

# Reach for It!

*You're reaching  
your arms so high!*



When your baby reaches for your tie or scarf, use your smile and voice to tell him he did something special.

Your baby learns that you will give him your biggest smile each time he reaches for your tie.



## Why this is important

Your baby will need to know how to make his hands and eyes work together in order to reach objects. At first he will only kick and swat randomly. When he gains better control of his hands, he will grab an object and play with it. The good feeling he gets from your positive reaction to his efforts encourages him to practice this skill and increases his understanding of cause and effect.

## What you do

- Tie a scarf or necktie around your neck so the ends dangle in front of your baby.
- Shake the scarf or tie gently to draw his attention to it, or help him by first touching the material to his hand.
- Smile broadly and talk to him when he makes any move toward the scarf or tie. This encourages him to reach again. *You grabbed Daddy's tie. You are so strong.* **Do not leave your baby unattended with a scarf, tie, or other material such as beads, string, or cords longer than 6 inches. These are strangulation hazards. Also avoid choking hazards by making sure that beads, bells, etc. cannot come loose and be swallowed.**

## Another idea

In order to encourage your baby to continue playing the game, vary the objects you hang around your neck. He may enjoy reaching for a beaded string, a soft toy, or a bell. Introduce a variety of textures and colors by altering the item each time.

### Let's read together!

*Pat the Bunny*  
by Dorothy Kunhardt

# Watching a Toy Go Out of Sight



*Jingle, jingle...*

Move a toy out of sight, make a noise with it, and then return it.

Seeing a toy disappear and always immediately return helps your baby begin learning that things are still there when they are out of sight.



*Where did it go?*



## Why this is important

Babies begin following moving objects with their eyes almost as soon as they are born. They continue to develop this skill as they grow. When you move a toy out of your baby's sight she may lose interest and look away. However, she may continue to look for it if she hears a rattling or jingling sound from the out-of-sight object. She will eventually learn that when people or things go out of sight, they are not necessarily gone forever.

## What you do

- Support your baby on your lap so that you can see her eyes. Hold a toy where her eyes are looking.
- Move the toy slowly and notice the way she follows it with her eyes. After a few moments, give her the toy to play with while offering kisses and encouraging words. *You watched Mommy move your keys back and forth and up and down.*
- Keep the game interesting by changing the direction of the moving object and by using different toys.
- Choose a noisy toy and move it out of her sight after she has had success following a toy with her eyes.
- Observe how she reacts when she can no longer see or hear the toy. Make a noise with the hidden toy and then bring it out for her to see and play with.

## Ready to move on?

Think of creative ways to make the toy disappear and reappear. The toy can hide under a blanket or shirt, peek behind a curtain, or sit under a hat.

### Let's read together!

*Playtime Peekaboo*  
by DK Publishing

# Rolling Over



Move a toy so that your baby will try to turn his body in order to keep the toy in sight.

Offering the child a toy in this way gives him a reason to try to roll over.

*You're rolling over to get the toy!*



## Why this is important

Your baby needs to know how to turn over so that he can crawl, change position, and make himself comfortable. At first he may only follow an object with his eyes when you move it in front of his face. Later, as you move the toy, he may turn his head and try to roll his body to keep the toy in sight. Rolling from a smooth surface onto a textured one will help him realize that he has moved his body to a new place. Awareness of his body will help him move purposefully later as he begins to crawl and walk.

## What you do

- Lay your baby on his back on a smooth surface. Put a fuzzy or textured blanket next to him.
- Sit behind his head and hold a favorite toy or a noise-making toy above him so that he can see it comfortably.
- Move the toy slowly in different directions, side to side, while making sure his eyes follow the toy.
- Move the toy far to the side and toward the top of his head, as you talk about what he sees. *Your elephant is moving over here. Can you hear it rattle?* Notice your baby follow the toy with his eyes.
- If your baby reaches by arching his back and turning his head, encourage him with words, but do not help him roll over. *You almost have it. You are really stretching!*
- Give him the toy when he turns over. *You rolled over to reach your elephant!* Talk with him about the textured blanket he is now lying on. *You rolled onto a fuzzy blanket.* If he keeps trying but cannot completely roll over, slightly nudge his lower body to help.

## Ready to move on?

When your baby can roll over easily, show him the toy and then place it next to him on the blanket where he will find it when he rolls.

### Let's read together!

*Red, Blue, Yellow Shoe*  
by Tana Hoban

# Show Feelings

Smile and laugh to show your feelings as you raise your baby and say *up* or lower your baby and say *down*.

