

Happy Social Play

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Nothing is more important to a baby than the close attention of a loving parent. Parents who interact and play with their babies help them gain social skills, independence and confidence.

Happy social play has an essential role in building self-esteem, confidence, creativity, imagination, language, problem solving skills and knowledge of the world. It is also a vital component for intellectual and physical development and an important step in helping babies learn about the subtleties of human interaction. All babies need to spend time in close contact with the people closest to them in order to develop to their full potential.

There are a wealth of things that parents can do to enrich their baby's play and learning. The following parent-baby activities are fun and thoroughly recommended:

- Spend time playing on the floor with your baby.
- Encourage tummy time during waking hours to strengthen neck and back muscles.
- Encourage your baby to reach for toys.
- Give your baby a massage.
- Play bouncing games to help your baby develop balance and coordination skills.
- Sing songs and rhymes that encourage participation and turn-taking through clapping and body actions.
- Play peek-a-boo games.
- Encourage eye-tracking skills with colourful scarves and ribbons.
- Cuddle up and share a book with your baby.
- Interact with your baby through dance and music.
- Take your baby swimming.
- Praise and applaud your baby for any new skill achieved.

Parents who interact with their babies in a fun, active and purposeful way, build long-lasting relationships with them. Showing an interest in what they are doing and praising them for their achievements, no matter how small they may appear to be, will lead learning and development forwards. Babies also stand a much better chance of developing into happy, confident and successful learners.