

Turn and Find

*You turned around
and found it!*



Turn your baby so she will need to look behind her body to see a toy.

Changing your baby's position so that a toy is out of sight encourages her to remember the toy and move her body to find it.



Why this is important

Showing your baby a toy and then moving her so she cannot see it encourages her to remember it and move her body to find it. Memory, like her other skills, develops in stages. Turning her head or body to regain sight of an object shows the beginning development of a type of memory called object permanence.

What you do

- Sit at a table with your baby in your lap. Show her a favorite toy and place it on the table while talking about the toy. *See the baby bear! What a friendly bear!*
- Turn your baby so that she faces away from the object. If she tries to turn her head or body to see the toy, encourage her to look and find it.
- Give her the toy. Smile and speak lovingly to her. *You turned around and found the bear!*
- Notice her interest in the game. If she does not look for the toy, try again at a later time.

Another idea

Lay your child on the floor on her stomach with the toy in front of her. Slide her quickly around so the toy is at her side (from a twelve o'clock to a three o'clock position). She may wiggle back to the original position or roll onto her back to look for the toy. Allow her time to find the toy herself before offering help.

Let's read together!

Ready, Set, Go!
by Nina Laden

Peek-a-Boo Mirror

Peek-a-boo!



Encourage your baby to remove a cloth from a mirror to see what is there.

Your baby will discover that he can make things happen, like causing his own reflection to appear.

Look at you!



Why this is important

Encouraging your baby to play in front of a mirror helps him practice finding his reflection. When you first pull the cloth away from the mirror, your baby may be surprised to see his image. At first he may touch the image and talk to the baby in the mirror, not recognizing his reflection. Over time he will begin to understand that he is the baby in the mirror. This helps him establish an understanding of himself.

What you do

- Attach a cloth to the top of a sturdy, unbreakable mirror. Hold your baby on your lap in front of the uncovered mirror.
- Point to the image and talk about the baby: *See the baby? That's you, Juan. Look at your smile!*
- Cover the mirror as you ask, *Where is Juan?* Wait to see what he will do. If he lifts the cloth or pulls at it, respond positively. *Peek-a-boo! You moved the cloth; look at you!* If he needs help, lift the cloth a little so he can see part of his face. Show surprise and pleasure as he sees himself. *I see something under there. It's you, Juan!*

Another idea

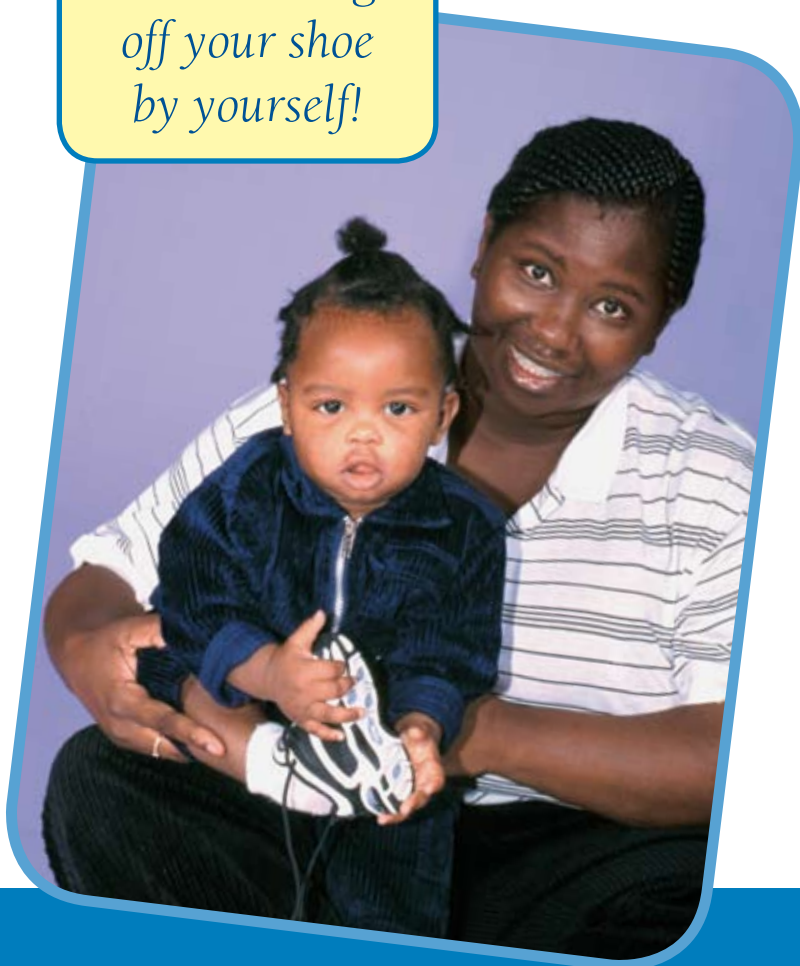
Sit with your baby on the floor with the unbreakable mirror in front of him. Play the game with him a few times before moving back and encouraging him to play by himself. Let him see you in the background through the mirror.

