



**Communication/  
Language**

**Exploring Words**

- Option 1** (OO) A young infant participates in a book sharing that emphasizes listening to a caregiver’s voice and looking at high-contrast pictures of familiar objects.
- Option 2** (OO) An infant participates in a book sharing that emphasizes opportunities to help turn the book’s pages and communicate about high-contrast pictures of familiar objects.
- Option 3** (OO) An older infant participates in a book sharing with opportunities to hold and turn pages of a book and communicate about high-contrast pictures.



**Cognitive**

**Solving Problems**

- Option 1** (OO) A young infant plays with a ball of his/her choice.
- Option 2** (OO) An older infant explores an object permanence box with a ball of his/her choice.



**Self-Regulation**

**Getting Calm**

- Option 1** (OO) An infant practices calming down after a mildly stimulating music and movement activity with a caregiver.
- Option 2** (OO) An older infant practices calming down after a mildly stimulating activity of moving his/her body to music with a caregiver.



**Social-Emotional**

**Interacting with Others**

- Option 1** (OO) A young infant participates in responsive interactions with a caregiver using a novel ball.
- Option 2** (OO) An older infant participates in back-and-forth interactions with a caregiver while playing with a ball and a basket.



**Physical/Health**

**Moving Our Bodies**

- Option 1** (OO) A young infant touches a ball with his/her feet.
- Option 2** (OO) An older infant explores rolling and catching a ball with a caregiver.
- Option 3** (IG) Older infants practice rolling and catching a ball in a small gathering.

(OO)=One-to-One, (IG)=Informal Gathering



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

**Receptive language**  
**Expressive language**

A young infant participates in a book sharing that emphasizes listening to a caregiver's voice and looking at high-contrast pictures of familiar objects.



#### Key Concepts

Book  
Look



#### Materials Needed

*Look, Look!* by Peter Linenthal



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive

**BEGIN:** [Sit on the floor with the young infant reclined in your lap. Support the infant's head in the bend of your arm. This will allow for your hands to hold the book and turn the pages while also securely holding infant.]

Hold the book about 12 inches from the infant and point to the picture on the cover.]

**ACT:** I have a book for us to read together! Look, there is a picture of a face on the front of our book.

[Pause and watch for the infant's response. Example: "You are looking at the face. You are kicking your legs!"



Open the book to the first page. Point to and describe parts of the picture. Example: "Do you see the two hands? Here are the fingers. The two hands are reaching. The hands are reaching for a butterfly!"

Use the following strategies to engage the infant with the book:

- Describe the infant's attention to the book. Example: "You are looking at the children. The children are smiling!"
- Spend more time talking about the pictures that seem to be of particular interest to the infant.
- Describe and respond to gestures and/or vocalizations. Example: "You are kicking your legs at the picture of the fish. Look at all the fish! The fish are swimming."
- Use a soft, soothing voice to add interest and enjoyment.

Transition out of the activity when infant shows signs of disinterest.]

**RECAP:** [Describe what happened during the book sharing. Example: "We looked at a book with pictures of different things. You liked looking at the pictures. You made cooing noises when you looked at the picture of the children. You kicked your legs when you saw the picture of fish. You looked at the fish swimming for a long time."]

## Birth–12 Months

### Option 2 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

**Receptive language**  
**Expressive language**

An infant participates in a book sharing that emphasizes opportunities to help turn the book's pages and communicate about high-contrast pictures of familiar objects.



#### Key Concepts

Book  
Look



#### Materials Needed

*Look, Look!* by Peter Linenthal



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive  
Physical/Health

Invite an infant to sit on your lap or next to you to read a book. Introduce the book by pointing to the cover and encouraging infant to look at the picture with you. Explain there is a picture of a face on the cover of our book. Open the book and begin looking at the pictures and reading the text, using the following strategies:



