



Helping my child learn through play: 12-18 months

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Play ideas to help my child's development using purposeful and pretend play, exploration, imitation and first words

Play Idea

How does it help my baby?



Eating



Dressing a doll

Helping my child learn through doing everyday activities and imitating

- Encourage eating with a child's spoon and fork as well as fingers.
- Feeding others – this develops relational play and is important for language.
- Helping with everyday activities like sweeping the floor – it's great fun! Children learn by imitating and helping.
- Use simple instructions – 'Let's put this in the bin', 'Let's find your shoes', 'Let's put the shoes on teddy' - this develops pretend play and is fun.

Helping my child develop their physical skills



Having fun standing

- Move toys from the floor up onto a low soft surface such as a couch to develop pulling up to stand and standing - give as much help as needed.
- Encourage crawling over different surfaces on the floor such as cushions or crawling in play tunnels or empty cardboard boxes can be great fun.
- Balls are a lot of fun - practise rolling and throwing small, soft balls.
- If your child is able they will love playing on a few small steps climbing up and down – a safe way to learn about crawling with adult supervision and help.

Helping my child learn through using their hands and exploring



Pop up toy



Pulling apart



Building Blocks



Stacking

- Scribbling with crayons or pencils - develops hand skills.
- Pop up toy – great for fingers and eye-hand co-ordination.
- Building blocks
- Picking up small safe items like peas or Cheerios®.
- Use containers in the bath for pouring water from one to another.
- Hand preference may begin to emerge after 12 months.
- Use empty containers and bowls with lids – encourage taking off and putting on
- Place the shapes in the holes



Scribbling



Did you know? Young children of this age will imitate much of the world around them. They learn through their experiences in their environment; for example, feeding themselves. Reading stories and naming objects is a great way to develop their language skills.



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Helping my child develop attention, first words and social skills

- Aim to spend 10-15 minutes every day of special one to one time talking, playing and having fun together.
- Encourage imitating actions e.g. 'jump like the frog', 'bark like the dog'
- Use everyday gestures such as waving, clapping, all gone and finished.
- When reading add your own words such as 'Oh dear what's happened here - poor little bear!'
- Play games such as Peekaboo, Round and Round the Garden, This Little Piggy, and Incy Wincy Spider.
- Sing action songs: Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes, Wheels On The Bus.
- Encourage sharing and turn taking – 'give teddy a drink, give daddy a drink, now your turn!'
- Make sure your child observes you being kind and caring such as stroking the cat, feeding the teddy, comforting them when they hurt themselves.
- Have periods every day when **you** do not look at your phone when you are with your child. This shows them they have your full attention.

Building Skills

Learning to play with others



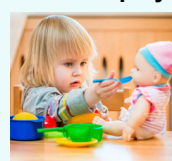
Your child will now become more interested in other children. Spending supervised time with other children helps develop social skills and interaction.

Repetition and practice



Children of this age love to repeat the same activity over and over - this is how they learn to master a skill. They will enjoy taking blocks in and out of a cup or shapes in and out. They may show preferences for books, toys, food and even clothing.

Pretend play



Show your child how to use toys and objects that imitate adult activities – feeding teddy with spoon, brushing hair, wiping face.

Keeping your baby safe



! Sit-in walkers have been shown to delay walking and are dangerous due to accidental tipping. Health professionals advise only to use push-along walkers.



Supporting Social-Emotional Development

- Always respond to your child when they cry as it's their way of telling you how they feel.
- Try to work out what the problem is.
- The quicker you respond to your child the less time they will spend in a crying state, this helps them cry less and feel more content.
- You cannot spoil your child by offering them comfort when they are upset.
- Build confidence by giving lots of cuddles, attention and praise.

Did you know? The importance of Real Life interaction

Screen time has been shown in many studies to be associated with delayed language development and attention difficulties. Avoid screen time for young children. Children this age learn through real life interactions.

