

MODULE 6

THE ART OF  
PARENTING

love, talk, play, read





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## KEY MESSAGES - why is this topic important for you?

- Children need a loving, secure and stimulating environment for their optimum growth and development. For this to happen, their physical, developmental, and emotional and psychosocial needs have to be met. As a home visitor you have opportunities to make both mothers and fathers more aware of these comprehensive needs.
- Positive relationships with parents, caregivers and other family members, as well as stimulating home environments shape the child's brain's architecture and influence development across all domains (physical, social/emotional, language and cognitive). During home visits, you can foster strong relationships between the parents/caregivers and the young child and the stimulating and safe environment young children need for exploration and learning.
- How families support the development of their children has the potential of having a greater impact on developmental outcomes than their socio-economic background. This means that you have opportunities during your home visits to provide families, especially the most vulnerable ones, with the support and information they need to give their children the best start in life, even in situations of social disadvantage.
- You can teach families about four important things they can do to nurture their young children: love, talk, read and play. Love is just as important as nutritious food for children's development. During your home visits, you can provide families with the knowledge and skills on how to talk, play and read with their children. You can convey to them how love, gentle touch, attention and understanding create strong relationships between parents and children and promote early learning and school readiness. You can explain how children learn through play, why reading is important and how talking with children builds their communication skills.
- During your home visits, empower fathers as well as mothers and build their confidence in parenting to become the best possible fathers for their child.



## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Describe essential aspects of positive parenting.
- Explain to families the importance of love, talk, read and play for child development.
- Give parents concrete suggestions of things that mothers and fathers can do at different stages of child development.

## INTRODUCTION

There is significant global evidence that shows that love and talking, reading and playing with babies and young children are essential for their being able to form positive relationships with others, enhance language development and teach the cognitive skills, social skills (how to relate to others in society), and executive functions (self-control, ability to sustain attention, etc.) that help children to be ready for school and achieve academically (Wave Trust, 2013). For example:

- When there is love between the parents or caregivers and the young child, with secure attachment, young children have the confidence to explore their environment and learn (see Module 4 on Falling in Love – Promoting Parent Child Attachment).
- When parents and caregivers create environments rich in spoken language, that is when they talk affectionately with their children, describe what is going on in their environment, and read to them, they have children that at age two have a more extensive receptive and expressive vocabulary. Language development at age two is strongly associated with school readiness (Wave Trust, 2013).
- When mothers and fathers talk to and engage face-to-face with their infants, they each independently contribute to greater social competence and reduced aggression in pre-school age children (Allen, Sarah PhD and Daly Kerry, PhD, May 2007).
- High father sensitivity, involvement in early childcare, play and literacy-related activities (reading) has been associated with secure attachment and greater academic achievement (early reading, math, grades), executive function, and social skills (see also Module 5 on Engaging Fathers) (Fatherhood Institute, 2014).
- While poverty often affects the development of young children and their chances in life negatively, research has shown that positive parenting can buffer children against the impact of poverty (Wave Trust, 2013). This is particularly true when families benefit from the support of available services, including home visiting.

Under The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), parents have the right and responsibility to give their child the best foundation they can by loving, talking, playing and reading to their child. The CRC asks governments to “provide appropriate assistance to parents in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities” (art. 18.2)” and “take all appropriate measures to enhance parents’ understanding of their role in their children’s early education, encourage child-rearing practices which are child-centred, encourage respect for the child’s dignity and provide opportunities for developing understanding, self-esteem and self-confidence.”

It further asks early childhood services to complement the parents’ role and develop services in partnership with them, “including through active cooperation between parents, professionals and others in developing ‘the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential’ - art. 29.1 (a) (A Guide to General Comment 7, 2006: 47).

In this module, we will focus on how during home visits, you can support mothers and fathers and other caregivers in concrete ways to fulfil this right and responsibility. You can assist families in creating positive learning environments for their children by talking and interacting, playing, and reading to them.

All these activities build on and strengthen the child’s relationship with the parent/s or caregiver (see Module 4 on Falling in Love – Promoting Parent Child Attachment). During your home visits, you can share with mothers, fathers, and other caregivers that when interactions are responsive, respectful, and responsive to the child’s initiatives to communicate, they are building the foundation for children’s learning and development.

During your home visits, you may also identify others in the family, such as grandparents, older siblings, extended family members or even caregivers in the community who may care for the child during the day. All of these people can contribute to the child's development while talking to, playing with, and reading to the child.

Parents should be made aware of the positive contributions that these people can make to their child's development and share with them some of the information you are providing.





## IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN



### Self-assessment – True/False Statements

Give true/false answers to the following questions:

- A. The development of the brain of the infant and young child depends on relationships.
- B. The mother's involvement during the early years is more important for children's later success in school, because fathers have less time for the young children.
- C. We are interacting with children when we are talking to them.
- D. Babies only become emotionally connected to parents or caregivers when they are about six months old.

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

**A. TRUE:** Research shows that early interactions and experiences affect how a child's brain is wired. The number and strength of connections in the child's brain depend on interactions, relationships, and experiences (i.e., love, talk, play, and read). Positive relationships are built on the responsive, respectful and reciprocal interactions that mothers, fathers, and other caregivers have with their infants and young children. This is of course true for people of all ages: Whenever interactions with others are responsive, reciprocal, and respectful, we develop positive relationships with those people, experience wellbeing, and grow and learn. If interactions with others are negative, we tend to withdraw and learning is affected. When young children withdraw or shut down, it places their development at risk.

**B. FALSE:** Research has shown that both, mothers and fathers, independently contribute to children's developmental achievements. Strong associations have been found for literacy, numeracy, as well as social and executive function skills when fathers are fully engaged with their infants and young children. If the father is not present, other men in the family can fulfil this important role in the child's development.

**C. TRUE:** However, interactions are more than just talking. Even when infants do not talk yet, they are able to interact and communicate their needs, preferences, interests, and desire to socialize. It is essential for development that these interactions are reciprocal and transactional, i.e., the adult is attuned and responds sensitively to the child's cues and initiatives to sustain the communication.

**D. FALSE:** Babies are connected to us emotionally from birth. They are born with the ability to capture perceptions and develop a sense of shared experience. What begins at birth as basic imitation and mirroring of face-to-face exchanges with the mother, father, or caregiver, rapidly becomes a more sophisticated "give-and-take" or "serve-and-return", where the infant initiates and invites a response, the adult responds, and the infant responds back.



### Important points

This topic is important for working with families because during your home visits, you can observe if parents and caregivers are responsive and attuned to their young children or if they might need some help. Particularly, with very young infants, during your first visits, you can show fathers, mothers, and/or caregivers how amazingly social and responsive babies are. You can support mothers, fathers and other caregivers in communicating, nurturing, and playing with their infants from the beginning. As we described in the *see Module 4 on Falling in Love – Promoting Parent Child Attachment*, engaging in positive interactions creates the basis for secure attachment and is the foundation for cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Your role as home visitors is to support the skills of parents and caregivers and be respectful of their cultural values. By reinforcing existing positive skills for communicating and playing, parents and/or caregivers will feel more confident about their capacity to care for their young children in ways that will promote their development and learning.

## 1. GUIDELINES FOR POSITIVE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PARENTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

The following section explains what makes interactions positive for young children's development. The first five Guidelines (International Child Development Programs, WHO, 1997) also apply to interactions with infants: the importance of showing them positive feelings and love, interacting with them, following their lead, focusing their attention, and making sense of their world.

### 1. Show the child positive feelings and love

For children to feel secure, they must be shown love: that is, they must be hugged, caressed and cared for with joy and enthusiasm. Even babies that are too young to understand what we say to them in words can understand love and rejection, joy and sorrow in the parent or caregiver's tone of voice, body language or actions.

There are many ways of showing love, and the ways will vary with the child's age:

- Smiling and laughing together
- Holding, hugging, caressing, tickling, massaging, or other forms of positive physical contact with the child
- Sharing jokes and silly games
- Speaking in a warm and loving tone of voice
- Telling the child "I love you" when it feels natural to do so.



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Even soon after birth, it is possible to have a "dialogue" with a newborn baby, using eye contact, smiles and exchanges of gestures and expressions of pleasure. When the mother, father, or caregiver comment positively on what the infant is doing, s/he "answers" with happy noises. Usually, the adult starts the dialogue by imitating a facial expression or noise that the infant makes. Given some time and encouragement, the infant responds with an approximation of the sound or expression, and so the first "dialogue" begins. This early emotional "conversation" is important for children's future relationships with their parents and for speech development.



