

Activities for Infants

Monday

Peek-a-Boo-You can begin this game with your baby at a young age, by covering your baby's face gently with a cloth and then quickly pulling it off and smiling as you say "peek a boo!" As your baby gets older she will be able to pull the cloth off her face herself. You can also play by covering your own face with the cloth and then you or your baby can pull the cloth off.

Skills: Object permanence, separation, socialization, language.

Mom's Still Here-Babies at 7-9 months often go through separation anxiety and like to be in constant sight and hearing of their parents. You can help your baby with separation while at home by leaving the room for a minute and then returning and happily reassuring your infant that you are still here and did not leave them.

Skills: Socialization, separation, object permanence.

So Big!-When your baby is lying on his back or seated supported on your lap or a baby seat, gently grasp his arms and lift them above his head in a game of "So Big". As he gets older he will begin to imitate this motor movement on his own in response to you verbally saying "How big are you?", "So Big!".

Skills: Fine Motor, language, imitation.

Tuesday

Help Me Roll-Place your baby on her tummy on a blanket on the floor, place toys to her side and attract her attention visually. If she does not attempt to roll off her tummy in order to reach toys, gently lift a corner of the blanket to give her the momentum she needs to roll from tummy to back. Most babies roll tummy to back first and it is usually accidental the first few times.

Skills: Gross Motor, trunk, neck, arm strength, Cognitive, motivation.

I Can Sit-By about 8 months many babies can sit independently with their hands free to play. Help your baby to get into and out of a sitting position by rolling your baby to his side and placing your one hand under his shoulder and your other hand on his opposite hip and guide him upwards into sitting instead of picking him straight up. This is easy to do after each diaper change. To get out of sitting have your baby rotate to the side and put both hands on the floor as if to go into a hand-knee crawling position and guide him gently to the floor.

Skills: Gross motor, transitioning in/out of sitting, balance, body rotation.

Wednesday

Prop to Sit-Your baby will begin to strengthen his/her neck & trunk muscles in order to learn to sit with support from you and then soon he/she will be able to sit for small periods propping on his/her hands. You can place your baby on the floor and place pillows around her or use a Boppy pillow for support. Help her open her hands and place them on the floor in front or beside her so she can prop herself up and maintain a sitting position on her own. Gradually fade your support.

Skills: Gross Motor, trunk, neck, arm strength, sitting balance.

Let's Crawl-Place toys just out of reach of your baby and encourage a hand-knee position. You can help your baby assume this position if needed and even place your lower leg under his tummy if he has trouble maintaining this position. Gently rock back and forth and side to side to help your baby shift his weight, reach for toys and begin to crawl reciprocally.

Skills: Gross motor, strength, fine motor, reach, sensory, weight bearing.

Board Books-Babies love ripping paper at this age, so stick to board books with heavy pages. They can look at these books, or cloth book on their own and even put them into their mouths without much damage. They can also use their little fingers to learn to turn pages.

Skills: Fine Motor, cognitive, language.

Thursday

Rock the Boat-Place your baby in a hand/knee position over your lower leg, so your leg supports his tummy. Gently rock your baby back and forth in this position and sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" to get your baby used to weight bearing on his hands and knees which he will need for crawling.

Skills: Gross Motor, weight bearing, sensory, balance, strength.

Pick it Up-Babies are starting to use their fingers and thumb to secure tiny objects, working toward a neat pincer grasp. Place single puffs or Cheerios on their high chair tray and encourage them to use fingers and thumb to secure them.

Skills: Fine motor, refining reach and grasp.

Let's Babble-Your baby will start to move from cooing open vowel sounds to babbling consonant-vowel sounds as she approaches 6 months. When you are face to face with your baby, babble consonant-vowel sounds (mamama, dadada, bababa) and wait 15 seconds to see if she will attempt to imitate you. Repeat any sounds your baby makes whether she is cooing or babbling. You can do this

while looking into a mirror with your baby too.

Skills: Receptive/expressive language, turn taking, listening, imitation.

Friday

Texture Books-Cloth books with textures and sounds are great motivators for young babies to touch and feel. If you don't have these types of books you can use cut up pieces of cloth, sponges or any household items with texture. Use these items supervised and help your baby open her hands to pat, rub, touch, grab and feel the items.

Skills: Fine Motor, reach, grasp, sensory, tactile exploration.

Reach Across-Instead of presenting toys always directly in front of your child present toys to either side and encourage him to reach across his body with his left hands to grasp a toy on the right and vice versa.

Skills: Fine Motor, reach, grasp, crossing midline.

Straw Cups-Babies as young as about 7 months can learn to drink from a straw cup. Straw cups promote a more mature oral motor pattern than sipper cups. You can start with a juice box and using juice or water, squeeze a bit into the straw as you encourage your baby to suck. It will take a while for them to get the hang of this new skill, but once they learn to use a straw there is no need to go backwards to using a sipper.