- Invite the infant to help you turn the pages of the book. Be flexible about this arrangement. The infant may skip some pages. The book does not offer a plot and it is easy to move around pictures. The infant may turn some pages more quickly than others.
- Point to and name what's in the picture, including its parts. Example: "This is a cat. The cat has a tail. Here is the tail. The cat also has whiskers. Look at the cat's long whiskers! Here are the cat's eyes. I am pointing to the cat's paws."
- Pause and talk about the pictures the infant shows particular interest in. You may wish to provide additional context or information. Example: "You are looking at the moon in the sky. Look at all the stars! The sky is dark because it is nighttime."
- Describe and respond to gestures and/or vocalizations. Example: "You are touching the picture of the race car. You are smiling! I think you like this picture of the race car."
- Help the infant connect book information to his/her own experiences and developing knowledge. Example: "These are hands. There are fingers on the hands. Let's look at our hands. I have fingers on my hand. You have fingers on your hand!"
- Use your voice to add interest and enjoyment to the book sharing.
- Recognize infant's participation in the book reading. Example: "We had fun looking at the pictures in this book together, Carter. You touched the picture of the race car. You smiled at the children! You helped turn the pages!"

## Birth–12 Months

### Option 3 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

**Receptive language**  
**Expressive language**

An older infant participates in a book sharing with opportunities to hold and turn pages of a book and communicate about high-contrast pictures.



#### Key Concepts

Book  
Look



#### Materials Needed

*Look, Look!* by Peter  
Linenthal



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive  
Physical/Health

Invite an older infant to read a book with you. The infant may wish to sit next to you or stand while you read. Encourage the infant to hold the book and turn its pages. Provide assistance if needed by keeping all the pages in your right hand except for the page to be turned. This will help the infant to turn one page at a time. A standing infant may want to use one hand to help turn the pages. Once the infant is comfortable and ready to read, point to and describe the face shown on the book cover. Use the following strategies to engage the infant with the book:



- Point to and name objects in the pictures. Example: “This is a sun. The sun has a face! Here are the eyes. Here is the nose. Look at the smiling mouth! The sun looks happy!”
- Invite the infant to point to objects that you name. Use objects and names that you anticipate the infant knows. Example: “I see a picture of a moon in the sky. Do you see the moon? You can point to the moon!”
- Describe what the infant is looking at and provide additional information. Example: “You are looking at the pictures of the flowers. The flowers have something called petals. Here are some petals.”
- Describe and respond to gestures and/or vocalizations. Example: “You said ‘night night.’ You are looking at the picture of the moon in the sky. Yes, it is nighttime!”
- Encourage the infant to connect book information to his/her own experiences and developing knowledge. Example: “This is a car. We have a toy car in our room. You like to play with our toy car.”
- Follow the infant’s lead in how quickly or slowly the pages are turned. It is fine if the infant skips some pages. The book is not organized by a plot.
- Recognize the infant’s participation in the book sharing. Example: “You helped me hold our book, Maya. You pointed to the stars in the sky. You turned the pages to see what was next! We had fun reading this book together.”

### What to Look For—Options 1–3

The board book featured in this activity plan continues a Block 10 focus on high-contrast pictures that support a young infant’s visual development and offer bold images for discussion. Many items will be familiar to some older



infants, who will benefit from your pointing to and naming parts of an object. See examples in Options 2 and 3. Look for an opportunity to point out the words on a page to an older infant, as suggested in the Enrichment tip. Some of the text in the book easily stands out through its placement in curving red lines. It is inappropriate to provide instruction in print at this young age, of course, but you can support an infant's developing awareness of print and pictures by simply pointing to the red text as you read it.

### More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

**Extra support** ■ Point to and name parts of the face on the book's cover, especially eyes, nose, and mouth. ■ Provide a book-related object, such as a toy car or cat figure, for a younger infant to hold during and after the book sharing. ■ At the conclusion of the book sharing, return to pictures that are of interest to the infant.

**Enrichment** ■ Draw an older infant's attention to words shown in a curving red arrangement on a page. Explain that these are words. Words tell us things.



#### Interest Area

**Materials Needed:** several books in black and white or contrasting colors

Provide opportunities for infants to look at high-contrast pictures in books throughout the day. Infants may enjoy looking at the pictures during tummy time, while waiting to eat, or during floor time. Talk with infants about what they are looking at.



#### Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** *Look, Look!* by Peter Linenthal, large piece of white paper affixed to a low table, black tempera paint in two shallow trays, art smocks, several toy vehicles with textured tires/wheels

Extend the book content with older toddlers and preschool-age children by inviting children to dip a vehicle into paint and then "drive" the car across the paper, leaving black tire marks. Younger toddlers may participate with the painting while one-to-one with a caregiver.