Let's read together!

The Big Book of Beautiful Babies
by David Ellwand

Make Undressing Easy

*You're taking
off your shoe
by yourself!*



Loosen your child's shoes, unzip his coat, or pull his shirt partly over his head so he can do the last part of the action.

Your child will have the satisfaction of successfully completing the job of removing clothes.



Why this is important

Undressing is a basic part of caring for one's own needs and moving toward independence. Your child may want to undress himself before he has the skills and he may not want you to help him. As he practices this new type of independence, he will be more willing to accept help if he feels he is accomplishing part of it on his own.

- Choose a part of the day when you have plenty of time for your child to practice undressing. It is best if you can make time to practice during a natural undressing transition, such as before a bath or taking off shoes when he comes inside.
- Start with his shoes, because most children are interested first in removing those. Untie the laces and loosen the shoe at his heel so that he only needs to pull it off his toes. Prepare the socks the same way by removing them from most of his foot before he pulls them off.
- Offer positive feedback after each item of clothing is removed. *You took off your shoe! I think you can pull off your sock, too!*
- Undo any buttons or zippers and show him how to pull his arm through the sleeve, when your child is ready to try more difficult pieces of clothing such as a coat or shirt.
- Help with pants by having your child stand and push his pants down to his knees. Then have him sit and invite him to pull them over his feet by himself.

Another idea

Talk about the patterns and colors on his clothes. As he takes off each item, use their names to help teach him the words to describe his clothing. *Red shirt. You are taking off your red shirt.*

Let's read together!

All By Myself
by Mercer Mayer

How Does It Feel?

*Does that sandpaper
feel scratchy?*



Invite your child to feel a few objects and then find them by touch when they are out of sight.



Your child will begin to connect the words you say with the textures he touches.

*You found a smooth
ball in the bag!*



Why this is important

Your child will enjoy touching objects with different textures. When he learns the words that describe the way an object feels, he will develop a better understanding of that object. Asking him to use his sense of touch to find an object gives him practice with following directions.

What you do

- Place three or four objects of varying textures in a box. A few examples are: a cotton ball, a pinecone, a hairbrush, a ball, sandpaper, and a crayon.
- Encourage your child to open the box and feel the objects.
- Talk about each item as he explores it. *That's a cotton ball. It's very soft.* Always use the same word to describe the same texture. Use more than one object of a particular texture so that your child understands that *soft* is not the name of the object but a word to describe an object.
- Give him plenty of time to explore the objects. Then, place two of the objects in a bag so that your child can no longer see them.
- Ask him to find one of the objects by reaching in to look for it using only his fingers. He may try to use his eyes to find the object. Encourage him to try again with his hands. *Let's see if you can find it with your fingers. Find a ball that's round and smooth.*
- Repeat the game using the same objects until he can intentionally choose the one you ask for.
- Add another object to the bag. If he is having success, work up to three or four items at a time.

Another idea

Ask him to locate an object by only giving him a description of the object, not the name. *Can you find something scratchy? Can you find something hard?*

