Activities for Infants 12-16 Months Old

Babies love games at this age (Pat-a-Cake, This Little Piggy). Try different ways of playing the games and see if your baby will try it with you. Hide behind furniture or doors for Peekaboo; clap blocks or pan lids for Pat-a-cake.	Make puppets out of a sock or paper bag—one for you and one for your baby. Have your puppet talk to your baby or your baby's puppet. Encourage your baby to "talk" back.	To encourage your baby's first steps, hold your baby in standing position, facing another person. Have your baby step toward the other person to get a favorite toy or treat.	Give your baby containers with lids or different compartments filled with blocks or other small toys. Let your baby open and dump. Play "putting things back." This will help your baby learn how to release objects where he wants them.	Loosely wrap a small toy in a paper towel or facial tissue without tape. Your baby can unwrap it and find a surprise. Use tissue paper or wrapping paper, too. It's brightly colored and noisy.
Babies enjoy push and pull toys. Make your own pull toy by threading yogurt cartons, spools, or small boxes on a piece of yarn or soft string (about 2 feet long). Tie a bead or plastic stacking ring on one end for a handle.	Tape a large piece of drawing paper to a table. Show your baby how to scribble with large nontoxic crayons. Take turns making marks on the paper. It's also fun to paint with water.	Arrange furniture so that your baby can work her way around a room by stepping across gaps between furniture. This encourages balance in walking.	Babies continue to love making noise. Make sound shakers by stringing canning rims together or filling medicine bottles (with child-proof caps) with different-sounding objects like marbles, rice, salt, bolts, and so forth. Be careful to secure lids tightly.	This is the time your baby learns that adults can be useful! When your baby "asks" for something by vocalizing or pointing, respond to his signal. Name the object your baby wants and encourage him to communicate again—taking turns with each other in a "conversation."
Play the naming game. Name body parts, common objects, and people. This lets your baby know that everything has a name and helps her begin to learn these names.	Make an obstacle course with boxes or furniture so that your baby can climb in, on, over, under, and through. A big box can be a great place to sit and play.	Let your baby help you clean up. Play "feed the wastebasket" or "give it to Mommy or Daddy."	Make a surprise bag for your baby to find in the morning. Fill a paper or cloth bag with a soft toy, something to make a sound, a little plastic jar with a screw-top lid, or a book with cardboard pages.	Play "pretend" with a stuffed animal or doll. Show and tell your baby what the doll is doing (walking, going to bed, eating, dancing across a table). See if your baby will make the doll move and do things as you request. Take turns.
Cut up safe finger foods (do not use foods that pose a danger of your baby's choking) in small pieces and allow your baby to feed himself. It is good practice to pick up small things and feel different textures (bananas, soft crackers, berries).	Let your baby "help" during daily routines. Encourage your baby to "get" the cup and spoon for mealtime, to "find" shoes and coat for dressing, and to "bring" the pants or diaper for changing. Following directions is an important skill for your baby to learn.	Your baby is learning that different toys do different things. Give your baby a lot of things to roll, push, pull, hug, shake, poke, turn, stack, spin, and stir.	Most babies enjoy music. Clap and dance to the music. Encourage your baby to practice balance by moving forward, around, and back. Hold her hands for support, if needed.	Prepare your baby for a future activity or trip by talking about it beforehand. Your baby will feel like a part of what is going on rather than being just an observer. It may also help reduce some fear of being "left behind."

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Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

12–16 months

Your baby's babbling is beginning to sound more like talking. He says "mama" and really means it. He also is beginning to learn the names of things. He may say "no" if he is not happy. Because he's so busy learning to walk, his language use may slow down a bit. He may combine a word with pointing or using his hand to gesture, but you know very well what he means.

Hide the Noises

Show your baby two things that make noise, such as a squeak toy, a set of measuring spoons, keys on a ring, or a rattle. Let baby play with them for a while, then hide the items under a box or cloth and make a noise with one. Take the cloth off and ask baby, "Which one made the noise?" See if she can guess.