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Problem-solving Object inquiry skills

A young infant plays with a ball of his/her choice.



#### Key Concepts

Look  
Reach



#### Materials Needed

3 activity balls (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Physical/Health  
Self-Regulation

**Be Prepared:** Select clear activity balls with objects inside that provide visual interest. Balls that are two and a half inches in diameter are appropriately sized for this age.

**BEGIN:** [*Hold a nonmobile infant on your lap and invite him/her to play with a ball. Provide support for his/her head, neck, and torso as needed. Some infants will be able to sit erect with one of your hands supporting his/her chest and torso. Use the infant's name as you talk with him/her and offer a few moments for the infant to get comfortable.*]

**ACT:** [*Hold two balls in your palm about 12 inches from the infant. Allow ample time for the infant to look at the balls. Observe whether one ball seems to attract his/her attention. Give just enough assistance for the infant to get ahold of the ball he/she seems to prefer.*]



*Describe the ball chosen by the infant. Example: "You looked at this ball. Then you reached for the ball. Something is spinning inside the ball."*

*Give the infant time to explore the ball. If the ball drops, pick it up and hold it for the infant to see. Tip the ball to activate the moving toy inside. Point to and comment on the moving part inside. Example: "A little toy is moving inside our ball."*

*If the infant remains interested, offer another set of two balls: the one not selected at the beginning of the activity and the third ball not initially offered. Help the infant select one of the balls for exploration, using procedures described above. Describe the selection and the infant's actions with the ball.]*

**RECAP:** [*Briefly describe what happened, pointing to balls involved in the activity. Example: "You looked at two balls. The balls have toys that move inside. You reached for one of the balls. You used your hands and your mouth to find out about the ball."*]

**Option 1 continued** What to Look For—Option 1

Infants will differ in how much they look at the two ball possibilities. You may wish to briefly and gently shake each ball separately so it is clear there are two balls. If you hold two balls stationary in your hand during the presentation, a young infant may think the two balls form one object. Most infants will look at the ball and feel the shape and hardness with their mouth. Some infants may look closely at the inside of the ball, especially if the moving part has strong visual appeal. Some infants may tire after exploring one ball. Infants sometimes begin to fuss after stimulation and need a structured calm down time. End the activity by talking to the infant and repositioning him/her if needed. Standing and holding the infant as you shift your weight from one foot to the other in a sway motion can help some infants become calm. Other infants are attuned to sound and begin to calm when you talk to them quietly.

 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

**Extra support** ■ For an infant who can explore only by looking, present one ball and describe the way the object inside moves and/or the rattle sounds.

**Enrichment** ■ Sit on the floor with the infant well supported on your lap. Place several balls on the floor where the infant can see them move. The moving actions may prompt the infant to prefer to explore one ball.



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 2 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Problem-solving

An older infant explores an object permanence box with a ball of his/her choice.



#### Key Concepts

Look  
Reach  
Hole



#### Materials Needed

Object permanence box  
1 white ball  
1 red ball



#### Also Promotes

Physical/Health



#### Optional Reading

*Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill

Sit on the floor next to an infant and invite him/her to play a game with you. Place the object permanence box on the floor so the infant can easily see the box, including the tray portion of the toy. Point to and demonstrate features of the box as you describe the hole, door, and tray. Infants may be interested in looking into the box or reaching into its hole. Imitate the infant's action. Affirm and describe the infant's actions. Examples: "You can reach into our box." "You can look in our special box. The box is empty."



Next, set the two balls in front of the infant, one at a time, and encourage him/her to select one. The infant may be excited to put the ball through the hole before you describe his/her choice. Describe the infant's pick and actions. Example: "Marco, you reached for the white ball right away. Then you dropped the ball into the hole!"

After a ball is put in the hole, the infant may look into the box through the top or may see the ball roll out the door onto the tray. Allow time for the infant to figure out what has happened. If the infant does not reach for the ball on the tray, ask him/her "Where did the ball go?" Use hand gestures to complement your words. Wait for the infant to respond.

Describe things the infant sees. Example: "Diego, your ball rolled out. There it is!"

Repeat the sequence a few times, drawing attention to the ball going in the hole and out the little door.