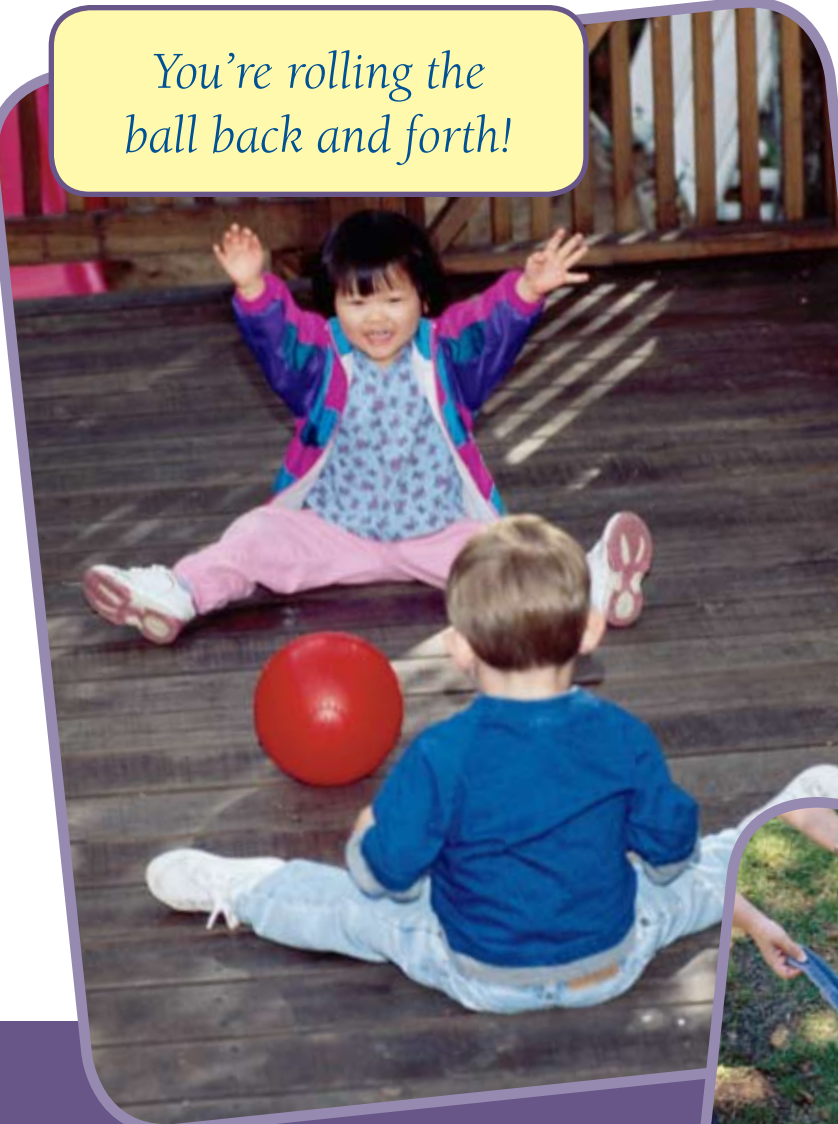
Let's read together!

Dog

by Matthew Van Fleet and Brian Stanton

Play With Others

You're rolling the ball back and forth!



Show your child and another child how they can use a ball to play together.

This gives your child a guided experience in cooperating with another child.

What can you make this ball do?





Why this is important

Your child may be ready to begin learning how to play cooperatively with another child. Through cooperative games, she will understand that playing with others can be more fun than competition or solitary play. As she gets older, she will find that many activities can be accomplished only through cooperative behavior. A child who enjoys cooperative games early in life is more likely to approach later situations involving cooperation in a positive way.

What you do

- Show your child and another how to sit on the floor so they can roll a ball back and forth. Stay close to offer help when needed.
- Give them a large towel after they have had time to practice rolling the ball. Invite them to each hold two corners of the towel.
- Place a light ball on the towel.
- Talk about how they can make the ball move. *What happens if you shake the towel? What else can you make the ball do?*
- Use words to explain to them what they are doing. *John, you're holding up your side of the towel so the ball won't roll off. You can make the ball bounce because you're playing together.*
If the ball goes astray, help them get it back.

Another idea

Think of other simple games that two children can play together. Encourage them to build with blocks, play with toy cars, or look at books cooperatively.

Let's read together!

A Boy and His Bunny
by Sean Bryan

What Would Happen If...?

Create some silly situations from daily life for your child to figure out.

Your child will understand a little more about the logic of familiar routines and in what order things must happen.

Do shoes go on first?



Noooo, socks.





Why this is important

Your child may now be able to use her imagination to understand make-believe situations. By asking her *What would happen if...* questions, she may begin to notice and understand what must happen first in a situation and to think about logical order. Recognizing the necessary order or sequence in which events happen helps with reasoning, problem solving, and understanding the plot in a story.

What you do

- Create situations that present time or space in an incorrect order and share them with your child. Pretend to make mistakes when doing simple tasks. For example, you can zip her coat before she puts her arm in the sleeve, or hold her glass upside down as you start to tip the milk carton to pour.
- Ask her, *What would happen if... you put on your shoes and then put on your socks?* Or ask, *What if you got in the bath and then we took off your clothes?*
- Give your child time to answer with words or gestures to show the proper order of events.
- Repeat her words in a full sentence. For example, if she says all wet. You might say, *You're right. Your clothes would get all wet!*
- Listen every day for the words *first*, *then*, *next*, and *until*.
- Encourage her when you hear them in her speech.
Yes! We do need to get a plate first!

Ready to move on?

Encourage your child to make up a few silly situations for you to solve. Challenge her by offering a few wrong answers for her to correct.

Let's read together!

Blue Hat, Green Hat
by Sandra Boynton

The Duck Said...

Who's that tripping over...



Read a familiar book to your child and pause in the middle of a repeated line.

Your child will practice using words by filling in the blanks of the familiar story.

...my bridge!





Why this is important

When you read stories to children they hear many new words used in different ways. Your child will increase her understanding, memory, and use of words as she listens to a story. She may also begin to notice printed words on a page. Her experiences of listening and helping to tell a story will help her learn to love reading. Completing, or filling in, a familiar sentence is an easy way for her to practice her memory skills and use her growing vocabulary.

