



Playing and talking is a joint resource produced by Talk To Your Baby and the National Association of Toy & Leisure Libraries



Talk To Your Baby

## Playing and talking

**Play helps children learn about themselves and the world around them and is an important way to develop early communication and social skills. Regular play is a simple and easy way to benefit your baby, and for both of you to have fun together.**

Babies are born to be sociable and love to interact. Play is a natural way of developing their communication and social skills. It is enjoyable for babies and adults and helps them to bond.

**TIP** As a parent, you are your baby's favourite playmate. Make time every day for regular play – in the bath, in the park or in the shops.

A newborn baby will show her enjoyment of play by gurgling, smiling or kicking. Her facial expression will tell you just how much she is enjoying herself.

**TIP** Blow on her face, tickle her tummy, sing her a song, tell her a story and add some actions.

Toddlers will initiate play themselves, often returning to their favourite game over and over. The simplest toys can give the greatest pleasure, and they help develop imagination, creativity and confidence.

**TIP** Make time for unstructured play. Save safe household items, such as cardboard boxes, pasta or sand, for play items. Allow him to play freely and join in his games.

Play is great for language development as it helps children learn the names of people and objects in context. It also helps them learn to listen.

**TIP** Talk about people and objects. Speak slowly and repeat the names. Make sounds to go with what is happening, such as brmm, brmm for a car. Give her time to respond.



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During play, children learn to make choices and to express their preferences and needs. This builds their awareness of themselves, others and the world around them.

**TIP** Present her with simple choices. Hold up two cuddly toys, or leave a variety of materials for her to choose from.

By playing with your baby, you are showing him how interested you are in him. This helps build his self esteem.

**TIP** Listen to what he tells you during play, and respond. Praise and encourage him.

Toddlers love to play with adults and other children. Games are a great conversation starter and can help overcome shyness. By playing with others, children learn about turn-taking, sharing and social interaction.



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**TIP** Encourage family members and friends to play too. Grandparents, siblings, cousins and babysitters all make great play mates.

Sometimes children like to play quietly by themselves. Too much time alone is not advisable, but it is important that children learn independence. She may enjoy some quiet time with a favourite toy or book.

**TIP** Give her time to herself if she wants it. Try to limit time spent in front of the TV. Keep her favourite toys close by.

When play is fun, learning happens naturally. The fewer rules, the better.

**TIP** Don't set learning goals. Allow some disorganisation and mess. Take your lead from him, and follow where he wants to go.