

Language & Learning

Learning Through Play

Planning Play Can Add Richness And Variety To Your Baby's Development

Although babies do a lot of playing on their own, some of the time you can plan their play. If you choose activities and toys appropriate for your baby's age and development, you can create special playtimes that stimulate your baby's development of communication and thinking skills.

There are plenty of books that can give you ideas about what your baby might be able to do at various ages, including the following:

Your Baby's First Year Month by Month, by Alison Mackonochie, is an exciting mix of pictures and information.

Baby Tips: Baby's First Year, by Jeanne Murphy, serves up information in small, digestible bits, including many suggestions for play and toys.

Baby Games: The Joyful Guide to Child's Play from Birth to Three Years, by Elaine Martin, organizes games and toys by type and appropriate age.

Of course, most baby books are written for children with normal hearing in mind. But you can use the information for your own needs and those of your baby by following just a few, practical steps:

- Think about the language that normally accompanies play. The books usually include that part.
- Make as much of that language accessible as you can. Use your face and body, speak naturally and close to the child, learn the signs (if your baby is signing), quiet the environment and make sure the implant or hearing aid batteries are working. Use the language as you play. Give your baby opportunities to do the same. Try to be encouraging without being too demanding.
- Choose just a few toys at a time for special playtime and alternate them to keep the toys and the language interesting.
- Choose experiences and routines where games play a natural part.
- Provide a lot of repetition. Babies enjoy it.
- Provide variety by alternating experiences or by adding something very small that is new.

Your planning gives your deaf or hard of hearing baby wonderful opportunities to learn through play.