

## Language & Learning

### Learning Through Play

#### Play Is Learning

Babies spend lots of awake time exploring the world through play. To adults, it might look like the baby is “just playing around.” In fact, the baby is learning many new skills. For a baby, play is the best time for learning.

What is a baby learning while she mouths a toy or kicks her mobile over and over again? By the end of three months, a baby will make a little game of reaching and swatting at a mobile or hanging object. She discovers how to coordinate her hands and eyes to reach it. She learns that she can make the movement happen. These are big discoveries that stimulate her thinking skills. Let's look at some more examples...

	<p><i>Oh boy, when I get this off, I can chew on it and play with my toes!</i> <b>What does baby learn?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The feat of finding his feet! This takes coordination of the eyes and hands and problem solving.</li> <li>• A baby's mouth is a “touch center” that has lots of nerve endings. Mouthing tells a baby a lot about what he puts in his mouth</li> </ul>
	<p><i>How am I gonna get all these toys in the bucket? If I turn it over, can I dump them all out?</i> <b>What is he learning?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eye-hand coordination</li> <li>• Thinking skills as he solves new problems</li> <li>• That his actions cause things to happen</li> </ul>
	<p><i>If I pull my blanket over me, I bet somebody will play peek a boo with me!</i> <b>What does baby learn?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To start up games with others</li> <li>• That she can socialize with others</li> <li>• That she can take turns with family members playing “peek,” smiling and laughing.</li> <li>• Conversations are a game of taking turns too, so she is learning to take part in conversations.</li> <li>• That people are there even when she can't see them.</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Wow, I leaned over and picked this toy up. When I shake it, it makes sounds! I can do it again!</i> <b>What is he learning?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large muscle skills</li> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• That his actions cause things to happen</li> <li>• That if he tunes in and listens, he can hear the sounds with his hearing aids or cochlear implant</li> <li>• That people are there even when she can't see them.</li> </ul>

For all babies, play is chock full of learning opportunities. When a baby is deaf or hard of hearing, families can use play to encourage the three L's....

- Language
- Listening, Looking & Communicating
- Learning

The next sections will provide some guidance for the three Ls.