**Watch the following videos** on Early Interactions

1. <http://www.your-baby.org.uk/early-interactions>
2. [http://raisingchildren.net.au/baby\\_cues/baby\\_cues.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/baby_cues/baby_cues.html) (this video clip shows both fathers and mothers)
3. The next video shows a "conversation" between a mother and her baby, with the baby

responding to her mother by cooing, opening her mouth and moving her whole body. It is important to tell mothers and fathers to give their babies sufficient time to respond and to show them that they are full partners in the conversation. <http://www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/bc-baby-conversations>

Unfortunately, many online videos focus on mother-infant interactions, so when you show these to parents and other caregivers, you may give the impression that 'only mothers matter or are capable of engaging their infants'. You may want to record, on your phone or some other device, a father interacting with his infant to validate fathers' communication skills. Or you can buy this wonderful, inexpensive DVD 'Hello Dad' to show-case infant-father interactions:

<http://www.goodbeginnings.org.au/shop/hello-dad/>

All children need to be held, hugged, and shown affection by both parents. Tactile contact is just as important with boys as with girls, and it is as important for the father as for mother to express warmth and love.

## 2. Interact with the child

Infants are born pre-wired to be social. They demonstrate this by adjusting the rhythms of their movements to the movements, voice and gestures of their caregiver, sensing the purpose and feelings. When infants then initiate actions on their own or respond to their parents or caregivers, they get an excited and affectionate response (Trevvarthen, 2010). Attuned parents and caregivers look for this responsiveness in the baby, amplify their own response and modify it, and keep the conversation going, always giving the infant a turn with extra time to respond.



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A conversation with an infant can be started with emotional expressions, gestures and sounds. Parents and caregivers can start the dialogue on an emotional level by gazing, smiling, making body movements and expressing joy, while commenting on what the infant does or seems to be interested in. The infant 'answers' with happy sounds, arm or body movements. These conversations create the foundations for building relationships and learning.

Infants start communicating right from birth. Crying, smiling, vocalizations, looking at the parent's face, and looking away are all ways babies tell us when they are hungry, sleepy, want our attention, or need a little break from the excitement. How we respond to these attempts of "communication" helps infants to regulate their emotions, manage stress, and feel safe. When parents and caregivers talk - and listen - to their infants, they are creating a bond by activating not only the areas of the brain related to hearing, speech, and recognizing the individual sounds of language, but also the social and emotional centres.

Older children also need these intimate and responsive interactions so they can share confidences and talk about what is important to them. These intimate talks include:

- Closeness
- Sharing confidences and "secrets"
- Rhythmical interaction through nonverbal language
- Eye contact
- Imitation and exchanging positive body movements

### 3. Follow the child's lead

In interacting with the infant or young child, it is important that the mother, father or caregiver pays attention to the child's body language, and tries to adjust to and follow the child's lead. Adults show that they are following the child's lead when they:

- Respond to the child when s/he turns to the parent or caregiver.
- Respond to the child's cries.
- Follow and verbalize about the child's activity and actions.
- See what the child is doing, what s/he wants.
- Read the child's body language.
- Guess what the child wants and feels.
- Respond to what the child wants and feels.
- Adjust actions to the child's mood.
- Show interest in what the child is doing.
- Praise and appreciate what the child manages to do.



**Watch the video on Taking turns** – giving their baby time to respond.

<http://www.your-baby.org.uk/early-interactions/taking-turns-giving-their-baby-time-respond>



#### Reflection and discussion

How do the caregivers in this video follow their infant's lead?

How do you see them taking turns with the infant?

How do these caregivers mirror (reflect) what their babies are doing?

When you are visiting families, how would you make sure that both fathers and mothers understand that fathers can do this too – and that their input is just as important?

Grandparents, older siblings, and extended family members should be encouraged to interact in the same loving and playful way with the infant, that is, follow the baby's lead and take turns in interactions. Just seeing parent and caregiver model these behaviours, teaches others who interact with the baby.

### 4. Help the child to focus his attention and share his experiences.

Children often need help to focus their attention. Adults can help by saying things such as: "Look at this..." or "Look!" "Come here!" Alternatively, parents and caregivers can follow the child's lead and focus on whatever the child is interested in, so they can share a common experience.

A shared experience is the basis for close contact and communication. Infants actually learn words when there is joint attention on an object or event, with the parent or caregiver commenting on it. They will turn their heads to focus on where the other person is looking and will hear the word(s) associated with it.

### 5. Help the child make sense of her/his world

For children to understand what is happening around them, they need adults to explain or put words to these experiences. When fathers, mothers, and other caregivers talk to babies and young children about

what is happening around them, describe what they are seeing or interacting with, and name the baby's feelings or other people's feelings, children start to make sense of the world around them and feel secure.

Tell parents to promote these kinds of interactions by:

- Talking to the infant or young child about shared experiences, including the daily routines of feeding, diapering, washing, and going to sleep.
- Giving names to and describing what they are both seeing.
- Showing the baby how things work and describing this in words.
- Explaining to the baby how she feels or how the parent feels.

We will explore this topic in greater detail, later in this module.

## 6. Praise and appreciate what the child manages to do

For young children, to develop confidence in themselves and the courage to try something new, they need to feel that they are valued and capable. Children's confidence is built when their parents and caregivers respond positively when the child does something well; give praise; and explain what was good and why. For the child's development of mastery and self-confidence, it is important that the child feels "seen", that each adult is aware of the child, his/her needs, and the signals that he/she sends. Parents and caregivers may want to use verbal and nonverbal recognition such as: "That's good, because when you do that..." with an explanation why it was good.

If the mother, father, or caregiver finds this challenging, have them make a list of the qualities that they cherish in their child or describe the happiest moments they have shared with the child. The point is to start seeing the child in a positive way. It may also help to have parents describe the strengths they see in each other's parenting.



**Watch the following video:** A Parent Child Interaction. It shows a mother being coached on how to interact in play with a young child with Autism Spectrum Disorder. You can also hear the Early Intervention Specialist give the mother feedback on her responses.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unmxS2OYP2I&list=PL3C3169A1AC73891B&index=2>



### Reflection and discussion

- How does the mother in this video clip show that she cares for the child, follows the child lead and communicate that she appreciates what the child does?
- How does she praise the child?
- How does the child react when his mother repeats what he is saying?
- How can you make sure both parents understand the value of father-child interactions, too?

## 7. Help children widen their experiences

With time, young children's horizons begin to widen and they need their caregivers to help them make sense from a wealth of information and detail. Mothers, fathers and other caregivers can help by:

- Giving explanations, telling stories and finding reasons why something happens
- Comparing similarities with and differences from other experiences
- Making links between the past, present and future
- Making and telling stories about experiences together
- Drawing, looking at pictures, and playing games based on those experiences.

### 8. Help the child to learn rules, limits and values

Children need help to learn what is called executive function skills, for example, self-control and planning.

Adults teach these skills to young children by helping them to wait, learn to soothe themselves, and learn about rules and limits. *(You can find more on this in the Module 8 Common Parenting Concerns).*

Positive discipline is the best way to help child learn self-control. Positive discipline is when we pay attention to positive behaviour and reinforce it, often by describing it, while paying little attention when behaviour is negative.

Helping children gain the knowledge and skills to make responsible decisions and take care of themselves and others is the ultimate goal of discipline. Your task is to explain to fathers, mothers, and caregivers that they need to support children in the process of learning rules, limits and values.

You can help parents to not exert power over their child by using punishment and coercive control *(You can find more on this in the Module 8 Common Parenting Concerns).*

It is important that both parents understand positive discipline techniques and use them in the same way together.



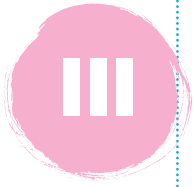
To discuss with fathers and mothers how they can help children learn the rules, limits and values you can use this Information Card 1 - Rules, Limits and Values.

Much negative parenting arises when parents have unrealistic expectations of their infant or child, looking for competencies that have not yet developed (for example, an infant cannot understand that the parent is tired and needs a rest). To help mothers, fathers, and caregivers understand what is 'age appropriate' so they engage in positive interactions with their infants and help them learn and grow, look at:



What to expect, when? (2015) Department for Education and 4 Children.

[http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2015/03/4Children\\_ParentsGuide\\_2015\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2015/03/4Children_ParentsGuide_2015_WEB.pdf)



## TALKING TO CHILDREN

Talking to infants and young children is important for building their brain and giving them a good start in language development. Research is now showing that the key to early learning (and later literacy) is talking — specifically, a child’s exposure to language spoken by parents and caretakers from birth to age 3. And the more of this the child experiences, the better!



