

Parenting News & Views



READ TO ME!

Reading books with your child will improve their language, help your child develop the ability to pay attention, and spark their curiosity to learn. If you have a young infant or toddler, choose board books, books made out of cloth, or vinyl (plastic) books. These books are sturdier than regular paper which makes them safer and easier to handle around young children. Visit your local library to check out books for your child and take advantage of their free story time programs. Look for the following books at the library, or ask the Children's Librarian to help you choose books for your child.

- *Close Your Eyes* by Kate Banks
- *Corduroy* by Don Freeman
- *Crocodile Beat* by Gail Jorgensen
- *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell
- *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Goodnight, Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann
- *Gossie* by Olivier Dunrea
- *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney
- *In the Tall, Tall, Grass* by Denise Fleming
- *Kitten's First Full Moon* by Kevin Henkes
- *Pat the Bunny* by Dorothy Kunhardt
- *Peek-a-boo!* by Roberta Grobel Intrater
- *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle



THE WAY BABIES LEARN

Infants use the senses they were born with to learn and to understand the world around them. For example, when you hold a new toy out to your infant what happens? Chances are the child will gaze at the object for a moment, then reach for it, grasp it, wave it around in the air, stick it in his mouth, look at it again, bang it on the floor a few times, and then start the same thing all over again. Are they really learning when they do this? Yes!

Infants are sensorimotor learners. This means that everything an infant knows or learns comes from their senses and from their movement. Infants are naturally curious about the people and things in their world. They absorb information about the things in their world from how objects feel, smell, sound, or taste. They use movements like squeezing, holding, throwing, kicking, or mouthing to explore the things around them. They will repeat the same actions, sounds, or experiences because the repetition helps them anchor information in their memory.

It may not always look like they are learning, but all of these experiences help build a baby's cognitive, or intellectual development. Cognitive development is the ability to understand cause and effect, spatial relationships (where one object is in relationship to another), problem solving, imitation, memory, number sense, classification (organizing things by the way they look, feel, sound, or smell), symbolic play (using toys to represent real objects), attention maintenance (being able to focus on an activity), and personal care routines.

There are many toys and activities that support the cognitive development of your infant or toddler. For example, shape sorting boxes, stacking rings, and balls inside boxes help infants practice their understanding of spatial relationships, sizes, patterns, and volume. Using simple musical instruments or action toys (toys with buttons, levers, slides, and latches) can give infants and toddlers the chance to explore the concept of cause and effect. You can also use items you have around the house to help your baby develop thinking skills. [continued on back](#)

IN THIS ISSUE

Recipes	2
Fun with Kids	2
Just for Parents	3

PEANUT BUTTER-BANANA SPIRALS

Children love to help prepare food; even young toddlers can help you make snacks or meals. They can bring you canned goods from low shelves, tear lettuce, pour in measured ingredients, and stir mixtures. Let your child help prepare this fun protein snack.

- 3 tablespoons low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 2 tablespoons reduced-fat peanut butter
- 1 1/2 teaspoons orange juice
- 1 small banana, sliced
- 1 (8-inch) whole-wheat flour tortilla
- 1 1/2 teaspoons honey-crunch wheat germ
- Dash of ground cinnamon

Combine the yogurt and peanut butter, stirring the mixture until it is smooth.

Slice the banana and drizzle orange juice over the slices, tossing them gently until they are coated. Spread the peanut butter mixture over the tortilla, leaving a 1/2-inch border.

Arrange the banana slices, in a single layer, over the peanut butter mixture.

Sprinkle wheat germ and cinnamon over the banana slices. Roll up the tortilla and cut it into three pieces.

Your toddler can help by arranging the banana slices on top of the peanut butter mixture and by sprinkling the wheat germ over the banana slices.

Source: adapted from www.myrecipes.com



FUN WITH KIDS

LESSONS FROM NATURE

Infants and toddlers are naturally curious, and time outside in nature can enhance their cognitive development. Nature offers young children the opportunity to explore spatial relationships, sizes, patterns, volume, and cause and effect. All of these experiences help infants and toddlers build their cognitive development and critical thinking skills.

Take infants for walks where they can easily observe trees, flowers, birds, insects, rocks, and other natural objects. Observe what seems to catch their attention and talk to them about it. For example, “Ryan I see you are looking at that tree. Do you see how the leaves are moving? What could make the leaves move like that?” They may not respond verbally to your questions, but you are supplying them with new vocabulary when you talk to them, and you are showing them that you are interested in the things they see. This helps young children learn to think of you as a resource, and later on they will be the ones asking you questions.