Expressing your happiness encourages your baby to join in the expression, too.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored top, is smiling and looking up at a baby she is lifting into the air. The baby is wearing a pink outfit and a white headband with a bow. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

*Up, up you go!*

A woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a light-colored top, is smiling and looking down at a baby she is lowering. The baby is wearing a pink outfit and a white headband with a bow. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

*Down you come!*



## Why this is important

When you express your excitement and happiness your baby will be encouraged to join in and show these same feelings. Expressing several basic emotions is not difficult for an infant, but she needs the adults around her to help her learn which emotions are appropriate at different times. When you show a joyful approach to games and learning, your child is likely to be cheerful, too. This activity also encourages her language development.

## What you do

- Hold your baby around her chest and under her arms. Smile at her.
- Raise her over your head gently and slowly saying, *Up* or *Up you go*. Lower her saying, *Down* or *Down you come*. Then hug her close to your body.
- Maintain eye contact with your baby as you lift her up and down to help her feel connected to you.
- Smile, laugh, and talk so she can tell by your face and words that you have happy feelings about the game and that her feeling of excitement is appropriate. If this is new to your child, she may look a little worried or gasp when she's lifted high in the air. When she sees you smiling, she will begin to feel good about the movement.
- Go slowly so you don't startle her with movements that are too fast. Give her time to smile and respond to you with cooing or babbling.

### Another idea

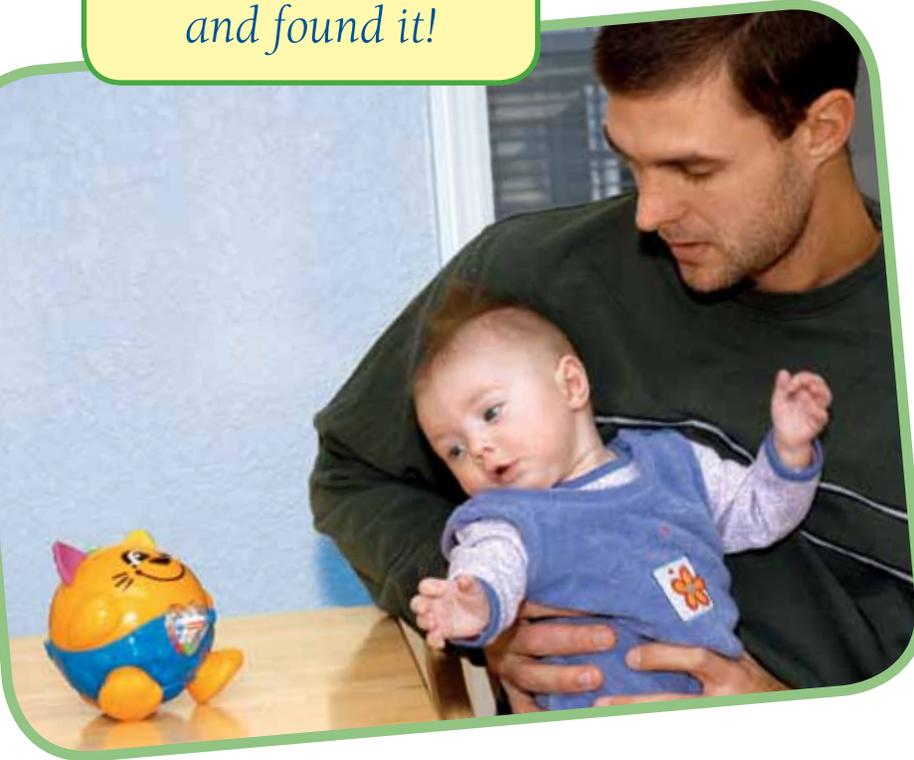
You can do this activity during routine times of the day such as when you lift her in and out of her crib or onto the changing table, or put her down to play on a blanket.

### Let's read together!

*Baby Faces*  
by Margaret Miller

# Turn and Find

*You turned around  
and found it!*



Turn your baby so she will need to look behind her body to see a toy.

Changing your baby's position so that a toy is out of sight encourages her to remember the toy and move her body to find it.



## Why this is important

Showing your baby a toy and then moving her so she cannot see it encourages her to remember it and move her body to find it. Memory, like her other skills, develops in stages. Turning her head or body to regain sight of an object shows the beginning development of a type of memory called object permanence.

## What you do

- Sit at a table with your baby in your lap. Show her a favorite toy and place it on the table while talking about the toy. *See the baby bear! What a friendly bear!*
- Turn your baby so that she faces away from the object. If she tries to turn her head or body to see the toy, encourage her to look and find it.
- Give her the toy. Smile and speak lovingly to her. *You turned around and found the bear!*
- Notice her interest in the game. If she does not look for the toy, try again at a later time.

## Another idea

Lay your child on the floor on her stomach with the toy in front of her. Slide her quickly around so the toy is at her side (from a twelve o'clock to a three o'clock position). She may wiggle back to the original position or roll onto her back to look for the toy. Allow her time to find the toy herself before offering help.