Children learn language through a process. The video, The Pyramid of Speech and Language Development shows how communication develops. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Z0rvMblP2o>

1. First of all children need to be bathed in language giving them chances to listen, watch and have their attempts to communicate verbally and non-verbally responded to.
2. Eye contact helps infants make the neural connections and releases hormones that feel good, reinforcing their participation. They need to listen to begin to differentiate different sounds. They engage in shared attention looking at objects named by an adult. And they learn that conversation is about taking turns.
3. After they learn to differentiate sounds, they begin to understand particular words, phrases, and later on sentences.
4. After they begin to acquire receptive language, they will start to produce language themselves (talking).
5. However, it is not until they are older that begin to speak accurately.

While children from different backgrounds typically develop language skills around the same age, the rate of vocabulary growth is strongly influenced by how much fathers, mothers, and caregivers talk to their children.

Children from professional families where parents have been found to talk more to their children, gain vocabulary at a greater rate than their peers from lower income families. (Hart and Risley, 2003).

As mentioned in the *Module 1 on Early Childhood – A Time of Endless Opportunities*, in the US, 42 families were studied over a period of almost 3 years.

Researchers grouped families into three socioeconomic categories based on parents’ occupations with the focus on parent education level and family income: (a) professional families (b) working class families and (c) families on welfare. All families were considered “well-functioning. The findings were:

- Children from all three groups of families started to speak at around the same age and developed good structure and use of language.
- Children in professional families heard more words per hour, resulting in larger cumulative vocabularies: these children heard an average of 2,153 words per hour, while children in working class families heard an average of 1,251 words per hour and children in welfare-recipient families heard an average of 616 words per hour.
- This means that in a year children in professional families heard an average of 11 million words, while children in working class families heard an average of 6 million words and children in welfare families

heard an average of 3 million words. By age four, a child from a family on welfare could have heard 32 million words less than a child from a family where parents are professionals.

- By age three, the observed cumulative vocabulary of children with parents that are professionals was about 1,100 words. For children from working class families, the observed cumulative vocabulary was about 750 words and for children from families on welfare, just above 500 words.
- Children in families of professionals also heard a higher ratio of words of encouragements than children from working class families or families on welfare.



**Watch the following video:** From Cries to Conversations. It is the first video in Series 3 Videos. <http://www.zerotothree.org/parenting-resources/MOEM/moem-series-3.html>



There are many things families can do with young children to help them develop their language.

As a home visitor, you can model interactions that promote children's development when you are with families.

## 1. TALKING WITH BABIES

Adapted from <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/baby/infant-development-9/baby-talk>

**From 1 to 3 months**, babies respond to familiar voices with smiles, waving their arms, cooing and gurgling.

They also like when people sing to them and may respond in the same ways.

**From 4 to 7 months**, babies realize that adults will respond to their babbles and coos. This makes them watch for others' reactions to their initiations and makes them become even more vocal.

They will experiment with more sounds and intonations and begin to raise and lower the pitch of their voices as they babble, just as adults do when asking a question or adding emphasis. When adults use simple words, that is "motherese" (elongated vowel sounds), and pause, the baby will be more responsive in the 'serve and return' or give and take that make these nonverbal interactions into conversations.

**From 8 to 12 months**, parents may begin to recognize sounds such as "mama," "dada," "papa." in their baby's vocalizations for the first time. In the beginning, this may happen when the baby is playing with sounds, but the parents positive reactions reinforce these first "words" more and more.

As parents and caregivers continue to have conversations with their babies, they expand this vocabulary by pointing to and naming things the baby sees in her environment.

They also can play silly word games and sing songs with babies to enhance their language development.

Babies will usually add a word at a time to their vocabularies until they have repertoire of around 50 words.



**Watch the video:** Talking with Infants. <http://www.parentingcounts.org/information/timeline/talking-with-infants/>



Give Information Card 2 – Tips on Learning to Talk for Babies to families with infants

## 2. TALKING WITH TODDLERS

Adapted from <http://www.babycentre.co.uk/a539841/helping-your-toddler-to-talk>

Parents/family members and caregivers should continue to talk as much and as often as they can to their toddler.

Remember that learning to talk is a process that is built on positive interactions the child has with others. A child does not learn to talk by just listening, but by being engaged in conversations (verbal and/or nonverbal).

It helps when adults who are speaking to the young child watch the child's face carefully and show interest when the child speaks.

The focus should also be on what the child is trying to say, rather than on how clearly she pronounces her words. When the child communicates successfully, adults should acknowledge what the child has said even if he mispronounces the words. Just repeating it back with the correct pronunciation will help the child learn to say correctly in time.

Tips for having conversations with toddlers include:

- Getting the child's attention by saying her name before talking to her and making eye contact with her. This will help her understand when you are talking to her.
- Giving the child plenty of opportunities to talk during everyday activities. When asking a question, leave a 10-second pause, so that he has time to answer.
- Exposing the child to new situations where new words can be introduced.
- Repeating back what the child is trying to say, even if she doesn't say it clearly. Expanding on what she says.
- Simplifying speech by using short sentences and emphasise key words. This will help him to focus on the important information.
- Switching off unnecessary background noise such as the TV or radio. This will help the child to focus her attention on what is being said. Children can find it harder than adults to filter out background noise.



**Watch the following video:** How to help a toddler learn how to talk. Gurgle Pregnancy and Parenting at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wdt-yBN76uw>

for tips you can share with parents and caregivers on how to talk with their baby or young child. Again notice that most 'parents' in this video are mothers.

You may want to point out that father-child conversations are just as important, and fathers are just as good at them as mothers. In fact, children need males to speak with them; so if the father is not present, see if there are other males in the family to interact with them.



Give families with toddlers Information Card 3 – Tips on Talking to Children Ages 1-3.



### **Reflection and discussion**

- Which families need additional support when it comes to talking to their children?
- How can support be provided?
- What are some of the reasons why parents you know are not talking to their children?
- What is the most important lesson learned from this video?



For you as a home visitor it is important to:

Communicate to mothers, fathers, and caregivers the importance of talking with children and about the most important aspect of children's language experience – have conversations with the infant and young child about everything in their everyday environment – objects, people, feelings – and always give your child an opportunity to be an active partner in your conversation.

## IV

## THE POWER OF PLAY

One of the best-known quotes in child development is Maria Montessori's statement that "Play is the work of the child." According to Montessori, play is voluntary, enjoyable, purposeful, and spontaneous. From birth on, children learn best through playful interactions with their parents, caregivers, family members, and peers.

Play promotes children's development in all domains (physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and language) as well as in executive function skills, creativity and problem-solving. It gives children the opportunity to freely practice existing and emerging skills, test new ideas, work through problems and difficult experiences, and engage in new learning. Play often, but not always, follows the child's lead (is 'child-directed' or 'child-lead'), is enjoyable and intrinsically motivating, and engages the imagination.

Parents/caregivers can facilitate opportunities for play as well as participate in their children's play, and during your home visits, you can help parents understand why this is important and how to do it. When parents/caregivers play with their children, they are building a positive relationship with their child that lets him know he is loved and appreciated. It opens the door for sharing problems and concerns as the child gets older. It helps the parent or caregivers understand how this child is unique and special. Play can also reduce parental stress and helps them enjoy their children (Child Development Info).

Research has confirmed that play helps infant and children build skills. Babbling, for example, is a self-initiated form of play through which infants create the sounds of the language they need to learn. Likewise, children teach themselves to crawl, stand, and walk through repetitious practice play and to imitate behaviors they see in their environment.

Because play is so central to child development, the right to play is solidly anchored in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Article 31 states that children have a right to play.

**Video clips**

Watch the following videos from [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org):

The Power of Play : <https://vimeo.com/103169732>

Driven to Discover. This is the second video in Series 3 Videos.

<http://www.zerotothree.org/parenting-resources/MOEM/moem-series-3.html>.

From Feelings to Friendships. This is the third video in Series 3 Videos

<http://www.zerotothree.org/parenting-resources/MOEM/moem-series-3.html>

Busy Bodies. This is the fourth video in Series 3 Videos <http://www.zerotothree.org/parenting-resources/MOEM/moem-series-3.html>.



As you watch these videos, notice how the caregivers and the role of play support the 8 Guidelines on Positive Interaction presented in the previous section.

- How are parents showing their love?
- How are they conversing with their child?
- How are they following their child's lead?
- How do they praise and/or show appreciation of the child?
- How are they helping the child to focus his/her attention?
- How are they helping the child make sense of his/her world?
- How are they helping to widening the child's experiences?
- How are children learning to understand limits?

What new information did these videos provide to you on the importance of play? How can you use this information in your work as a home visitor?



### Self-assessment – True/False Statements

1. Playing with children makes them smarter and helps them do better in school.
2. Play starts officially when infants have learned to handle first toys.
3. Children need a lot of toys to play.
4. Playing with a child is also beneficial to the parents.