Skills: Self-feeding, oral motor strengthening

Activities for Toddlers

Monday

What's the Scoop?-Your child is just starting to use a spoon. Let her hold a spoon during all meals & play with a spoon, even if she is still using her fingers. Place a food that sticks to the spoon on it, such as yogurt or mashed potatoes and see if she can guide it to her own mouth. Guide at the elbow if needed and fade your assistance. You can practice these same food scooping skills in water, sand or rice/bean tables.

Skills: self-feeding, fine motor

Hit the Target-Toddlers love to throw anything & everything, so re-direct this behavior by teaching them throw toward a target. Use a box or laundry basket and let them toss balls, toys, etc inside.

Skills: Gross Motor, Fine Motor.

Ramp it Up-Place a book or a cutting board on a small pillow to create a ramp. Show your child how to race cars down the ramp or roll small balls down the ramp. If it is strong enough they can walk down the ramp themselves.

Skills: Gross Motor, Fine Motor.

Tuesday

Step Up & Down-Help your child begin to negotiate steps from a standing instead of a crawling position. Hold both or one hand as needed and practice on one step or a curb to start. Once your child can do 3-4 steps with one hand held then you can start to work on the staircase in your home.

Skills: Gross motor, strength, depth perception, body in space awareness.

Blanket Slide-if you have hardwood or smooth non-carpeted floors somewhere in your home, you can use a large blanket, have your child sit on the blanket and pull or spin them around on the floor providing lots of giggles and fun. See if they can maintain a sitting position while you change their direction quickly.

Skills: Gross Motor, sitting balance, sensory.

Paint with water-Kids love to use large adult paint brushes and this can be done in a non-messy way by using water & a chalk board. Fill a cup/bucket with water and let your kids go to town painting with water. Outside, they can paint the house, fence or driveway, a great summer fun activity.

Skills: Fine Motor, creativity.

Wednesday

Roll the Ball-Sit on the floor a few feet from your child and demonstrate how to roll a large ball. Encourage them to roll it back and make a fun game of it. You can sing “roll, roll, roll the ball gently across the floor” instead of Row Your Boat.

Skills: Gross/Fine Motor, turn taking, language.

Dress Up-Before you donate those old hats, shoes, scarves & clothing to Good Will, make a dress up box for your child. Kids this age love wearing adult clothing and accessories and don't fret if your little boys want to join in too. You can also add safe jewelry and purses/backpacks.

Skills: Self-Help, dressing, imaginary play.

Movers & Shakers-Toddlers love making noise. Use old soda bottle, medicine jars, oatmeal boxes, etc and fill them with beans, rice, marbles, or anything that makes fun noise. Be sure to seal the boxes tightly because some of the small items may be choking hazards. Kids can decorate the sealed containers with paints or markers and then you can sing “Shake Your Sillies Out” and go to town making music.

Skills: Fine motor, wrist rotation, creativity, rhythm, music appreciation.

Thursday

Joint Attention-By now your child should be starting to gesture or point toward people or objects he wants or to show you something or gain your attention. She should also be following your gesture or point to look toward things you show her. For example, a child hear an airplane and looks around and then looks up and points to the sky. She may not be able to say “airplane” yet, but she is indicating to you that she sees the plane and wants you to know that she saw it, thus gaining your attention for what she is interested in. Or she is looking for her ball and you say, “Your ball is behind you” and you point toward her back and she looks around, finds the ball and then smiles at you, showing that she understands your gesture/words.

Skills: Cognitive, receptive/expressive language, joint attention, socialization.

Little Helper-Toddlers love helping their parents, so why not enlist them to remove clothes from the dryer, unload the dishwasher, wipe up spills, dust or sweep the floor. It's all good practice, makes them feel special and helps you out at the same time.

Skills: Gross/Fine Motor, Imitation, Language, Self-Help.

Sing & Do-Sing familiar and new songs with your child, especially songs with gestures. If you don't know the gestures, make them up! "Itsy Bitsy Spider", "Wheel on the Bus", "Old MacDonald" are a few. Encourage your child to sing along as best they can and to imitate the gestures.

Skills: Receptive/expressive language, imitation, motor planning.

Friday

Megaphone- Use empty paper towel or toilet tissue rolls and show your child how to put it against their mouth and speak, sing or make silly sounds.

Sometimes this greatly enhances a child's participation in sound making, speech imitation.

Skills: Receptive/expressive language, imitation.

Dump & Fill- Toddlers LOVE to dump and fill repeatedly, so provide them with varied containers and dump truck type vehicles to do so. They will help clean up, but probably as soon as everything goes into the box it will all be dumped out again!

Skills: Fine motor, grasp, release, wrist rotation.

Activities for 2-3 years old

Monday

Expand It-Toddlers are learning to use their vocabulary to build 2-3+ word phrases. When your child says “ball”, expand on that word by putting it in a simple sentence for him to hear and imitate, such as “A big, red ball”.

Skills: Receptive/expressive language.

