

Be engaged & engaging

0-3 months

Sing, cuddle, read, massage, touch and play.

Every baby is born ready for love and to interact with her caregivers with these activities.

At this stage, you are her favourite toy!

4-6 months

Talk, sing, and imitate your baby's coos and babbles. He will look at you and coo and babble back.

Being actively engaged in baby's life will allow you to learn his routines and what makes him content.

Watch for cues that baby needs a break, (e.g., looks away or needs some quiet time). He will let you know when he is ready to engage again. This is just his way of absorbing all that he is experiencing.

7-12 months

Pick up on her cues when she wants something.

Introduce her to new things, new places and new toys.

Follow her lead when she explores her world. You will come to learn what she enjoys doing and will be able to foster that interest and expand on it.

13-18 months

Get down to baby's level and follow his lead and imitate his actions.

Learn his interests and what he enjoys doing.

Become his play partner and expand on his interests.

19-24 months

Join in her play and help foster her social play skills, teach her sharing and turn taking skills that she can later use when she plays with her peers.

Baby is beginning to engage in pretend play and will imitate your actions. She sees you as her role model.

25-36 months

Continue to help him with turn taking and sharing.

These terrific toddler years are marked by independent exploration of his world, communicating thoughts and ideas, and becoming more easily understood.

Become a play partner and help him increase his imagination by introducing different scenarios.

37-48 months

Be available and ready to talk to him when needed to show him you are interested in his activities.

Play simple games with him that require turn-taking (e.g., Go Fish).

Engage in activities that make him happy (e.g., reading books, doing puzzles).

49-60 months

Encourage more sophisticated pretend play by providing props (e.g., restaurant, grocery store, doctor's visit). This will help him engage in more problem solving, making decisions and new conversations.

If you can, run with him, jump with him, and play on the floor with him. He is very active at this age and loves to share this with you. Taking him to environments (i.e., the park) where he can move his body will make him feel more in control during quieter activities.

Be sensitive

0-3 months

Respond quickly and appropriately to baby's needs.
Read her cues and give her what she needs to be content.

4-6 months

Baby's cries are his way of expressing his feelings.
Don't get frustrated at these times. If baby cries after his feeding or diaper change and does not settle, try other things, (e.g., burp or hold him for a bit), and see if he calms down.
Keep trying until you find something that works.

7-12 months

Your baby is her own person with her own personality which may be different from yours.
She may not like the same things as you and may prefer to do things differently than you. Respect and foster those differences.
Acknowledge her dislikes/likes, preferences and feelings.
Comfort her when she gets upset, and use words to help her label and express her feelings.

13-18 months

Learn what your baby likes/dislikes and what he prefers and continue to reassure him that it's okay for him to have his own preferences.

19-24 months

Give her space to explore her independence. Intervene only when necessary for safety or to set limits.
Provide her with options that allow her to make simple choices about what she wants, e.g., let her choose between two healthy dessert options—grapes or strawberries.

25-36 months

Your toddler is beginning to understand the sequence of events in familiar stories.
Help him understand the world around him. His words are now more clearly formed.
Give him the words he needs to be understood and to express himself.
Be patient.

37-48 months

Provide opportunities for him to make choices about play activities.
Avoid the urge to quickly fix things when he's upset. Support him while you allow him time to problem solve.
When he is crying, avoid the urge to tell him to stop crying, model the behaviour you are trying to change. Staying calm will help him become calm again.

49-60 months

Support him when he wants to try new things or take risks in social situations. He will learn that it's okay to try out new things and can bring success.
If transitioning to a new setting (i.e., school, daycare), it can be difficult for him to express what he's feeling. New experiences mean new emotions. Take time to talk to him to help him understand his new feelings and think of ways to cope with difficult ones.

Be consistent

0-3 months

Build routines and respond the same way to her cues.

Consistency will help baby find her world more predictable and reliable.

4-6 months

Continue to build routines and respond in the same ways to baby's cues.

By making his world more predictable, you will help him make sense of the world and to feel safe and secure.

7-12 months

The consistency of your daily routines and responses will let your baby know what is expected of her.

She will also know what to expect from you and will begin to learn what her limits are and what she can and cannot do in regards to her safety.

13-18 months

You and your child are building a trusting relationship.

As he learns what is expected of him, he is learning the limits for safe play.

He knows that when he is distressed or in need you will respond by comforting or redirecting him.

19-24 months

Toddlers are now testing their limits.

Keep her safe while nurturing her independence by allowing her to choose from options that are acceptable to you.

She will keep her sense of control

25-36 months

Providing consistent care and responses to behaviour lets your toddler feel safe and secure and lets him know what you expect from him.

He will know his limits and know what he can or cannot do

Be patient.

37-48 months

Be consistent with the rules, this will help her understand expectations.

Holding and cuddling helps her feel reconnected after being apart.

