



How can I support my baby's learning?

Babies are born wanting to learn and even tiny babies use their senses to explore the world around them.

Babies learn through all their senses: listening and responding to their mother's voice and smell, tasting and learning to feed, watching and seeing everything around them, smiling and responding, touching and being touched.

Parents, caregivers and ECD practitioners are a young child's first teachers.

In order to grow and develop, babies need loving and trusting relationships.

Caregivers can make a big difference by talking, playing and sharing stories and books with babies in their mother tongue.

The ideas and activities in this leaflet are for you to use in the first 1000 days of a child's life. You can use the ideas with babies and young children in your ECD centre or playgroup. You can use them with your own children at home and can share with parents in your community.

The ideas are based on Book 1 (*Talk, play and sing*), and Book 4 (*Share books*) which are part of a series of six books which cover the age range from birth to five years. The books are used in our *Every word counts* programme which offers practical ideas for supporting young children's language development and early learning.

For more information about these materials and our programmes, visit our website [www@wordworks.org.za](http://www.wordworks.org.za) or contact us:

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It only takes a few minutes to make a big difference!

Play

Gone!



There's the **ball**!



In this picture the mother has hidden the ball for her baby and started a game. They have played this game before and now he knows to look for the ball. When they first played the game, the baby didn't know where the ball had gone – then his mother showed him where to look. She encouraged her baby to keep trying and praised his efforts. It often takes lots of 'tries' to work something out!

Where else can you play this game of hide and find?
What could you hide instead of a ball?

More ideas: Hide your face with your hands and let baby pull your hands away and find you! Hide something in your hand and let baby open your hand to find it. Babies love to play this over and over again. What about playing on a train or in a taxi or when you are next waiting for an appointment at the clinic?

Play

1

Mom says from the kitchen:

I can see you like that spoon -
is it helping your sore tooth?



2

Yes close it, close,
close! Good!

uh-uh!



In this picture the mother has made a play-basket for her baby with things that are baby-safe and good to suck, feel, shake, look at and bang – this is how babies play and learn! In Picture 1, baby is playing while his mother is nearby and chats to him while she is washing up. In Picture 2, she sees he is trying to close the jar and she talks about what he is doing. He loves to hear his mother's voice!

Can you find four things you can put in baby's play basket?
Wash these and add more!

More ideas: Here are some things to add to your play basket: a wooden spoon, brush, plastic bottle, soft toys. Play baskets can keep your baby busy while you are working around the house. Keep an eye on your baby and keep chatting while you work! You can describe what your baby does with things in the basket (e.g. when your baby takes a doll and hugs it, you could say: 'Love baby, love baby').

Let babies get to know books



In this picture the baby is given a chance to find out what a book looks like and how it feels. Her mother is allowing her to explore the book and lets her turn the pages backwards and forwards. She is sitting nearby and now and again she helps her baby to turn the pages. She encourages her baby and talks about the pictures – her baby hears from her voice that books are exciting and full of wonder!

Do you think that babies can enjoy books?

Has your baby ever held a book? What do you think she would do with one?

More ideas: Give your baby a chance to look at and experience a book on her own but stay close so that she doesn't chew bits off the book and choke. Follow your baby's lead as she explores books by turning pages, holding them upside down or going backwards. Stop when she is tired or loses interest! Never get cross if your baby drops the book or turns it upside down.

Do actions

1

Look, he's clapping hands!
Can you clap hands?



2

Look at you clapping!
Good clapping!

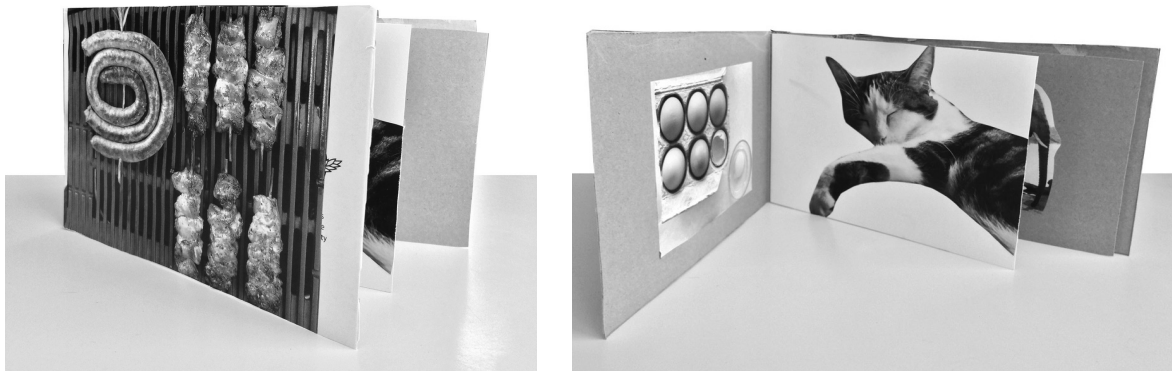


In this picture the mother and little boy are looking at a book together. The boy is copying the action in the picture and his mother gives the word: 'clapping'. He is seeing the picture, doing the action and hearing the word - this is how children learn! Later, his mother might ask him to show his father or another family member how he claps.

When do you have time to look at books or pictures with your child? Is there anyone else in the family who would enjoy spending time sharing books and talking with your baby?

More ideas: There are lots of words you can introduce when you look at books with your child. You can name things in pictures or talk about all the things people are doing (jumping, sleeping, running, reading, dancing). Do the actions so that your child connects the action, the picture and the word! Try and find a time every day that is 'storytime'. Your child will look forward to this special time together.

Make a cardboard book



Examples of cardboard books

To make a baby board book you need some cardboard, scissors, glue and sticky tape. Here are some ideas for making board books:

- strong and durable
- use no or few words
- simple pictures
- lots of colour
- pictures about babies everyday activities
- pictures of people, animals and flowers
- pictures of faces

Babies can be encouraged to start handling board books from a very young age. Follow their lead and let them enjoy exploring books and looking at the pages that interest them.