Roll it, Pat It-Use store bought Play-Doh or make your own. Supply your child with a rolling pin, cookie cutters, spoons, bowls, etc. and encourage rolling of dough, pulling dough apart, making imaginary food, poking the dough with fingers, etc.

Skills: Fine motor, finger isolation, hand strength/dexterity, imaginative play, tactile/sensory exploration.

Give me ONE-Many parents focus on having their children count by rote memory to ten, but fail to teach the concept of a number. Use Cheerios or your child’s blocks and while teaching counting work on the concept of “one” by asking your child “can I have one block?” or “give me one Cheerio” and help him learn the concept of one out of many. When he understands one, you can move on to asking him to find two of out of many.

Skills: Concept of number, counting, receptive language.

Tuesday

What Do You Feel?-Use a small box or bag and place an object inside such as a block. Place the same block and a different object, such as cotton ball on the table. Have the child reach into the box/bag without looking and feel the object, then encourage him to look at the two objects on the table and tell you which one was inside the box/bag.

Skills: Sensory-tactile, memory, language.

Mailman- Use some junk mail or let your child scribble on paper and seal it in envelopes. Place a different sticker on the outside of each envelope and place them around the house. Give your child a backpack or fabric bag and ask him to go around the house collecting the letters. Using a Kleenex or empty shoebox, cut a hole in the top for your mailbox. Then ask the child to sort through his bag and “find the letter to the horse”, “find the letter to the sunshine”, etc. and encourage him to find the correct letter with the matching sticker and drop it into the mailbox.

Skills: Cognitive, attention, memory, receptive/expressive language, following directions, fine motor.

Sidewalk Chalk (bathtub chalk)-Use your sidewalk, patio or driveway as a place for your child to get creative with sidewalk chalk that washes off with water. If it's too cold, use bathtub chalk/paints to encourage creativity.

Skills: Fine motor, imitation, handedness, thumb & fingers grasp

Wednesday

Sing the Missing Word-By age 2 most toddlers are quite familiar with certain songs such as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" or "Old MacDonald". To help your child learn to sing these songs on his own & to encourage language, sing a familiar song and leave out a word for your child to fill in. For example, "twinkle, twinkle little____" and see if your child will spontaneously say "star" to fill in the missing word.

Skills: Language, memory, attention, rhythm/music.

Bead Stringing- No need to buy beads if you don't own a set. You can use dry rigatoni pasta or wagon wheel pasta and a shoestring or regular string to work on bead stringing. As a craft you can first color the pasta with paint or markers and later you can help your child sort colors or make patterns, but putting 2 green beads onto the string, then 2 red, etc.

Skills: Fine motor, cognitive, color matching/sorting/recognition, hand-eye coordination.

What's The Use?-Find some everyday objects that are familiar to your child and see if he can identify the objects by their function. Place a ball, spoon, cup and shoe out in front of him and ask "Which one do you put on your foot?" or "Which one do you drink out of?" and see if he can tell you the object and its function.

Skills: Cognitive, receptive/expressive language.

Thursday

Obstacle Course-Toddlers are developing balance & coordination skills & like to be active. Create an indoor obstacle course using pillow, stuffed toys, blankets, furniture or an outdoor course using old tires, logs, trikes, rocks, etc. Arrange objects so your child needs to crawl under, walk around, jump over, walk on and balance, slide, scoot, step, walk between, swing, etc.

Skills: Gross motor coordination, balance, motor planning, body in space awareness.

I Spy-Play this game inside or outside with your child encouraging him to find things that are familiar by saying “I spy something that flies” and see if he can find a bird, or “I spy something that drives on the road” and see if he points to his toy car.

Skills: Cognitive, attention, memory, receptive/expressive language.

Nature Walk-Take a walk around your neighborhood or local park in different seasons and talk about what you see/find with your child. Talk about trees, flowers, cars, people, anything and everything you see! Collect leaves or rocks & bring them home to make craft projects.

Skills: Gross Motor, cognitive, language.

Friday

Let's Pretend-Toddlers are starting to use imaginative play and this can be encouraged by staging imaginary play scenes for your child. Use dolls, action figures, stuffed animals and props like empty containers or pretend food/dishes & create scenarios for your child where you play alongside them having an imaginary tea party, imaginary baseball game, imaginary breakfast, etc.

Skills: Creativity, imagination, language, socialization.

Frogs on a Lily Pad-Help children learn to jump forward & side to side, by cutting out big green circular shapes & taping them to the floor a few inches apart. Tell your child he is a frog and needs to jump from one lily pad to the next without jumping into the water. As he gets better coordinated you can move the circles a bit farther apart.

Skills: Gross motor, jumping, coordination.

Let's Learn Colors-Use 4 large containers or laundry baskets and cut out a red, yellow, blue, green circle to tape on the front of each. Get balls in each of the 4 colors and make a game of throwing the same color ball into the same color basket.

Skills: Cognitive, color matching, language, gross motor, coordination.