Quiet Time

On weekends or at a time that's not busy, spend time with baby in a quiet place with no music and no television (perhaps outside). Talk to your baby about what you're doing or about what baby is doing. Let your baby hear your voice and see your face making words. Talk calmly and tell baby how special he is. When your baby talks, encourage him. Have a conversation.

Rhythm Clapping

While listening to music, show baby how to move and clap in rhythm. Your baby will enjoy moving to the beat. Play different types of music, such as rock, country, hip-hop, funk, electronic, pop, or classical. Be sure to keep the volume down. Those sweet ears have to last a long time!

Listening on the Phone

When Uncle or Grandpa calls, ask him to spend a few minutes talking to baby. Baby probably won't talk back yet, but she will be delighted to hear someone's voice coming through the phone.

Big Talk

While you do housework or get a meal together, talk to your baby about what you are doing. Encourage your little one to use two words together to make baby sentences, such as "Help me" or "More juice." This big language step will grow into a lot of talk.

Little Reader

Read to your baby every day. Snuggle up and make this a special time. Point to pictures and name things for her. Sometimes ask her to find something: "Where's the cat? Oh, here it is." She may need a little help from you at first.

Big Helper

Your baby can be a big helper. Give him simple directions: "Can you get me a napkin?" or "Give me your shirt, please." He may need you to point or help a little. Say, "What a big help. Thanks!"

Notes:

Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.

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Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

Baby is using fingers with more skill now. He will point with his index finger and can pick up tiny bits of cereal with his thumb and finger. He can hold and mark with a crayon or washable marker and grasp small objects, such small blocks or other small toys.

Budding Artist

Let baby draw a picture for you with a crayon and a large piece of paper. Give baby plenty of room. She may only make a few marks, but give a lot of praise: "Look at the picture you made!" Be sure to put the crayon away when you are finished. Your baby doesn't yet know that you only want marks on the paper.

Ball Toss

Encourage your baby to practice throwing a small, soft ball. A rolled up pair of socks works just fine. Have him stand in one spot and throw the ball. Try again and see how far it goes. At first, he may need you to show him how to throw the ball. Say, "Wow, look how far it went!"

Carton Construction

Save different sizes of paper cereal boxes or juice boxes to use for blocks. Show baby how to stack them, then knock them down. Line them up to make a wall and then knock them down again: "What fun to knock them all down!"

Tacky Tape

Make a small wad of masking tape with the sticky side out. Give this to baby to play with. It is very entertaining and will give baby some good finger exercise.

Squeezing

Give baby a sponge, washcloth, or sponge ball to play with in the bath. Show baby how to squeeze the water out. You might also let baby play with plastic squirt toys. That's really fun!

Fill and Dump

Give baby a container or box and a few items such as clothespins, spoons, and small cars. Make sure the items are big enough that they can't be swallowed. Show baby how to put them all in the container, then dump them out again. The next day, change the container or the objects. Make this activity a bit more challenging by choosing a container with a smaller opening.

Library Time

Find a time every 2 weeks or so to go to a library or bookstore. Pick out new books with your child. Cuddle every day and read together. Read the story, talk about pictures, and let her take turns pointing to pictures and turning pages. What a special time together!

Notes:

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Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

By now your busy baby can move around the house quickly. She may be standing by herself, walking while holding onto furniture, or walking well on her own. She will try to climb up steps, so your watchful eye is very important. Baby loves to push and pull things and is getting stronger every day.

Let's Go for a Walk

Your baby will love going for walks and seeing new things. Talk to her about what you are seeing. In an open area, let baby push her own stroller. She will enjoy the feeling of power as she moves something big all by herself. Be sure to watch that she keeps the stroller where it is safe.

Row the Boat

Let your child experience rocking on a rocking horse or in a chair. Sit him on your lap and use your body to rock back and forth. Play with him sitting opposite you on the floor. Hold hands and gently pull and push him to and from you. Sing a little song, such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," while you rock back and forth.

Moving Day

Give your baby a box large enough to push while standing. Show her how to fill it with a few toys, small cartons, or boxes. Let her push these things around the room from one area to another. She may want to take everything out. If so, show her how to put it all back in again!

Have a Ball

Your baby will enjoy playing with balls. You can sit across from him and roll a ball to him. Encourage him to roll it back. Clap your hands when he does. If the ball is big and soft (e.g., beach ball with some of the air out), he may be able to "catch" it by stopping it when it gets to him.