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS

**1. TRUE.** Research (Brown, 2009; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Elkind, 2003) shows that children that children who play and have had adults play with them do better in school, score higher on tests, and are healthier mentally and physically.

**2. FALSE.** Play starts at birth and is an essential and critical part of the development of all children. Its importance continues throughout life.

**3. FALSE.** Providing play opportunities does not mean that families have to buy a lot of toys. Simple materials, ideas and time and opportunities to explore, create, and transform, act out what they see and understand, as well as a “play mate”, often the parent during the early years, are the most important ingredients for play.

**4. TRUE.** Playing with children establishes and strengthens bonds that will last forever. Parent-child play opens doors for the sharing of values, increases communication, allows for teachable moments and assists in problem solving.



### Important points

During play, fathers and mothers/caregivers can focus their attention on the child and follow the child’s lead. In addition, they can help the child go beyond existing knowledge and skills, using what is called scaffolding. Scaffolding helps children be successful, with an activity they may not be able to do on their own. It is best when parents match their strategies to the child’s skill level and offers possibilities to take that skill to the next level. For example, when the child is doing something well (e.g., put a block into a box), the parent can add new pieces of information (“see, you put the red block into the box”); when the child is struggling, they can make suggestions (“turn the box the other way”, guide (help the child turn the box), or model a skill (“look how I am dropping the block into the box”). These situations can help the child achieve success that they would not have achieved on their own, and such success can be applauded together.

Playing with young children involves actively observing, listening to, supporting, talking with, and understanding what they are doing and capable of doing next. Scaffolding responds to the child’s cues, actions, and comments by providing verbal and nonverbal hints and assistance, or questions, descriptions, prompts, and persists through multiple back and forth exchanges. It is not intervening but offering new possibilities to the child.

Safety first! An important role of home visitors is to educate parents/caregivers about child safety, because children need safe places as they play, explore and learn. One of our jobs is assess the safety of the home environment as well as to help families understand what is safe and unsafe for children as they develop. As home visitors, we need to be educated in what our countries recommend for toy and play safety and any publications on the topic available to parents and families. More information you can find in the Module 9 on Home Environment and Safety.



If your country has no or limited information on this topic, print this card and share it with the parents – Information card 5 – Toys' Safety and Play Safety

## 1. PLAY WITH BABIES



### Case study

Read the following case study. (Zero to Three)

It was bath time for nine-month-old Jessica. Her father gently lowered her into the tub. Jessica immediately reached for the red plastic measuring spoon floating in the water and started chewing on it. Then she splashed the spoon up and down in the water. Her dad splashed the water too. Jessica looked surprised for a moment, and then giggled. She splashed again and looked expectantly at her dad. He splashed too. They both laughed this time. Then a rubber ducky caught her attention and Jessica grabbed for it, letting go of the spoon. The spoon dropped into the water and sank below the surface.

Interested in what she saw, Jessica dropped the duck and reached under the water for the spoon. She let it go so it fell into the water. She watched it sink and then picked it up again. Her father caught her eye and said, "Splash! There it goes it again! Look at that spoon sink to the bottom." Jessica put her fingers in her mouth and started to suck on them. "Eating your fingers? Are you getting more teeth?" wondered her dad.

As he lathered up a washcloth, Jessica's dad sang their special bath song, "Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes..." He tickled her toes with the washcloth and Jessica giggled, kicking her feet. Her dad continued singing, "Eyes and mouth and ears and nose, ears and nose..." He kissed the tip of her toes. Jessica laughed, splashed her hands down into the bath and cooed, "Daaa! Daaaa!"

1. Identify which of the following domains of development are nurtured through this playful interaction during this daily routine:

- Social-emotional development
- Language development
- Physical development
- Cognitive development

2. When is Jessica in the lead?

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

1.

- Social emotional development: Jessica's self-esteem is boosted through this warm, loving interaction with her father. She learns about trust as her father handles her gently and keeps her safe. Her dad's kisses during the song make Jessica feel special and loved.
- Language and Communication Development: Jessica is learning about back-and-forth communication through her interactions with her dad kicking, cooing, and splashing. When they take turns playing together, Jessica and her father are having a "conversation" of sorts. When her father wonders "Are you getting more teeth?" when he sees Jessica put her hands in her mouth, he shows how attuned he is to the messages his daughter is sending.
- Physical Development: Jessica develops muscle strength through kicking and splashing. She is also practicing fine (small) muscle skills by picking up and manipulating bath toys. Sitting up while bathing gives Jessica time to perfect her balance and to develop back strength as well.
- Cognitive Development: Jessica is learning cause and effect by kicking her legs and then feeling the splash on her legs. She is learning about sinking and floating (properties of water) as she plays with the different toys in her bath. She is learning about patterns when she realizes that songs have a regular, logical rhythm pattern. She is learning about words and language when her she feels (through tickles and kisses) that words like "nose" and "toes" represent parts of the body.

2. Jessica is in the lead when she is splashing and her father also splashes her.



Share ideas with parents and caregivers on how to play with babies. When you can, model some of these ideas in your home visits.

- **Stages of Play: Birth to Six Months.** [http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/stages\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_birth\\_to\\_six\\_months\\_-\\_6-15.pdf?docID=13865](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/stages_of_play_-_birth_to_six_months_-_6-15.pdf?docID=13865)
- **Stages of Play: 6-12 Months** [http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/stages\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_6\\_to\\_12\\_months\\_-\\_6-15.pdf?docID=13862](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/stages_of_play_-_6_to_12_months_-_6-15.pdf?docID=13862)

What is important to communicate to parents! (Brown, 2002)

- Young babies have a fairly short attention span. They are easily overwhelmed and usually only "play" (interact with you, make eye contact, and/or play with toys) for brief periods of time.
- Babies have their own ways of letting you know when they are done playing. They might cry or fuss, rub their eyes or turn away from you, or just fall asleep.
- Parents can watch their baby and learn what his/her cues are that say: "I'm overwhelmed" or "I am no longer interested in this". When their child is ready to stop playing, the adult can give the baby the quiet time needed.
- Children (and even adults) respond to sensory experiences differently and have different tolerance levels for how much noise, lights and stimulation they can cope with before they feel overwhelmed. For example, if a baby is afraid of loud, fast, and surprising movements, toys or games such as a jack-in-the box may be too much for him. You may recommend other toys that are less noisy.

- As you have seen in the Module 4 on Falling in Love – Promoting Parent Child Attachment, a baby’s temperament may also play an important role. Babies and toddlers that are “slow to warm up” may need more time to adjust to changes in their environment, including play.
- Babies have their own preferences on how to explore the world. Some babies are observers—they learn by watching and by carefully exploring specific toys or objects. Other babies prefer to learn on the move. If a baby prefers watching to moving, look for engaging toys that will build on her desire to explore with her hands.  
Think about shape sorters, textured blocks, and other toys that encourage handling and observation.  
An adult can also encourage the development of the baby’s gross motor movements by placing an interesting toy at some distance and encourage the baby to move toward it. An adult can put music on and dance with the baby or play with a textured ball (like one with soft bumps) that encourages both tactile exploration and active play.

## 2. PLAY WITH TODDLERS

As shown in an earlier video, toddlers are explorers. They get into everything and need to be supervised at all times.

Toddlers are starting to express themselves and be social. They play side by side and near other children, but not really together.

This is called parallel play. Since developmentally they are not yet ready to take turns or share successfully, their play needs supervision by an adult.

Toddlers need toys that allow them to practice large motor skills (pushing and pulling) and fine motor skills (putting things into other things, picking up small things).

They also need soft things to cuddle with and familiar things when things become scary for them.

Their attention spans are short, and they need to be allowed to change activities often. They also need opportunities to practice language, e.g., nursery rhymes, and talking to parents.



### Important points

The following strategies can help parents/caregivers more successfully play with their toddlers.(Zero to Three)

- **Try to hold off doing a play activity for the child.** Remember scaffolding. It helps to show a child how a toy works, but not to always do it for him. Toddlers need support, but are still drawn to appropriate challenges. Providing just enough help to keep frustration at bay motivates a child to learn new skills.
- **Read the child’s signals.** Even though a child may not yet have the words (or the self-recognition) to say when she is frustrated, tired, or bored, she will show it in other ways making noises, facial expressions, and gestures. Being able to read when a child needs a change may prevent a later temper tantrum. On the other hand, when the child likes what she is doing, she will also show it, and this lets the adult know what kinds of activities the child prefers.