### Let's read together!

*Ready, Set, Go!*  
by Nina Laden

# Ride a Horsie

*Ride a horsie  
up and down!*

Do a special action on the same one or two words in a rhyme and see if your baby notices.

Your baby will learn to look forward to certain words and their matching actions.



## Why this is important

Babies enjoy all kinds of rhythm games. By moving your baby in a special way when you say a certain word in a song, your baby will learn to look forward to the particular word that signals the special event. This helps your baby learn that words can tell her what is happening to her. Hearing a rhyme repeated and moving to it in the same fun way gives her confidence in her ability to predict what will happen next.

## What you do

- Hold your baby on your lap as you say the rhyme: *Ride-a-horsie, ride-a-horsie, ride him into town. Ride-a-horsie, ride-a-horsie, up and down.* Gently bounce her to the rhythm of the rhyme.
- Bounce your baby high when you say *up*; when you say *down*, bounce her low.
- Make eye contact with your baby so that she can see your smiling face and you can see what she is feeling during the game.
- Repeat the rhyme and movements several times, then try pausing before saying *up* and *down*. She may show you she knows what will happen next by laughing, kicking her feet, or trying to move her body high and low.

## Another idea

Try the game using other songs and rhymes such as “This Is the Way the Farmer Rides,” which uses changing rhythms and motions. Choose a special word or words and move your baby in a different way when you sing those words in the song.

### Let's read together!

*Up!*  
by Kristine O'Connell George

# Sitting, Turning, and Reaching



*You're reaching high!*

Hold toys in various positions to encourage your baby to stretch and reach for the toys.

Your baby will practice using his hands and body to reach objects and will gain better balance for sitting.



*You're reaching to the side!*



## Why this is important

Providing an interesting object for your baby to reach encourages him to stretch and balance himself while also learning to sit alone. Once he can comfortably sit alone, he will not need his hands for support. Instead, he can use his hands to explore his surroundings. Seeing objects out of reach will eventually inspire him to try new ways to get them, such as crawling.

## What you do

- Begin the game with your baby sitting securely on your lap with your arm wrapped around his waist.
- Hold a noise-making or favorite toy in front of him—just far enough that he needs to lean forward slightly and stretch his arms to reach it. *Can you reach the rattle? Look how you can stretch!*
- Offer encouraging words and hugs when he reaches the toy, while allowing him to play with the object.
- Repeat the game, moving the toy to a new location just within his reach. Be sure to support his body as needed.
- Try moving the toy to his side and observe how he tries to reach it. Does he move his arms and trunk? Does he try to use only one arm? Encourage him to move in a variety of ways by moving the toy to different positions around his body.

## Ready to move on?

Try the game with the baby seated on the floor. If necessary, place pillows around him for support. Let him practice reaching in different directions for the toy by placing it in a variety of locations just within his reach.

