pictures have been added, he must make a choice.  
*Baby. Find the baby.*

### Let's read together!

*Where Is My Friend?*  
by Simms Taback

# Making Useful Choices

*Let's go for a walk. Do you want a hat or a towel?*



Let your baby choose between two things during an everyday task, one that is useful and one that is not.

Your baby will have a chance to make choices and learn from the results.



*It's time to eat. Would you like a spoon or a lid?*



## Why this is important

Choosing between two objects on the basis of their usefulness is an early step in the process of learning how to evaluate. Adding a few safe choices to his day opens up new possibilities for him to have some control. Making these choices helps him to understand what an object can do and what is needed for a particular task. With practice he can choose the right tool for each job.

## What you do

- Give your child two choices of objects to use when he needs to complete a task. For example, if he is ready to drink, let him choose between an empty cup and a full one. When he is ready to eat, offer him the choice of a spoon or a plastic lid. When it is time to wash hands, show him a block and a bar of soap. When it is time to take a walk, offer him a hat or a towel. Let him choose which item he wants.
- Let your child play with the item, even if he chooses the less useful option. Laugh with him as he enjoys the silliness of washing his hands with a block, for example.
- Show him the two choices again and give him a chance to choose more appropriately. *Do you want water? Which cup has the water?* At first, he may choose the less useful object, but with experience he will intentionally choose the more useful one.

## Another idea

Add as many choices to his day as you can. Let him feel in control when there is no harm in either option. *Would you like to play with your truck or your fire engine?*

### Let's read together!

*Wibbly Pig Likes Bananas*  
by Mick Inkpen