Create a schedule that he she can get used to. Predictability can help her understand time and time management.

49-60 months

Even though she now has a stronger character and will stand up for what she wants, she still needs you to direct her in the right direction and guide her daily decisions. She relies on you to feel safe and loved.

Be responsive

0-3 months

When baby smiles, smile back.

When she coos, talk to her.

When baby cries, she is telling you loud and clear that she needs you and you must respond appropriately and quickly.

Responding, especially when she is upset, is your number one job and she will learn that you will be there for her.

4-6 months

When baby is seeking your attention, respond with touch (e.g., picking him up) or with your voice (e.g., letting him know you are there).

When he cries, comfort him.

When he is babbling or cooing, talk to him.

Your baby will engage even more when you are responsive.

7-12 months

When baby cries, looks for you, or wants to play with you, respond and let her know that you're there when she needs you.

13-18 months

When baby seeks your attention, join in and play with him.

Be his play partner and follow his lead.

19-24 months

Although baby is seeking her independence, she is still dependent on you and needs to know you will comfort and help her when she is distressed.

25-36 months

Your independent toddler will still become distressed at times.

Comfort him and reassure him that you are always there.

37-48 months

Help her deal with tantrums by talking to her about what makes her feel better when she is angry or sad.

You still play a crucial role in responding consistently, especially when she is hurt, sick or scared.

49-60 months

This time period often brings big transitions (i.e., school). You may find that she needs additional support during this time and she adjusts to the new demands of her new routine. Be patient and extra supportive during this time to help her feel safe and confident to tackle what lies ahead.

Monitor and put a name to things that may cause her experience to be negative. This will help her experience lower levels of stress and feel your parental support.

Be enjoyable to be with

0-3 months

Babies can read your cues, too! Baby loves to be with you and to see your happy face.

Focus on baby and make yourself emotionally available to her.

If you are stressed out, ask for help.

4-6 months

Allow yourself to take a moment to sit back and enjoy the pleasures of being a caregiver.

Watch your baby while he is sleeping or playing and take pleasure in the fact that this little person is an important part of your life and you are a part of his.

7-12 months

Spend time with her.

Take pleasure in watching her, seeing how much she has grown, how much she has learned.

Take notice of her unique personality when she is with others, with you, and when playing on her own.

Take it all in and take pride in how much your little girl has grown.

13-18 months

Enjoy your baby's company.

Sit back and watch him play.

Watch him build on his strengths, engage with the world and become a confident independent little person.

19-24 months

Take pride in knowing your little toddler is becoming independent and mastering things on her own.

25-36 months

Enjoy being around your toddler and spending time with him.

You are helping him become a strong, independent individual. Take pleasure in this but know that you will always be his caregiver and will be there when he needs you.

Do not make him feel bad for making mistakes or for doing things in a different way.

Encourage him to try new things, build on his strengths and to do things on his own.

37-48 months

Model coping emotions so she can learn acceptable ways to cope.

Praise turn-taking during every day routines.

Even though she may be showing more independence, she still needs you to build her self-esteem, confidence, optimism, and enjoyment of everyday activities. Take pride that you are helping to shape how she views the world.

49-60 months

Tell her how proud you are of her abilities whenever you catch her doing something well. She will feel proud of what she's done and will have a strong sense of her strengths and abilities.

Engage in activities that she chooses and let her take the lead. This shows respect for her ideas and builds the relationship.

Be baby's voice

0-3 months

Until your baby can talk, you need to be her voice and to speak up for the things that she needs.

4-6 months

Be your baby's advocate.

Observe and learn his cues because that is how he is telling you that he needs you.

Respond with comfort and pleasure to make him feel safe and comfortable.

7-12 months

Try and help her understand things when she becomes overwhelmed by giving your baby words to describe her feelings and emotions.

By giving her words, you are also building her vocabulary which will help her put words together to make simple sentences.

13-18 months

Give him words to help him voice his feelings and express his emotions.

When he cannot, do it for him.

19-24 months

Your toddler is beginning to use her words.

Help her label objects and experiences.

When you can sense she is uncomfortable or needs something, help her by giving her the words to use or voice it for her.

25-36 months

Your toddler is on the road to becoming more and more independent but you have been his voice for most of his life to keep him safe and secure.

He is still very dependent on you. Continue to be his voice and comfort him especially when he is distressed.

While your toddler begins to interact with others more independently, you may need to step in to guide play.

37-48 months

Explore books about emotions and talk about times he has felt those emotions.

When he loses control, help him label his emotions and guide him on how to regain control.

When conflicts arise with peers, he will need your assistance to problem solve. Being nearby as he explores will allow him to feel safe.

49-60 months

Encourage him to not give up on games or tasks when he plays with others. He will learn to persist at a task, especially when others are counting on him.

Show and coach him on how to handle emotions and feelings. You can teach him how to express anger and frustration safely.