It is important to closely supervise infants and toddlers when they play with nature objects, but once you have decided the items are safe, allow infants to explore them freely. Here are some of the many ways infants and toddlers can learn from nature:

- Go on a “nature walk” in your neighborhood or nearby park. Talk about the trees, flowers, and other nature items you see.
- Collect fallen leaves that are different sizes, shapes, and colors.
- Collect other natural items that toddlers can explore such as: large stones, large sea shells, twigs, pinecones, soil, mulch, grass, sand, coffee grounds, water, fruits, and vegetables. Always closely supervise the use of sensory materials, and if you are using fruits and vegetables let children taste them (when appropriate).
- Hang bird feeders in front of windows or play areas so that children can observe the birds in your area.
- Plant non-toxic herbs and flowers in your garden such as spearmint, mint, chives, rosemary, African violets, Boston fern, geraniums, Lucky bamboo, or hibiscus.
- Read books about nature that have realistic photos of plants, animals, and habitats in them.

WHY DOES MY BABY CRY?

Each baby is a unique person with likes, dislikes, needs, and wants. When a baby needs something he cries to get attention. When a parent hears their baby cry she will start going through the mental checklist of basic needs. Is the child hungry, tired, needs a diaper change, wants to be held? In most cases getting what is needed, along with a little cuddling, will stop the crying.

What about the baby who cries for hours and will not calm down? The first step is to check with a pediatrician to make sure the baby is not suffering from an illness or in pain. If the doctor determines there is no medical reason for the crying, then it is possible that your baby is going through what is called the period of PURPLE crying.

The period of PURPLE crying can begin when a baby is two weeks old and lasts up to four months. The acronym PURPLE describes the infant as being at the **P**eak of **U**nexpected crying that **R**esists soothing, has a look of **P**ain on his face, the crying is **L**ong-lasting (five hours or more), and most often happens in the **E**vening.

When an infant cries for long periods of time it can cause a parent to feel frustrated, angry, not capable, or unwanted. Just remember that you can be an excellent parent, do everything your doctor tells you to do, and your baby can still cry. This is normal. Your job is to make sure your baby has what he needs and to offer comfort.

You can develop an action plan for PURPLE crying that will support and comfort your baby, and will help you stay calm. Write your plan down, and post it where you can easily see it. Make a list of basic needs to check (food, diaper, illness), and then make a list of things you can do once those needs are met such as rocking, singing, putting the baby in a stroller and taking a walk, calling a friend or family member to come give you a break, or placing the baby on his back in an empty crib and stepping into another room to take a break.

Hang in there! Eventually your baby will learn to soothe himself and the crying will become less frequent. If you feel like you need help then talk to your doctor or visit www.purplecrying.info for more information.



AGENCY INFORMATION

For more than a century, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

To fulfill our mission, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, educational, and resource services, which include Community Education, Child Care and Development, and Family Resource Services. Along with helping children and their families, CHS is an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level.

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continued from page 1

For example, you can let your toddler play with empty boxes of different sizes like cereal, tissue, or other food boxes, or use plastic bowls and pots with wooden spoons to play music. Give your child plenty of time and space to explore.

The most important part of your infant's learning comes from the time spent with you. Make the most out of your time with infants and toddlers. Personal care routines such as eating, dressing, sleeping, changing diapers, and washing hands all offer opportunities for you to talk and interact with infants. Take your time with personal care routines and use those moments to strengthen your relationship with your child and to create an atmosphere of trust. When an infant feels safe with you, the child will be more likely to follow his natural curiosity and explore.

Infants learn about language and social relationships by interacting with you. Try singing simple songs like *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* or *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* with your baby, read simple story books, or look at picture books together. Say the names of new objects so that your baby learns what things are called, and talk to your infant about the things you see or hear. For example, "I hear you crying. Do you need something? Let's check and see." Talking to infants increases their understanding of language, builds vocabulary, and teaches them how to participate in conversations.

The most valuable things you can give your child are your time, affection, and attention. All three of these things help you build a strong and positive relationship with your baby. You are your baby's first, and most important, guide to learning. Each time you play with your infant, read books to your toddler, go for walks, and sing songs you are building a strong foundation for learning and success.

Source: *California Infant Toddler Curriculum Framework* by the California Department of Education (2012).



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