What you do

- Choose a familiar story, such as *The Little Red Hen*, which has repeated words and sounds.
- Invite your child to say the repetitive lines in the story as you read. For example, when the Hen asks who will plant the wheat, you can read, *The Duck said...* Then let her fill in the words, *Not !!*
- Point to the words as she says them. Later, encourage her to point to the words.
- Challenge her by leaving out a word that shows the sequence of the story. For example, read *Who will help me...this wheat?* She will need to choose from several words (*plant, water, cut, or eat*) by remembering what has already happened and what comes next.

Another idea

You can keep your child interested in this activity by choosing funny stories with repeated noises and sounds. Stories about animals, machines that act like people, or families and familiar situations provide fun opportunities for your child to contribute to telling the story.

Let's read together!

The Little Red Hen
by Byron Barton

That Doesn't Belong

*What doesn't belong
on the table?*

When setting the table, add an item that should not be there, such as a toothbrush, and wait for your child to discover it.

Your child will develop a clearer understanding of a group by noticing an object that does not belong in the group.

The toothbrush!



Why this is important

Pointing out an object that does not belong helps your child express the reasons why something belongs or does not belong. Noticing the item that is not part of the group helps her clarify her understanding of group membership.

What you do

- Finish setting the table by placing an odd object, such as a toothbrush or a book, near a plate.
- Say to your child: *Something doesn't look right. Would you please come and help me see what doesn't belong?*
- Show her the setting and tell her: *I was setting the table with things we use to eat. But something is there that shouldn't be. Can you see what it is?*
- Draw her attention to it, if necessary, by commenting on the appropriate items on the table: *I know we need a spoon, a cup, and a napkin.*
- Give positive feedback when she correctly locates the object. *You're right! That toothbrush shouldn't be there.*

Another idea

Increase the number of odd objects to be found. Think of other ways to incorporate the game into your time together: a pencil stuck into a crayon box, a sock in the washcloth drawer, etc.

Let's read together!

There's A Cow in the Cabbage Patch
by Clare Beaton

Double Treasure

Is it
round?

Yes!

Yes.

Is it a container?

Create a treasure hunt for things that have two characteristics, such as being round and being a container.

Your child will need to think carefully in order to classify things in more complex ways.





Why this is important

Your child will practice creating groups that are based on more than one characteristic. Playing this game gives him practice in thinking carefully and systematically about the features of various objects. As people organize information in most everyday situations, it is usually necessary for them to consider more than one aspect of an object.

What you do

- Invite your child to join you on a treasure hunt around the house. For example, say, *Let's look for some double treasures. The things we find must be red, and they must be toys.*
- Check each object he finds by reviewing the characteristics: *This is a toy, and this part is red, so it's a double treasure!*
- Talk about items your child includes but that do not fit the criteria: *That's a fun toy, but it isn't red, so it's not a double treasure. Let's keep looking until we find something that is both red and a toy.*
- At the end of the game, look over all of the objects that he collected.

Ready to move on?

Keep the game interesting by changing the characteristics by which you choose double treasures. You might look for objects that are blue and something to wear, smooth and round, or canned and a vegetable. You can also use a book or magazine to look for pictures of double treasures.

Let's read together!

Round is a Mooncake
by Roseanne Thong

We Play Relay



*You're working
together to clean up!*

Turn an ordinary job, such as putting toys away, into a relay game for your child and a few friends.

By being a member of a fun team, your child may develop a positive attitude about cooperating.



Why this is important

You can provide your child with chances to accomplish tasks cooperatively with other children. Many enjoyable activities, such as team sports, are possible only when groups of people work together. Enjoyable group experiences at age 4 can help your child gain a positive, confident attitude toward later cooperative activities.

What you do

- Create a fun relay game for your child that accomplishes an ordinary task. For example, several children can cooperate in carrying toys to an outdoor sandbox.
- Offer instructions that involve your child and a couple of friends or family members. Assign each child a task in the process of getting the toys to the sandbox. *Let's pretend these sand toys are very big and that you can only carry one at a time. Jeri, you start. Let's pretend that Jeri can only carry a toy from here to the table. Maria will stand at the table to take each toy when Jeri gets it there. Then Maria will carry each toy from the table to the door, where Gene is. Then Gene will carry each toy to the sandbox.*
- Observe and comment as the children cooperate. *Jeri, it was a good idea to wait for Maria until she got back to the table. Then she was ready for the next toy that you brought.*
- Talk about the game when the children are playing in the sandbox. Help the children remember each child's role.

Ready to move on?

Use a relay game for giving a snack out for a picnic, putting away toys, or moving tricycles to the shed.

Let's read together!

Watermelon Day
by Kathi Appelt