### What to Look For—Option 2

This activity supports cognitive development in two ways: the infant is encouraged to make a choice between two balls and to explore what happens to a ball when it is placed in a special box. Understanding that an object exists when it cannot be seen (known as object permanence) takes time to develop. Look carefully for signs of its development in the infant and provide appropriate support. Example: Demonstrate how the box works (see Extra Support tip) if it appears the infant is confused about how a ball can be dropped in the hole of the box.



**Option 2 continued**

The infant may be interested in dropping a ball in the hole but not in looking for it. Ask where the ball went, as suggested in the activity plan description, but do not push the question if the infant continues to show little interest in discovering where the ball went. The development of object permanence cannot be hurried. Simply talk with the infant about his/her version of the activity, giving words to each action.

If an infant shows no interest in the box, use the balls to play with him/her in other ways, such as handing them back and forth or rolling. Offer the infant two balls and encourage him/her to select one.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

**Extra support** ■ Demonstrate use of the ball with the object permanence box. ■ Substitute a favorite small toy for a ball if the infant seems uninterested in the ball but the box has some appeal.

**Enrichment** ■ Cover one of the balls with a cloth after it is retrieved from the box. Offer the infant a nudge to look under the cloth if he/she does not do so after you hide the ball.

 **Interest Area**

**Materials Needed:** small toys, cloth, mirror, small dish, stacking ring, books with flaps (such as *Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill), laundry basket, lightweight ball, cardboard box

Play *Peekaboo* with a nonmobile infant during care routines. During playtime, draw an infant's attention to a partially covered toy and lift the cover. Another day, play a peek game with a mirror. Cover a small mirror with a cloth and then remove the cover so the infant can see himself/herself.

For an early mobile infant, partially cover a toy for the infant to discover. Place a small dish over a stacking ring. Share books with flaps, such as *Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill.

Cut 1–2 holes in the top of a cardboard box. At one end, cut an opening where infants may see and retrieve toys. Provide balls to drop through the holes. Mobile infants will enjoy dropping balls and other small toys into the top of the box and retrieving them from the side.



 Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** large mailing tubes, balls or small vehicles, toy moose, *Animal Camouflage* by Sarah Dennis, *Animals in Camouflage* by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes

Reinforce object permanence understandings of toddlers and preschool-age children with large mailing tubes they can use with balls or small vehicles. Children may enjoy making tunnels with tubes.

Preschool-age and older children enjoy games played repeatedly. A fun way to begin the week is *Moose is Missing*, a game that involves hiding a toy moose and celebrating when children find the moose. Children also will enjoy taking a turn to hide the moose toy.

School-age children may be interested in learning about how animals use camouflage to hide. The books *Animal Camouflage* by Sarah Dennis and *Animals in Camouflage* by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes offer useful information and pictures. ELM's activity plans in Science for preschool-age children also offer an introduction to animal camouflage.



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal Self-control

An infant practices calming down after a mildly stimulating music and movement activity with a caregiver.



#### Key Concepts Calm



#### Materials Needed Gentle instrumental music



#### Also Promotes Communication/Language Physical/Health

**BEGIN:** [*Hold a young infant in your arms with his/her head well supported in the bend of your arm, ensuring the infant can clearly see you. Invite an older infant to sit on your lap. Sit within easy reach of the music source.*]

**ASK:** Are you ready for some music?

[*Pause and acknowledge infant's response. Example: "I see you are looking at me. I think you would like to listen to some music. Let's move a little bit while we listen."*]

**ACT:** [*Play soft, instrumental music and lightly sway the infant from side to side. Smile and make eye contact with the infant. If he/she seems to enjoy the movement, gradually increase the amount of swaying.*

[*If the infant develops a frown or appears at all distressed, eliminate or reduce the amount of swaying or stop the music. You may wish to provide a mildly stimulating experience for the infant by playing the music without the movement or offering gentle movement without music.*

[*Acknowledge the infant's reactions. Example: "You have a big smile! You like our moving to the music!"*

[*After several minutes of music and/or movement stimulation, turn off the music and explain that it is time for us to get calm now. Reposition the infant to provide a clear signal that the activity is over. Provide comfort, such as patting on the back, quietly singing a familiar song, and/or offering soft-voice reminders that it is time to rest.*]

**RECAP:** [*Smile and make eye contact as you describe what happened. Examples: "We had fun moving with the music, Akilah! You had a big smile. Then the music stopped. I held you while you got calm again." "You didn't like moving to the music, Darius. We sat and listened to the music instead. You felt calm and happy when we were sitting."*]



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 2 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Self-control

An older infant practices calming down after a mildly stimulating activity of moving his/her body to music with a caregiver.