- **Provide safe and stimulating play spaces.** Is the area child-friendly and child-safe? Is there too much noise or other distractions?  
Is the area safe to explore? Is this a good place for the activity chosen, such as running, throwing balls, or painting?
- **Repetition is good.** Toddlers like to do things over and over again. They are practicing skills in order to master a challenge. Mastering something gives them self-confidence and feelings of competence.  
The more they practice and master new skills, the more likely they are to take on new challenges that promote learning.



Share with parents/caregivers ideas on how to play with toddlers. Model some of these ideas in your home visits.

#### **Stages of Play: 12-24 Months**

[http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/stages\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_12\\_to\\_24\\_months-6-15.pdf?docID=13863](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/stages_of_play_-_12_to_24_months-6-15.pdf?docID=13863)

#### **Stages of Play: 24-36 Months**

[http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Stages\\_of\\_Play\\_-\\_24\\_to\\_36\\_-\\_6-15.pdf?docID=13864](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Stages_of_Play_-_24_to_36_-_6-15.pdf?docID=13864)

#### **Games to play with toddlers**

[http://www.babycenter.com/0\\_games-to-play-with-your-toddler\\_1485454.bc](http://www.babycenter.com/0_games-to-play-with-your-toddler_1485454.bc)

### 3. TOYS



**Expensive toys are not needed to play.** There are many items in the home and in the environment families can use. The main concern is safety when everyday items are used in play.

The use of toys and games that reinforce gender stereotypes continues to be widely debated by the public, and pressure has been put on toy stores in some countries to stop displaying their toys as gender-specific. Early childhood education professionals would agree with this move and discourage the use of gender-specific toys, especially if they reinforce gender stereotypes. Stereotypes are overgeneralizations and in the case of gender can limit the potential of both females and males.

Researchers have found that many toys targeting girls are associated with physical attractiveness, nurturing, and domestic skill, whereas boys' toys were rated as violent, competitive, exciting, and somewhat dangerous. Strongly gender-typed toys might encourage attributes that aren't ones you actually want to foster. For girls, this would include a focus on attractiveness and appearance, perhaps leading to a message that this is the most important thing—to look pretty. For boys, the emphasis on violence and aggression (weapons, fighting, and aggression) might be less than desirable in the long run. Other toys considered primarily for boys have many positive qualities (developing spatial skills, exploring the sciences, building things, etc.) that parents might want to encourage in both boys and girls. Perhaps, to some extent, it is the same for some moderately feminine toys (dolls for nurturing, toys related to cooking and housework). (NAYEC)



Print these cards and share them with the parents

- *Information card 6 – Toys and different ages and*
- *Information Card 7 - Playing with items from home*



## V

## READING TO CHILDREN

**Self-assessment**

Which of the following are reasons why mothers, fathers and caregivers should start reading to their children from infancy on?

- A. It promotes language and vocabulary development.
- B. It promotes social-emotional development.
- C. It promotes phonemic awareness (letter-sound relationships).
- D. It promotes memory and listening skills.

**ANSWER:****OPTIONS A, B, AND D.**

Hearing words helps to build a rich network of words in a baby's brain. Children whose parents frequently read to them, know more words by age 2 than children who have not been read to. Children who are regularly read to during their early years are more likely to learn to read at the right time.

When you read, your child hears you using many different emotions and expressive sounds, which fosters social and emotional development. Reading also invites your baby to look, point, touch, and answer questions — all of which promote social development and thinking skills. And your baby improves language skills by imitating sounds, recognizing pictures, and learning words.

But perhaps the most important reason to read aloud is that it makes a connection between the things your baby loves the most — your voice and closeness to you — and books. Spending time reading to your baby shows that reading is a skill worth learning. And, if infants and children are read too often with joy, excitement, and closeness, they begin to associate books with happiness — and budding readers are created. [http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/reading\\_babies.html#](http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/reading_babies.html#)

**OPTION C** – Phonemic awareness (listeners are able to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes, the smallest units of sound that can differentiate meaning. Separating the spoken word “cat” into three distinct phonemes, /k/, /æ/, and /t/, requires phonemic awareness) is a skill that children will not begin to acquire until they are older and can distinguish the words from pictures and shapes of letters from each other. What they will recognize first is that marks on a page mean something that can be said. What is most important to an infant is the pleasure of being held and talked to about the book. This is what will eventually motivate them to learn letter sound relationships when they are developmentally ready.

**Why is it important to read to babies and young children?**

Some parents may ask why it is important to read to babies when they do not even understand what is being said to them. You can explain to parents and caregivers, that they are also talking with their baby or signing songs, even though the baby does not yet understand the words. Reading contributes to building the brain's architecture and thus to building a strong foundation for learning language and learning about people and relationships. Reading to the baby can be integrated easily into daily activities, to settle down after active play, or as a bedtime routine to share a special time before the young child settles down to sleep.

Reading is a great activity for fathers. Research has found that when fathers read to their babies and toddlers regularly, their children had better early reading and literacy skills (for example, a better vocabulary); they liked books more; concentrated better in nursery school; and had better math and problem-solving skills (Fatherhood Institute, 2014).



**Watch the following video** Literacy Skills: The Roots of Reading Start at Birth, from the. <http://www.zerotothree.org/parenting-resources/MOEM/> This is the second video in Series 1 Videos. As you watch the video, reflect on what information is new for you. How can you convey the importance of reading to children from birth to the fathers and mothers you work with?

### **Stages in reading to children (Balmain, 2002):**

Young babies may not know what the pictures in a book mean, but they can focus on them, especially faces, bright colors, and contrasting patterns. Since an infant's vision is still developing, books with little or no text are fine or even reading from magazines with bright pictures. Comprehending the words isn't really the point with babies as young as this. For infants, reading is about the tone of the parent's voice and cuddling up.

**Between 4 and 6 months**, a baby may begin to show more interest in books. He or she will grab and hold books, but will mouth, chew, and drop them as well. Choosing sturdy vinyl or cloth books with bright colors and repetitive or rhyming text are best for this age level.

**Between 6 and 12 months**, the child is beginning to understand that pictures represent objects. The most meaningful words are the names of objects from their everyday life – words like "doggy," "mommy," "daddy," "milk," or "bottle."

Books with just one object or person per page are best. Hearing the names of objects of things the baby recognizes reinforces vocabulary. Pointing to the pictures the baby shows interest in and acting out what is read, helps the baby focus his attention.

**Between 13 to 18 months** babies can be introduced to books with a sentence or two per page. Inviting participation by asking questions such as "What does the doggy say?" or "Do you see the kitty?" or asking them to point to real-life examples of what's pictured, ("Where's your nose?") also helps them focus their attention. At this age, we can show more pictures of things the baby doesn't encounter every day.

**Also, at 15 to 18 months**, the baby may be able to answer questions with a word, so give her the opportunities by asking, "What's that?" If she answers we can boost her vocabulary by expanding on her thought: "Yes, car. That's a big green car."

**At 19 to 24 months**, many toddlers find the familiar routine of reading reassuring and calming. The same goes for familiar books.

This helps explain why, starting at about 18 months, children may ask for the same book over and over and over – and why they won't let you change your reading performance by a single "meow" or "vroom."

However, this dogged repetition has a learning benefit as well: experts think it helps children make sense of and then remember new words.



Use this Information card 8- Reading Tips, to give ideas to parents on when, how and what to read to their infants and toddlers.



### Additional resources

The following article explains more on infant communication and the development of social relationships.

Murray, L. 2014. The development of children's communication in the first two years: A research overview. Perspective – NCT's Journal on preparing parents for birth and early parenthood 23, 16-20. Retrieved at [http://www.nct.org.uk/sites/default/files/related\\_documents/Murray%20The%20development%20of%20children%20C2%B9s%20communication%20in%20the%20first%20two%20years-%20a%20research%20overview%20pp%2015-20\\_0.pdf](http://www.nct.org.uk/sites/default/files/related_documents/Murray%20The%20development%20of%20children%20C2%B9s%20communication%20in%20the%20first%20two%20years-%20a%20research%20overview%20pp%2015-20_0.pdf)

To learn more about the play read the booklet, The Power of Play, <http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/ThePowerofPlay.pdf;jsessionid=EB875B9F444C473720E8125035FE33FF.app248c?docID=161> from the organization, Zero to Three ([www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org))

If families do not have books in home and cannot afford to purchase them, then you can show them ideas for making their own books. The following websites offer ideas on how to make books:

<http://www.ehow.com/ehow-crafts/blog/how-to-make-a-sensory-stimulating-book-that-your-baby-wont-want-to-put-down/>  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_6216310\\_make-own-blank-books.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_6216310_make-own-blank-books.html)  
[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2077328\\_make-cloth-baby-book.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2077328_make-cloth-baby-book.html)

If you are interested in learning more about activities and materials parents can use to play with their children, you can explore the following sites for ideas on every day, simple objects that children can use to play. If you are also working with parent education groups, you can give these ideas to parents and ask them to bring items from their home to share in the next session for a fun play session.

