Activities for Infants 8–12 Months Old

Let your baby feed himself. This gives your baby practice picking up small objects (cereal, cooked peas) and also gives him experience with textures in his hands and mouth. Soon your baby will be able to finger feed an entire meal.	Your baby will be interested in banging objects to make noise. Give your baby blocks to bang, rattles to shake, or wooden spoons to bang on containers. Show your baby how to bang objects together.	A good pastime is putting objects in and out of containers. Give your baby plastic containers with large beads or blocks. Your baby may enjoy putting socks in and out of the sock drawer or small cartons (Jell-O, tuna or soup cans) on and off shelves.	Mirrors are exciting at this age. Let your baby pat and poke at herself in the mirror. Smile and make faces together in the mirror.	Your baby will begin using his index fingers to poke. Let your baby poke at a play telephone or busy box. Your baby will want to poke at faces. Name the body parts as your baby touches your face.
Put toys on a sofa or sturdy table so that your baby can practice standing while playing with the toys.	Find a big box that your baby can crawl in and out of. Stay close by and talk to your baby about what she is doing. "You went in! Now you are out!"	Read baby books or colorful magazines by pointing and telling your baby what is in the picture. Let your baby pat pictures in the book.	Play hide-and-seek games with objects. Let your baby see you hide an object under a blanket, diaper, or pillow. If your baby doesn't uncover the object, just cover part of it. Help your baby find the object.	Play ball games. Roll a ball to your baby. Help your baby, or have a partner help him roll the ball back to you. Your baby may even throw the ball, so beach balls or Nerf balls are great for this game.
Turn on a radio or stereo. Hold your baby in a standing position and let your baby bounce and dance. If your baby can stand with a little support, hold her hands and dance like partners.	Play imitation games like Peekaboo and So Big. Show pleasure at your baby's imitations of movements and sounds. Babies enjoy playing the same games over and over.	Let your baby play with plastic measuring cups, cups with handles, sieves and strainers, sponges, and balls that float in the bathtub. Bath time is a great learning time.	Play Pat-a-Cake with your baby. Clap his hands together or take turns. Wait and see if your baby signals you to start the game again. Try the game using blocks or spoons to clap and bang with.	Your baby will play more with different sounds like "la-la" and "da-da." Copy the sounds your baby makes. Add a new one and see if your baby tries it, too. Enjoy your baby's early attempts at talking.
Make a simple puzzle for your baby by putting blocks or Ping-Pong balls inside a muffin pan or egg carton.	You can make a simple toy by cutting a round hole in the plastic lid of a coffee can. Give your baby wooden clothes pins or Ping-Pong balls to drop inside.	Say "hi" and wave when entering a room with your baby. Encourage your baby to imitate. Help your baby wave to greet others. Waving "hi" and "bye" are early gestures.	Let your baby make choices. Offer two toys or foods and see which one your baby picks. Encourage your baby to reach or point to the chosen object. Babies have definite likes and dislikes!	New places and people are good experiences for your baby, but these can be frightening. Let your baby watch and listen and move at her own speed. Go slowly. Your baby will tell you when she is ready for more.

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Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

8–12 months

Your baby now has many different sounds and a lot to say. She likes to play with sounds, such as "ba ba ba," and is learning that some sounds mean special people, such as "dada" and "papa." She understands some words and directions now and will soon say the names of familiar people or things.

Following Directions

Help your baby learn to listen and follow simple directions. Try simple directions, such as "Show me Grandma," "Wash your tummy," or "Hold the diaper." When baby responds or follows the direction, be sure to let him know you notice: "Oh, there's Grandma" or "Thank you for holding the diaper."

Grocery Time Is Learning Time

When you go to the food market, talk to baby about what she is seeing. Let her hold a small box or a piece of fruit. Point out signs in the store and read them to your baby: "That sign says *apples*. Let's get some nice red apples."

The Phone Game

Talk to your baby on a play phone or an old cell phone. Be sure to remove the battery before giving it to baby. When there are two phones, you can both "talk," even though baby may only make her baby sounds or pretend to listen. Your baby will have fun carrying on a conversation just like big people.