#### Key Concepts

Music  
Calm



#### Materials Needed

Gentle instrumental music



#### Also Promotes

Communication/Language  
Physical/Health

Invite an infant to sit near you on the floor to listen to music. Sit facing the infant and within reach of the music player. Offer a big smile and explain what will happen. Example: “We are going to listen to music. We are going to move our bodies with the music! Are you ready?” Point to your ears when you mention listening to music. Move your body slightly when you describe moving your body. Do not pursue the music and movement if the infant shows clear signs of no interest.

Begin playing the music and demonstrate gentle movements by swaying your upper body back and forth. Smile and encourage the infant to do the same with his/her body. Many mobile infants will naturally begin to move their head and upper body with music. Offer additional prompting and demonstration, if necessary. Some infants may enjoy standing and holding both of your hands while moving his/her whole body with the music. End the activity if the infant shows signs of disinterest or distress at any time.

Describe the infant’s actions. Examples: “You had fun moving your body with the music, Brody!” “You didn’t feel like moving your body today, Siri. You enjoyed sitting to listen to the music.”

After several minutes of music and movement, ask the infant to sit and rest with you. The infant may want to sit near you or on your lap. Provide quiet time for the infant to calm him/herself. If needed, support the infant by patting his/her back, quietly humming or singing a favorite song, and/or offering gentle reminders that it is time to rest. Recognize and acknowledge the infant’s behavior as he/she becomes calm after the activity. Example: “You had fun moving your body with music. Now you are sitting with me and resting. We are feeling calm.”

### What to Look For—Options 1–2

An infant may signal that he/she would like the music and movement to continue. A younger infant may kick his/her legs, coo, or laugh aloud. An older infant may say “more” or show displeasure with your announcement that it is time to rest. Remember that the ultimate goal of the activity is to practice calming down. Continuing the music and movement may lead to overstimulation and greater challenge in getting calm.

Your most important role in the activity is to help the infant calm him/herself. Watch the infant’s responses to a strategy (or strategies) you use carefully. Give the infant a few moments of quiet time to respond to a strategy before offering help. Some infants may move toward a calm state independently with your indication that the music is over. Others may need additional support to become calm.



## More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

**Extra support** ■ In Option 1, first offer music and then introduce swaying, rather than beginning with both music and swaying. ■ If an infant needs extra support to become calm, consider playing slower, soothing music as you hold or sit near him/her.

**Enrichment** ■ If the infant responds positively to gentle music, consider offering livelier music in a repeat of the activity. ■ Invite 2–3 older infants who have previously demonstrated emerging skill in getting calm to participate together in Option 2. Infants may watch one another and choose to move or “dance” their bodies in different ways.

### Interest Area

**Materials Needed:** none

During floor play, engage infants in songs or rhymes that involve gentle movement, such as “Row, Row, Row, Your Boat.” Slowly sing one verse of the song and invite one or more infants to gently sway forward and back. You may wish to sit with one infant on your lap at a time to sway with you. Encourage the infants to calm down after the exciting activity using one or more of the strategies suggested in the activity options.

### Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** none

Include toddlers or preschool-age children in Option 2, especially if you anticipate their involvement will informally demonstrate for older infants how to get calm.



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Social interaction skills

A young infant participates in responsive interactions with a caregiver using a novel ball.



#### Key Concepts

Look  
Listen  
Ball



#### Materials Needed

Novel ball (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Communication/Language  
Physical/Health

**Be Prepared:** Secure a ball with interesting features that an infant can easily grasp, such as the Oball Rollin Rainstick Rattle.

**BEGIN:** *[Place the infant on his/her back in a comfortable reclining position.*

*Smile and begin talking with the infant. Example: “Good morning, Mason! I am happy you are here today. You look ready to play!” Acknowledge the infant’s reactions, including any vocalizations and/or facial expressions. Examples: “You are smiling, Aria! I smiled at you, and you are smiling at me!”*

*Hold the ball about 12 inches from the infant, at his/her midline.]*

**ACT:** Look, I have a ball for us to play with! Listen to the sound our ball makes. Maybe you would like to touch and hold the ball.