Finger Walk

Take a little walk with baby holding on to your finger. Baby can choose to hold on or to let go. Talk to baby about what you see and where you're going: "Let's walk over to those plants. Let's walk down the hall. You're a good walker!"

Dance Party

Play some fun dancing music and show baby how to dance! Wiggle and turn, clap, and stomp your feet. Try lots of different kinds of music. Wave around some scarves and ribbons. Get other family members to join in. Have a dance party.

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Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

Your sociable baby likes to roll the ball and play Peekaboo or other games with you. He needs to know you are nearby. He actually likes to be the center of attention now! He will show you great affection but may collapse into a tantrum when things don't go his way. He is proud of his new skills, and he wants to learn how to do things by himself.

Happy Hats

Your baby may enjoy trying on different hats and looking at herself in the mirror. Make a dress-up box with a few hats. As your child gets older, you can add new things now and then.

Help Me Clean

Your baby can help do small jobs, such as wiping the table with a sponge, stirring pancake mix (with your help), or sweeping up a little dirt with a small broom. He will enjoy doing something special for you. Give him opportunities to be a helper, and let him know he is being helpful.

Brushing Teeth

Give baby her own toothbrush. Let her see you or her siblings brushing their teeth. Put a tiny dab of toothpaste (without fluoride) on the brush so baby can taste it. Don't expect much brushing. She will probably chew the bristles as she learns about this new thing, and you may need to finish for her. Be sure to cover baby's toothbrush and store it in a clean, safe place until next time.

To Market, To Market

Take baby to the supermarket with you so baby can "help." Talk about all of the colors and smells. Let baby hold something, such as a small can or a lemon. At the checkout, let baby "pay" the cashier. What a good helper!

Find Me!

At home, play Hide and Seek by hiding just behind a door, calling to baby, then peeking out so you can be found. A sibling may have fun playing this game. It helps baby understand that when you disappear, you will come back.

Bathing Baby

When bathing baby, let him bathe a small plastic doll. Show baby how to be gentle with the doll. Later, let him dry and hug the doll. It will teach him to be loving.

Cleanup Time

Ask baby to help you put the toys away. You will need a box with a safe cover or a shelf where toys should be placed. Show baby how to pick up the toys and where to put them. Keep this task easy and brief right now. It's a good idea to do it together and have fun: "What a good helper!"

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Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

Your baby is a busy explorer. She enjoys holding, stacking, and playing with toys. She is learning her body parts and can probably point to at least one if you ask her. She enjoys books and will "pat" her favorite picture. She may try to help turn pages in a book. She enjoys learning about how things work.

Fill the Bank

Make a money bank out of a large can or a plastic container. Cut a long slit in the plastic cover about a half-inch wide. Cut circles from cardboard to use as "money" and show your baby how to put these "coins" into the bank.

Water Painting

Give your baby a clean paintbrush and a small bucket of plain water. On a sunny day, go outside and let your child paint the walls, sidewalk, or fence with water. Your child will enjoy this "painting." Then you can watch it dry and paint again. Try this inside with a small paintbrush and a brown paper bag. Watch the painting disappear!

Problem Solving

Let your baby figure out how things work and what they do. Show baby how the switch turns the light on and off. Show him how the flashlight works. Talk to him about what you are doing and why: "I'm putting on a coat because I am cold."

Little Hunter

During quiet times, ask your baby to find the blanket or to get a book from another room. Ask her to get things she cannot see at the time. She might need a little help. When baby is successful, be sure to say, "Thank you. You found it."

Matching Game

Children this age are just beginning to notice when two things are alike, especially shoes, socks, or other objects they know. Hold up one of baby's shoes or a sock. Ask baby, "Where's the other one just like this?" Help baby make the match: "Yes, these two are the same."

Copy Me

Play a game with your baby. You do something and then try to get baby to imitate you. Clap your hands. If he tries to imitate you, say, "Look, you can clap, too!" Touch your nose, stick out your tongue, and say, "You try." When he does something new, imitate him. Be silly and have fun.

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