Baby play ideas and activities. Retrieved at <http://theimaginationtree.com/2012/06/baby-play-ideas-and-activities-6-18.html>  
 Twenty fun toddler activities and games. Retrieved at <http://www.kidspot.com.au/Toddler-Play-20-fun-toddler-activities-and-games+6166+25+article.htm>;  
<http://voices.yahoo.com/found-toys-turning-household-objects-into-fun-for-11569314.html?cat=25>  
 Seven handmade toys for babies. Retrieved at <http://www.babble.com/home/homemade-toys/>  
 Play with children  
<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=122&id=1943>

## VI

## SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

**Final summary**

Infants are born pre-wired to be social and are amazingly adept at initiating and sustaining the relationships with their parents and caregivers. One of your roles is to help fathers and mothers understand that communication with the baby starts even before birth and that infants are social and seek interactions with their caregivers. Parents can learn to attune and synchronize their own interactions to their infant's cues. They can start by imitating their infant's facial expressions and the sounds they make. Infants also use body movements, gazing, and sounds to communicate and interact.

Caring, responsive, respectful, and reciprocal interactions with infants and toddlers contribute to their overall and brain development and build positive relationships with them. Ways in which fathers and mothers can ensure that these interactions are positive include showing love, interacting with and not just talking to the child, following the child's lead, appreciating what the child does, helping the child focus attention, helping the child make sense of his world, helping the child widen her experiences, and helping the child learn rules, limits, and values.

As children get older, parents can help their children make more sense of their world and widen their experiences by interacting with them in ways that encourage them to talk more and by asking open-ended questions about what they think about something or linking past experiences with present ones.

Playing with children is one way parents can have more positive interactions with them. Play is pleasurable for children and parents and helps parents learn more about their child. Play contributes to children's overall development and children whose parents play with them do better in school.

Playing with children and encouraging their play does not require expensive toys. There are many items around the house that children love to play with, including their parents. Unstructured materials will stimulate toddlers' imaginations and creativity. The role of the adults is to make sure that the environment and materials are safe and developmentally appropriate for the child to play with and explore.

During your home visits, you can make fathers, mothers and other caregivers aware that talking with a young child is very important. Parents need to understand that in order to foster their child's development they need to talk to him, listen to him and engage in conversation. And that it is never too early to start. Talking, listening, reciprocating should happen right from the very beginning when the child is pre-verbal, through an exchange of touch, facial expressions and sounds.

Reading to babies and toddlers contributes to their overall development. It should be pleasurable and a time for feeling loved. Books appropriate for infants should contain colourful pictures. As children grow, they like to be able to handle books, so cloth or sturdier board or waterproof books (for the bath) will be appropriate.

If families do not have books at home, they can borrow them from libraries, buy them in markets or second hand shops, or make their own books.

You have power and opportunity to help fathers, mothers and other caregivers understand that the best way to show love to infants and toddlers is to spend time with them, talk with them, play and read with them. Quality time that infants, toddlers and parents spend together in enjoyable and loving activity is the most precious gift that parents can give to their child.

## VII

### ANNEX



#### INFORMATION CARD 1: RULES, LIMITS AND VALUES

Ways to help a child be in control include:

- Make the home a safe place to play and explore
- Keep dangerous and precious objects out of reach
- Help the child to plan step by step
- Offer the child different options and let the child choose. The options should be age appropriate (e.g. during the winter invite the child to choose between two warm clothes)
- Provide gentle guidance to the child by suggesting, pointing to and describing what he can do
- Focus on what to do, instead of what not to do. For instance, say, "Touch the kitty gently", instead of "Don't hit the kitty!"

Ways to help a child stay in control include:

- Set clear limits with a few simple rules
- Inform the child in advance
- Give explanations when saying "no" to the child
- Be consistent and follow through.
- Show appreciation when the child succeeds
- Give the child opportunities to correct what was done wrong

Children also learn control and values by seeing them modelled.

- Set a good example: live what you teach. For example, don't shout at a child!
- Stay calm and controlled. The more calm and controlled your behavior is, the more likely your child will be to pattern herself after you.

The following information is from the International Child Development Programmes/WHO (1997). Eight Guidelines on Positive Interactions. Program on mental health: Improving mother/child interaction to promote better psychosocial development in children. Oslo and Geneva: International Child Development Programmes and World Health Organization.



## INFORMATION CARD 2: TIPS ON LEARNING TO TALK FOR BABIES

Learning to talk is a process that starts at birth, when your baby experiences how voices can sound. By two years, most babies have a large vocabulary and can put words together to express their needs and ideas. Let's see how this process unfolds and what you can do to encourage your baby's ability to communicate.

From birth to three months, your baby listens to your voice. He coos and gurgles and tries to make the same sounds you make. You can help your baby learn how nice voices can be when you:

- Sing to your baby. You can do this even before he is born! Your baby will hear you.
- Talk to your baby. Talk to others when she is near. She won't understand the words, but will like your voice and your smile. She will enjoy hearing and seeing other people, too.
- Plan for quiet time. Babies need time to babble and play quietly without TV or radio or other noises.

**From three to six months**, your baby is learning how people talk to each other. You help her become a "talker" when you:

- Hold your baby close so he will look in your eyes. Talk to him and smile.
- When your baby babbles, imitate the sounds.
- If he tries to make the same sound you do, say the word again.

**Between six and nine months**, your baby will play with sounds. Some of these sound like words, such as "baba" or "dada." Baby smiles on hearing a happy voice, and cries or looks unhappy on hearing an angry voice. You can help your baby understand words (even if she can't say them yet) when you:

- Play games like Peek-a-Boo or Pat-a-Cake. Help her move her hands along with the rhyme.
- Give him a toy and say something about it, like "Feel how fuzzy Teddy Bear is."
- Let her see herself in a mirror and ask, "Who's that?" If she doesn't respond, say her name.

**Between nine and twelve months**, your baby will begin to understand simple words. She stops to look at you if you say "no-no." If someone asks "Where's Mommy?" she will look for you. She will point, make sounds, and use her body to "tell" you what she wants. For example she may look up at you and lift her arms up to show you she "wants up." She may hand you a toy to let you know she wants to play. You can help your baby "talk" when you: Show him how to wave "bye-bye."

(Note: This information is from <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-language-literacy/helping-learn-to-talk.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/> and is adapted, with permission, from Learning Link: Helping Your Baby Learn to Talk, by C.E. Morrisette Huebner and P. Lines, 1994, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.)



### INFORMATION CARD 3: TIPS ON TALKING TO CHILDREN AGES 1 – 3

**Between fifteen and eighteen months**, your child will use more complex gestures to communicate with you and will continue to build her vocabulary. She may take your hand, walk you to the bookshelf, point to a book and say “buk” to say, “I want to read a book with you.” You can help your child talk with you when you:

- Tell him “Show me your nose.” Then point to your nose. He will soon point to his nose. Do this with toes, fingers, ears, eyes, knees and so on.
- Hide a toy while she is watching. Help her find it and share in her delight.
- When he points at or gives you something, talk about the object with her. “You gave me the book. Thank you! Look at the picture of the baby rolling the ball.”

**Between twelve and fifteen months**, babies begin to use words. This includes using the same sounds consistently to identify an object, such as “baba” for bottle or “juju” for juice. Many babies have one or two words and understand 25 or more. He will give you a toy if you ask for it. Even without words, he can ask you for something—by pointing, reaching for it, or looking at it and babbling. You can help your child say the words she or he knows when you:

- Talk about the things you use, like “cup,” “juice,” “doll.” Give your child time to name them.
- Smile or clap your hands when your child names the things that he sees. Say something about it. “You see the doggie. He’s sooo big! Look at his tail wag.”
- Talk about what your child wants most to talk about. Give him time to tell you all about it.
- Ask about things you do each day—“Which shirt will you pick today?” “Do you want milk or juice?”
- Build on what your child says. If he says “ball,” you can say, “That’s your big, red ball.”
- Introduce pretend play with your child’s favorite doll or toy animal. Include it in your conversations and your play. “Rover wants to play too. Can he roll the ball with us?”

**Between eighteen months and two years**, your baby will be able to follow directions and begin to put words together, such as “car go” or “want juice.” She will also begin to do pretend play which fosters language development. You can spur your child’s communication skills when you:

- Ask your child to help you. For example, ask her to put her cup on the table or to bring you her shoe.
- Teach your child simple songs and nursery rhymes. Read to your child. Ask him to point to and tell you what he sees.
- Encourage your child to talk to friends and family. She can tell them about a new toy.