Sleep Waltz

At naptime or bedtime, hold your baby close and dance together to some quiet music. Your baby has probably spent a lot of time exploring during the day. Now she needs some cuddling. This communicates to baby a feeling of closeness and intimacy.

Just My Voice

When baby is awake and alert, turn off the television and other household sounds so that he only hears your voice. This helps baby hear the sounds of words more clearly. Hum and sing just for baby's pleasure. Ask baby, "Can you hear a bird? Can you hear the rain?"

Baby Babble Game

When your baby makes a sound, such as "ba," repeat the sound back: "Ba ba ba." Your baby will enjoy playing with sounds and making conversation.

Applause, Applause

When baby does something new or fun, give baby a hand. Clap and say, "Yeah!" Baby will love the attention and may start to clap, too!

Reading Fun

Read to your baby every day. Cuddle up, get close, and make this a special time together. Point to pictures in books or ask her to find something: "Where's the kitty? Where are baby's socks?"

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

8–12 months

Your busy baby is beginning to pick up tiny bits of food with her thumb and forefinger. She can take things out of a container, such as spoons out of a plastic bowl, and can bang two toys together. If you give her a crayon and paper, she may even attempt to imitate your writing with a scribble.

Feely Game

In a cardboard box, collect things to feel, hold, and bang. Good items might include an empty plastic bottle, a toothbrush, and a little shoe. Let baby reach into the box to grab something and pull it out to show you. Talk about what he is holding. This exercise for little muscles also helps baby explore how different things feel.

Find the Feet

With baby sitting on the floor or the bed, drop a towel or small blanket over baby's feet. Ask baby, "Where are your feet?" Let baby pull off the blanket and show you her feet: "Hooray! There they are." Then play it again!

Catcher's Up

Use a small, soft ball (or make a ball out of socks rolled together) and play catch with your baby. He won't be able to really catch the ball yet, but he will enjoy trying to throw it and chase after it.

Tearing

Get a big basket or box and put some old magazines and wrapping paper inside. Let your baby tear what she wants. If she is more interested in putting wads of paper in her mouth, put the box away and try again in a few weeks.

Sticks and Stones

Take a walk outside. Encourage your baby to pick up items, such as stones, twigs, and leaves. Put them in a pail or paper bag. Talk about the color or the size: "Look, this big leaf is nice!"

Goodies in a Jar

Put small pieces of cereal in a screw-top or snap-top plastic container. Put the lid on loosely. Let baby take the lid off. You may have to show your baby how to take the lid off and get the cereal. Soon he will do it by himself.

Bedtime Book Time

A great way to get ready for bed is to snuggle up and read books with your baby. Let her pick a few books and help turn the pages. Talk about the pictures and ask her to point to things she sees. Enjoy your special time.

Notes:

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Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

This is a very active period for your baby. He's now pulling up on furniture, crawling and creeping into places he couldn't reach before, and getting ready to walk. In fact, he will probably walk holding on to your hand and attempt a few steps without your help. Baby is on the move!

Money in the Bank

Save large lids from jars to use as "money." Now that your baby can sit on her own, let her put these round things into a clean container. Then shake the container and make a great noise. Dump them out and put the "money" in the bank again.

Kick, Kick

When you are changing your baby's diaper or getting him ready for bed, play this game. As your baby kicks his legs, sing in rhythm to the kicking. When your baby stops kicking, stop singing. When he starts again, start singing. This will develop into a fun game of stop and go. Your baby not only exercises his muscles, but he gets to be the boss.

Reaching for Fun

If your baby is pulling herself to a standing position, put some of her favorite toys on a low table and let her stretch way out to reach them. This will give her practice with reaching and balancing. She will also be learning about ideas such as near and far.

Rain, Rain in the Tub

Get a small empty plastic container, put some holes in it, and let your baby fill it with water during bath time. Help him to hold it up and discover "rain" for himself while you supervise.

Walking Practice

Once your baby has started to walk, she will want to practice a lot. Show her how to hold on to a lightweight but stable chair or stool and push it around the room. Sturdy cardboard boxes also make great push toys. Let your baby push things indoors and outside.