### Let's read together!

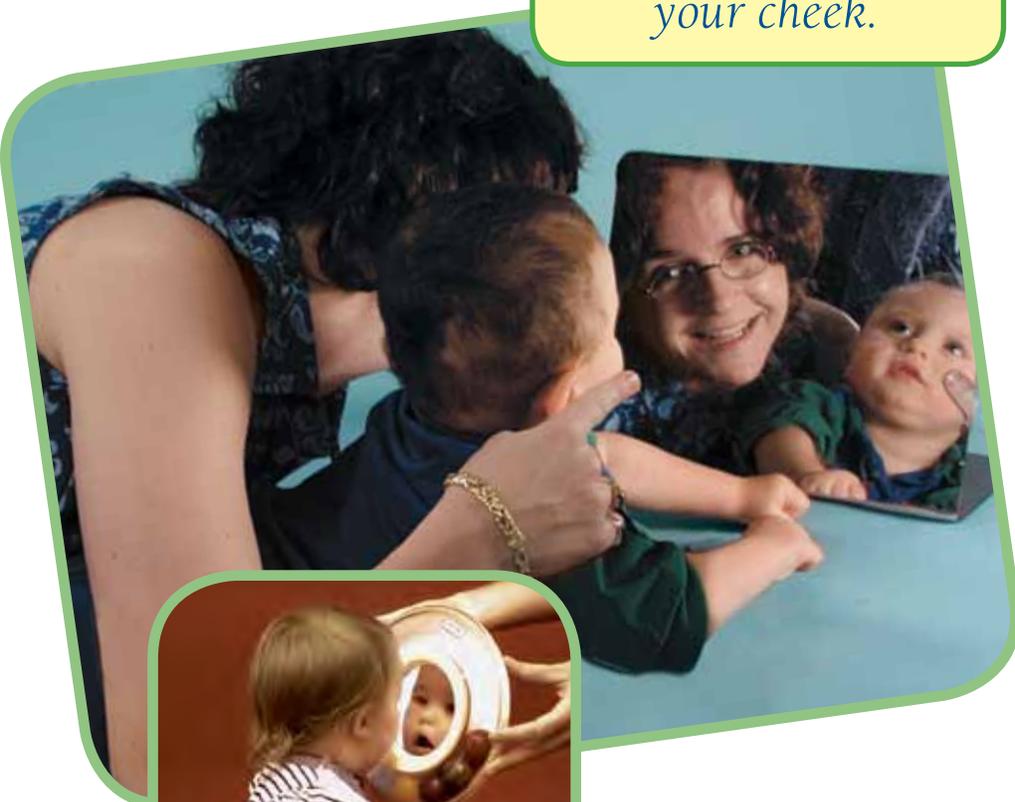
*Baby Love*  
by Sandra Magsamen

# Naming With a Mirror

*Cheek! I'm touching  
your cheek.*

Touch and name parts of your baby's face as she looks in the mirror.

Your baby will gradually begin to recognize herself and her body parts as you point them out to her.



*Where's your nose?*



## Why this is important

Feeling the touch of your finger on her mouth at the same time that she sees it happen in the mirror gives her a better understanding of the word *mouth*. At first your child will not understand that she is the baby in the mirror. Over time as you play this game with your baby, she will begin to understand that the mirror shows her image. With your help she will learn to recognize the names of body parts. Learning about herself helps her develop a positive sense of self.

## What you do

- Sit with your baby or stand holding her in front of a mirror. Talk to your baby while she looks at her reflection. *See the baby? See Annie in the mirror?*
- If your child has not had many experiences with the mirror, she may be surprised to see you in two places. Acknowledge the new experience. *Yes, Mommy is holding you and you see Mommy in the mirror.*
- Touch your child's mouth and say, *Mouth*.
- Try the game with different body parts, especially parts of her face, to help her recognize each one.

## Ready to move on?

After many days of this game, alter it by no longer touching her mouth as you speak. Say the word *mouth* or ask, *Where is your mouth?* Allow your baby time to find her mouth. If she does not find it or does not try to find it, gently guide her hand to her mouth.

### Let's read together!

*Pretty Brown Face*  
by Andrea & Brian Pinkney

# Reading Pictures and Books

*Banana. Yum!*



Notice what your baby is looking at in a book and name that picture.

When you name the picture at the moment he is showing interest in it, he will begin to understand more of your words.



## Why this is important

Seeing the pictures and hearing the names of objects on the page help your baby to connect pictures and words. When you place an object next to its picture, you deepen your child's understanding that pictures represent real things. A positive introduction to pictures and books is an important step in your child's literacy development.

## What you do

- Collect cards or board books with one simple picture on each page.
- Show a card or picture book to your child and name the object on the page at the moment he looks at it.
- Tell him in simple words about its color, shape, or use: *This is a shoe. A red shoe. You wear it on your foot.*
- Give him the picture to hold and explore, and continue to talk to him about the picture.

## Another idea

Pair a picture with an object the baby is familiar with. For example, if you have a picture of a cat, invite him to hold his toy cat as you show him the picture. Talk to him about the object in the picture and the object in your hand: *That's a cat. The cat is furry. You have a toy cat. Acknowledge his attempts to talk about the picture. I hear you talking about that cat.*

### Let's read together!

*Good Morning, Sun*  
by Lisa Campbell Ernst

# Making Da-Da-Da Sounds

*Da-da-da-da.*



*Da-da-da!*

Imitate sounds that your baby makes, especially repeated sounds like *da-da-da* or *ma-ma*.

Soon, some of these repeated sounds may turn into your baby's very first words: *mama*, *dada*, or *bye-bye*.



## Why this is important

When your baby begins to make sounds, both purposely and accidentally, you can encourage her to repeat those sounds. After practicing a sound, she will later be able to recall the sound and distinguish it from others. Repeating sounds develops the skill that will enable her to eventually repeat words. Oral language development (learning to talk and understand the words they hear) is an important part of early literacy development for young children.

## What you do

- Hold your baby so she can see your face.
- Repeat a sound back to her that you have heard her make. Move your lips distinctly and make the sound clear: *Da-da-da*.
- Observe her watching your mouth move. She may move her lips and tongue as she attempts to use her voice. Wait for her to make the sound again.
- Encourage her by giving her plenty of time to respond and by repeating the sound.
- Acknowledge her attempts to make the sound back to you. *You're talking!* Take turns with your baby in saying the sound.

## Another idea

Try the many different sounds you've heard your baby make, such as *da, ma, bi, bu, and me*. Be sure to focus on one sound at a time. Making the sound into a song by changing your voice pitch or the tempo of the syllables keeps your baby interested longer.

### Let's read together!

*Baby Says*  
by John Steptoe