Engage your child in pretend play. You can talk on a play phone, feed the dolls or have a party with the toy animals.

**Between two and three years**, your child’s language skills will grow by leaps and bounds. He will string more words together to create simple sentences, such as “Mommy go bye-bye.” He will be able to answer simple questions, such as “Where is your bear?” By 36 months he will be able to answer more complicated questions such as, “What do you do when you are hungry?” He will do more and more pretend play, acting out imaginary scenes, such as going to work, fixing the toy car, taking care of his “family” (of dolls, animals.)

You can help your child put all his new words together and teach him things that are important to know when you:

- Teach your child to say his or first and last name.
- Ask about the number, size and shape of the things your child shows you.
- Ask open-ended questions that don't have a "yes" or "no" answer. This helps them develop their own ideas and learn to express them. If it's worms, you could say: "What fat, wiggly worms! How many are there? Where are they going? Wait, watch and listen to the answer. You can suggest an answer if needed: "I see five. Are they going to the park or the store?"
- Ask your child to tell you the story that goes with a favorite book. "What happened to those three pigs?" Reading spurs language development. Take him to storytime at your local library. Your toddler will enjoy sharing books with you as well as peers.
- Do lots of pretend play. Acting out stories and role-playing create rich opportunities for using, and learning, language.
- Don't forget what worked earlier. For example, your child still needs quiet time. This is not just for naps. Turn off the TV and radio and let your child enjoy quiet play, singing and talking with you.

(Note: This information is from <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-language-literacy/helping-learn-to-talk.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/> and was adapted, with permission, from Learning Link: Helping Your Baby Learn to Talk, by C.E. Morrisset Huebner and P. Lines, 1994, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.)



## INFORMATION CARD 4: TOY AND PLAY SAFETY POINTS

Retrieved from: <http://www.toyshopuk.co.uk/safety/>;

- **Toy size**

In terms of toy safety, toys that are both too large and too small can pose risks. The most obvious thing to check for is whether there are any choking hazards. Babies and toddlers shouldn't be given any toy that is smaller than (or has individual parts smaller than) mouth-size. Similarly, toys such as bicycles and other outdoor toys that are too large for the child can easily lead to unnecessary accidents and falls.

- **Age suitability**

Whilst the 'Age Warning' mark is there to show what toys are suitable for the under 3s and which are not, all children develop at different speeds so it is important to also take your own child's ability into account. Always supervise children with balloons, inflated or not.

- **Sharp edges**

It is important to check toys regularly, to ensure that they do not have any broken parts or sharp edges that could cause your child harm.

- **Cleanliness**

Although this is especially important for babies and toddlers who tend to chew and suck any toy they are given, keeping toys clean is also especially important for outdoor toys (such as scooters, bikes and swings).

- **Tidiness**

We all know that putting away a room full of toys when you know they are going to be strewn all over the floor again the next day can often seem pointless, but toys can pose serious tripping hazards so should be stored as tidily as possible. Similarly, ensure that toys are not stored in places that might cause your child harm when trying to find them (i.e. a high shelf).



## INFORMATION CARD 5: TOYS AND PLAYING ACTIVITIES FOR DIFFERENT AGES AND STAGES

**Infants** (<http://school.familyeducation.com/games/growth-and-development/38382.html>)

| PLAY ACTIVITIES                                                                         | TOYS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Use their bodies as the primary avenue to explore the world.                            | mobiles,<br>rattles,<br>toys with wheels,<br>stacking and nesting toys,<br>unbreakable mirrors,<br>washable stuffed animals and dolls,<br>cloth, card and waterproof books.<br><br>(Try to avoid electronic toys that do things infants can't understand or control.) |
| Learn to participate in and control simple social interactions with caregivers.         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Learn to recognize, explore, and control objects, sights, sounds, textures, and tastes. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Explore, master, and learn to use their body parts.                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Learn how to get desired reactions from people and objects.                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**Toddlers** (<http://school.familyeducation.com/games/growth-and-development/38382.html>)

| PLAY ACTIVITIES                                                                                          | TOYS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enjoy the physical activity that comes from their new mobility in the environment.                       | pull-push toys;<br>blocks;<br>an assortment of balls;<br>Play Doh with simple tools (craft sticks and wooden rollers);<br>picture books;<br>containers, scoops, sifters, and other objects for sand and water play;<br>toys and props for dramatic play like scarves, hats, cars, a toy telephone, stuffed animals, and generic baby dolls;<br>large pegged-top puzzles;<br>a small climbing structure (a changeable structure is most versatile). |
| Explore relationships between objects and how to control them.                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Expand their understanding of object permanence—e.g., hide-and-seek activities.                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Start to see themselves as part of the community and develop skills to participate, especially language. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Work on using symbols and make-believe in play.                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

**Good Toys for Young Children by Age and Stage** (retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/toy>)

| AGE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | GOOD TOYS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Toys for young infants—birth through 6 months</b></p> <p>Babies like to look at people—following them with their eyes. Typically, they prefer faces and bright colors. Babies can reach, be fascinated with what their hands and feet can do, lift their heads, turn their heads toward sounds, put things in their mouths, and much more!</p>     | <p>Things they can reach for, hold, suck on, shake, make noise with—rattles, large rings, squeeze toys, teething toys, soft dolls, textured balls, and vinyl and board books</p> <p>Things to listen to—books with nursery rhymes and poems, and recordings of lullabies and simple songs</p> <p>Things to look at—pictures of faces hung so baby can see them and an unbreakable mirror</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>Toys for older infants—7 to 12 months</b></p> <p>Older babies are movers—typically they go from rolling over and sitting, to scooting, bouncing, creeping, pulling themselves up, and standing. They understand their own names and other common words, can identify body parts, find hidden objects, and put things in and out of containers.</p> | <p>Things to play pretend with—baby dolls, puppets, plastic and wood vehicles with wheels, and water toys</p> <p>Things to drop and take out—plastic bowls, large beads, balls, and nesting toys</p> <p>Things to build with—large soft blocks and wooden cubes</p> <p>Things to use their large muscles with—large balls, push and pull toys, and low, soft things to crawl over</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>Toys for 1-year-olds</b></p> <p>One-year-olds are on the go! Typically they can walk steadily and even climb stairs. They enjoy stories, say their first words, and can play next to other children (but not yet with!). They like to experiment—but need adults to keep them safe.</p>                                                            | <p>Board books with simple illustrations or photographs of real objects</p> <p>Recordings with songs, rhymes, simple stories, and pictures</p> <p>Things to create with—wide non-toxic, washable markers, crayons, and large paper</p> <p>Things to pretend with—toy phones, dolls and doll beds, baby carriages and strollers, dress-up accessories (scarves, purses), puppets, stuffed toys, plastic animals, and plastic and wood “realistic” vehicles</p> <p>Things to build with—cardboard and wood blocks (can be smaller than those used by infants—2 to 4 inches)</p> <p>Things for using their large and small muscles—puzzles, large pegboards, toys with parts that do things (dials, switches, knobs, lids), and large and small balls</p> |

| AGE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | GOOD TOYS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Toys for 2-year-olds (toddlers)</b></p> <p>Toddlers are rapidly learning language and have some sense of danger. Nevertheless they do a lot of physical “testing”: jumping from heights, climbing, hanging by their arms, rolling, and rough-and-tumble play. They have good control of their hands and fingers and like to do things with small objects.</p> | <p>Things for solving problems—wood puzzles (with 4 to 12 pieces), blocks that snap together, objects to sort (by size, shape, color, smell), and things with hooks, buttons, buckles, and snaps</p> <p>Things for pretending and building—blocks, smaller (and sturdy) transportation toys, construction sets, child-sized furniture (kitchen sets, chairs, play food), dress-up clothes, dolls with accessories, puppets, and sand and water play toys</p> <p>Things to create with—large non-toxic, washable crayons and markers, large paintbrushes and fingerpaint, large paper for drawing and painting, colored construction paper, toddler-sized scissors with blunt tips, chalkboard and large chalk, and rhythm instruments</p> <p>Picture books with more details than books for younger children</p> <p>CD and DVD players with a variety of music (of course, phonograph players and cassette recorders work too!)</p> <p>Things for using their large and small muscles—large and small balls for kicking and throwing, ride-on equipment (but probably not tricycles until children are 3), tunnels, low climbers with soft material underneath, and pounding and hammering toys</p> |



## INFORMATION CARD 6: PLAYING WITH ITEMS IN THE HOME

(Brown, N. (2002) The Power of Play: A Strategy to Meet the Developmental and Learning Needs of Young Children. UNICEF)

Here is a list of materials and activities that are easy to find in the home and are appropriate for older infants and toddlers. Take samples with you to show parents in home visits and even show parents how to make some of the items themselves. It is often the less expensive open materials that are most interesting to this age of the child.