Tunneling

While folding laundry, throw a blanket or sheet over a table or the backs of two chairs. Let your little explorer crawl into the "tunnel." When he's out of sight, call him. Then, greet him with surprise when he finds you: "Oh, there you are!"

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. Always stay with baby when he is in water.

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Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

Your baby may fear strangers and want only you. She loves to explore her environment and needs your watchful eye to keep her safe. She knows her likes and dislikes and shows love for you and even favorite toys. She can help you dress her by holding up a foot for a sock or pushing her arm into a sleeve, but she is not ready to dress herself independently.

Bath-Time Helper

When your baby is taking a bath, give her the washcloth. Encourage her to wash by herself. After the bath, let your baby help herself get dressed by pushing her arm through her nightshirt. Be patient; these self-help skills take a lot of time and practice. Be sure to give her lots of praise: "What a good job you did getting dressed!"

Follow Me

Your baby is learning to enjoy imitation. Encourage this by showing your baby how to play Follow the Leader. Use simple movements, such as tapping on the table or putting a hat on your head. Talk about what you are doing. Say, "It's your turn," and see if your baby will follow along. Let your baby have a turn at being the leader.

Party Time

Your baby may enjoy watching older children play, especially when he has older brothers or sisters. If there are other babies his age in the neighborhood, he will enjoy playing alongside them. At first, they will enjoy watching each other. Eventually, they will learn to play together.

Little Helper

Give your baby a damp sponge. Let her wipe the table, chairs, floor, walls, and doors—whatever she can reach. She may enjoy doing this while you are getting dinner ready or washing dishes. Baby won't really clean anything but will feel proud of doing things "just like mommy." Tell baby, "Thank you for helping Mommy (or Daddy)."

Snack Time

Your baby will enjoy feeding himself during snack time. Give him a few choices of simple foods such as crackers, pieces of fruit, or bits of cereal. He'll even enjoy trying to drink out of an open cup with a little help.

Mirror, Mirror

When you have a moment at home or while running errands, stop and encourage your baby to look at her face in a mirror. Make silly faces. Tell her what a big girl she is getting to be!

Roly-Poly Game

While sitting on the floor, roll a small ball to baby, and then ask him to roll it back. Now do it again. Then do it just a little faster! This is a fun game to play with an older sister or brother.

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. Remember to always supervise baby during bath time and mealtime.

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Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn

As baby learns how things work, he will be busy taking them apart. He can take pieces out of a puzzle or rings off a stack. He is learning how to find hidden objects under a blanket. He enjoys looking at pictures in a book and enjoys when you name the pictures. He's been so busy exploring that he probably now knows the word *no*.

Rhythm Play

Give your baby spoons to drum on a table or a pot. Clap blocks or sticks together to make sounds. Sing along and dance a little. Enjoy the music!

Scarf Play

Tie several colorful scarves together. Insert one end into a cardboard tube. Let your baby pull the scarves through the tube. Now see if your baby can stuff the scarves back into the tube.

Listen and Find

Hide a ticking clock or a toy that makes sounds under a pillow or blanket. Let your baby listen to find the sound: "Do you hear it? Where is it? Can you find it?"

A Third Toy

Give your baby a toy or object when she is holding something in each hand. See if she can figure out a way to take the third item and hold on to all three. If this is too difficult for your baby right now, try it again in a few weeks.

In and Out

Put a piece of cereal inside a clear plastic container or bottle without a lid. As your baby works to get the cereal out, he will learn more about inside and outside. Another way to show baby *inside* and *outside* is to get a big box that your baby can crawl into and out of.

Little Laughs *(about 11 months)*

Your baby is beginning to develop a sense of humor. Do something funny, such as trying to put baby's sock on your foot or putting a clean pair of pants on your head. She just might giggle or laugh out loud! Funny Mommy! Silly Daddy!

Lift the Cup

Place a cup and a small toy on a tray for baby. Hide the toy under the cup and ask, "Where is the toy?" If he doesn't find it, lift the cup and show your baby where it is. Say, "You found it!" Do this several times. Soon he will lift the cup and find the toy all by himself. Later, add another cup. See if baby can remember which cup hides the toy.

Notes:

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