- Soft, fabric toys
- Plastic objects—bowls, spoons, lids
- Pull toys—tape a string to a little box
- Push-pull toys—with wheels
- Fabric tunnels: sheets draped over chairs and small tables
- Mobile of colourful papers & cut up pieces of paper towel roll hanging over the crib
- Large grocery boxes—some open, some taped shut
- Small slides
- Early cloth books—sew together pieces of fabric and use non-toxic markers to make simple pictures
- Photos laminated or covered with clear plastic—familiar people, family, pets, animals
- Play peek-a-boo games—hiding faces, objects
- Things that make noise/musical instruments—banging on pots, drums, stroking a comb, etc.
- Shakers with different sounds—put different quantities of shells or pebbles in cans with the plastic tops glued on for safety
- Puppets—make sock puppets and sew on button eyes
- Paper (old) to tear and crunch
- Spools (old and empty)—sand them to make stacking toys
- Space to crawl—clean, safe, comfortable
- Water play—in large plastic bins, with plastic bottles, plastic bowls, sponges, soap
- Sponge balls, or stuffed old stockings—to practice throwing and catching, and possibly large baskets to throw them in
- Blankets and fabric—for hide and seek
- Matching games—matching sets of pieces of coloured paper, fabric, old wallpaper
- Matching shape games—cut out matching sets of geometric shapes
- Props for pretend play—old clothes for dress-up, hats, fabric, old kitchen items (bowl, spoon, pot), toy telephone, doll babies
- Sorting games—collections of large items (that cannot be swallowed) like seashells, big pieces of coloured cardboard for playing “put together what goes together”
- Jigsaw puzzles—take a simple magazine picture and glue it to a piece of cardboard. Cut the image into 3 or 4 pieces and let the child reconstruct it.
- Small boxes—taped closed, for constructive play
- Surprise bag—game for naming and texture recognition. Put one item at a time in the surprise bag, let the child feel it and guess what it is.
- Sand and water play—sand can be dry or mixed with water.
- Provide: spoons, shovels, pails, plastic containers, funnels, and strainers, if available.
- Riding toys—tricycles, or take a square board and attach wheels to it so children can move it with their feet.
- Dolls—bought or made at home



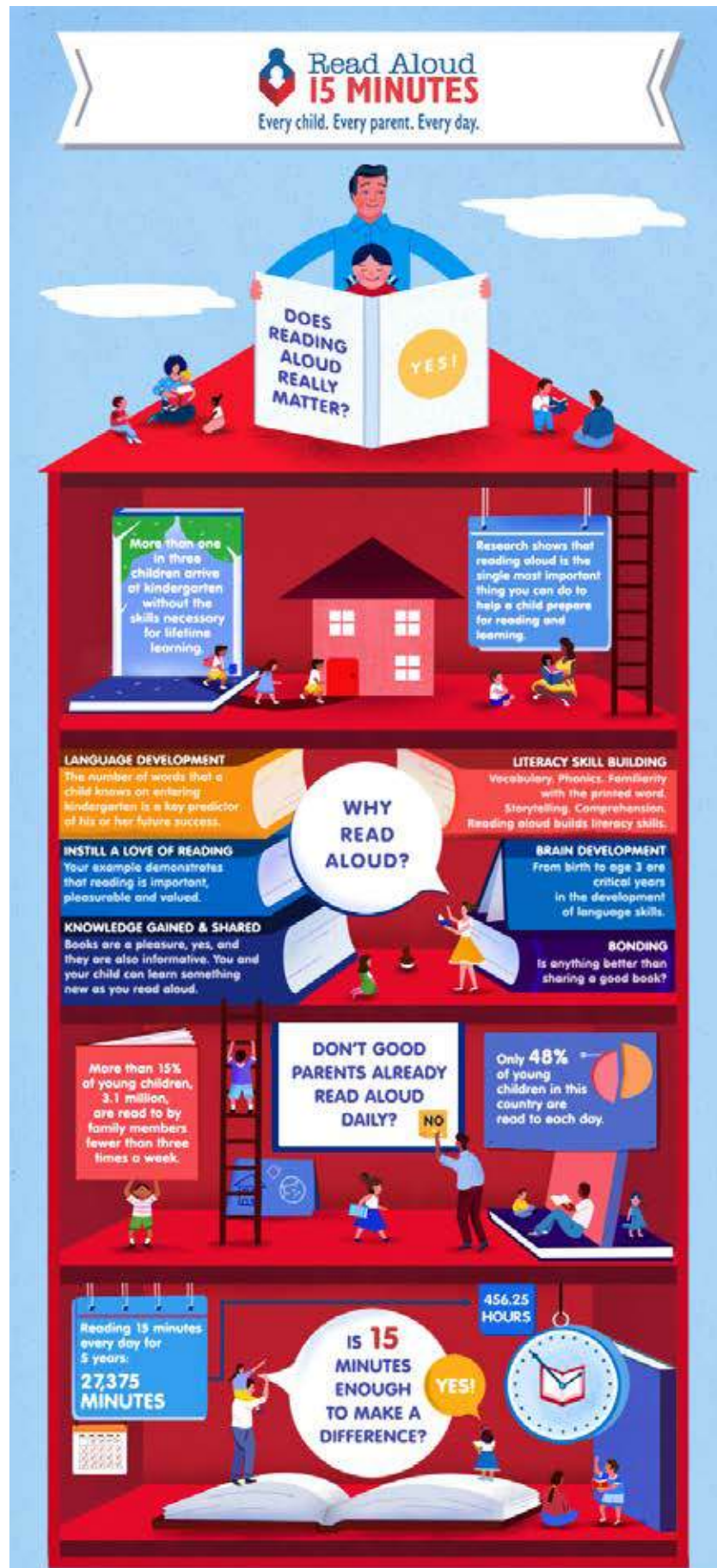
## INFORMATION CARD 7: READING TIPS

For infants, read aloud for a few minutes at a time, but do it regularly. Don't worry about finishing entire books — focus on pages that you and your baby enjoy.

- Try to set aside time to read every day — perhaps before naptime and bedtime. In addition to the pleasure that cuddling your baby before bed gives both of you, you'll also be making life easier by establishing a routine. This will help to calm your baby and set expectations about when it's time to sleep.
- Cuddling while you read helps your baby feel safe, warm, and connected to you.
- Books for babies should have simple, repetitive text and clear pictures. During the first few months of life, your child just likes to hear your voice, so you can read almost anything, especially books with a sing-song or rhyming text. As your baby gets more interested in looking at things, choose books with simple pictures against solid backgrounds.
- When your child begins to do things like sit up in the bathtub or eat finger foods, find simple stories about daily routines like bedtime or bath time. When your child starts talking, choose books that invite babies to repeat simple words or phrases.
- Read with expression, pitching your voice higher or lower where it's appropriate or using different voices for different characters.
- Don't worry about following the text exactly. Stop once in a while and ask questions or make comments on the pictures or text. ("Where's the kitty? There he is! What a cute black kitty.") Your child might not be able to respond yet, but this lays the groundwork for doing so later on.
- Books with mirrors and different textures (crinkly, soft, and scratchy) are also great for this age group, as are fold-out books that can be propped up, or books with flaps that open for a surprise. Board books make page turning easier for infants and vinyl or cloth books can go everywhere — even the tub. Babies of any age like photo albums with pictures of people they know and love. And every baby should have a collection of nursery rhymes!
- Babies love — and learn from — repetition, so don't be afraid of reading the same books over and over. When you do so, repeat the same emphasis each time as you would with a familiar song.
- As your baby gets older, encourage him or her to touch the book or hold sturdier vinyl, cloth, or board books. You don't want to encourage chewing on books, but by putting them in his or her mouth, your baby is learning about them, finding out how books feel and taste — and discovering that they're not edible!
- One of the best ways you can ensure that your little one grows up to be a reader is to have books around your house. When your baby is old enough to crawl over to a basket of toys and pick one out, make sure some books are included in the mix.
- In addition to the books you own, take advantage of those you can borrow from the library if there is any in your neighborhood. Sometimes libraries have story time just for infants and toddlers. If you do not have library in your neighborhood, you can connect with other mothers and exchange books for children. Don't forget to pick up a book for yourself while you're there. Reading for pleasure is another way you can be your baby's reading role model.

Adapted from [http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/reading\\_babies.html#a](http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/reading_babies.html#a)

You can also use this infographic - <https://www.pinterest.com/catebohn/infographics/>





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