*[Gently shake and move the ball slowly from side to side to attract the infant’s attention. Watch for the infant to respond by gazing, batting at, or reaching for the ball.*

*Describe the infant’s reaction to the toy. Examples: “Your eyes got wide when you saw our toy. You are looking at the ball.” “You kicked your feet when you heard the rattle inside the ball, Muhammad! I think you like our ball.”*

*Move the ball close to the infant so he/she can touch or grasp it. Describe your action. Example: “I will hold the ball close, so you can touch it.” Describe the infant’s actions. Example: “You reached for the ball as soon as you saw it, Lily! I moved it closer. Now you are holding it.”*

*Watch for and acknowledge vocalizations and/or facial expressions.]*

**RECAP:** *[Offer a brief description of the interaction. Example: “We had fun with a ball, Mason. You moved the ball and listened to the sound it made!”]*





## Birth–12 Months

### Option 2 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Social interaction skills

An older infant participates in back-and-forth interactions with a caregiver while playing with a ball and a basket.



#### Key Concepts

Ball  
Basket



#### Materials Needed

Soft, medium-size ball  
Large basket



#### Also Promotes

Communication/Language  
Physical/Health

Invite an infant to sit with you on the floor to play with a ball. Place the basket between you. Name the basket for the infant. Introduce the ball, and invite the infant to hold and explore the ball. After several moments, encourage the infant to drop the ball into the basket. Enthusiastically acknowledge the infant’s actions. Example: “Nicholas, you put the ball in the basket! Look, the ball is in the basket. Yay, Nicholas!”

Remove the ball from the basket. Describe your actions and their results. Example: “I took the ball out of the basket. Look, the basket is empty!” Gently place the ball in the basket and describe your action. Invite the infant to take the ball out of the basket. Then explain that it is the infant’s turn to put the ball back in the basket. Demonstrate putting the ball in the basket if it appears the infant is not clear about your suggestion.

Promote a back-and-forth pattern with the ball with the following strategies:

- Provide clues about who does what.
- Describe what is happening. Example: “You dropped the ball in the basket. I dropped the ball in the basket! We are taking turns putting the ball in the basket.”
- Recognize the infant’s actions. Example: “You clapped your hands when you dropped the ball into the basket! Clap, clap, Brooklyn! You put the ball in the basket.”

Pause for the infant to start or contribute to the exchange. Maintain eye contact. Remember to use facial expressions to communicate with the infant. Focus on the interaction with the infant more than getting the ball into the basket.

### What to Look For—Options 1–2

Both options use an object(s) to facilitate interactions between you and an infant. Look for ways to demonstrate your responsiveness to the infant’s actions and attention to you. In Option 1, the young infant will benefit from your gentle comments about how he/she is playing with the novel ball, and some freedom to explore the ball as he/she wishes. In Option 2, your careful guidance is needed for an older infant to experience a back-and-forth exchange with the ball and basket. Be prepared for the infant to be interested in doing one action only, such as placing the ball in the basket, but not retrieving the ball from the basket, and perhaps only one round of handling the ball. The length of each activity is likely to range considerably across infants and situations. In Option 2, an infant may be interested in carrying the ball around the room and not dropping it in a basket. At this young age, children cannot be expected to understand the concept of taking turns, but



Option 2 has potential to support the development of early awareness of how back-and-forth exchanges can work. Your being tuned into the infant is central to the success of each option.

## More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

**Extra support** ■ Your short, clear comments actively support the infant’s language skills. But infants are unlikely to understand most of the words you say. Remember to accompany your words with demonstrations, partial demonstrations, or hand gestures.

**Enrichment** ■ Option 2 can be pursued with two infants at the same time.



### Interest Area

**Materials Needed:** assortment of balls in different sizes, textures, and colors, several containers to fit one or two balls (such as a bucket, basket, or large bowl)

Provide opportunities for infants to play with balls and containers. Infants may enjoy exploring the balls individually, or practicing filling and dumping the containers. Infants may enjoy watching their peers engage in the materials in similar ways. Describe infants’ actions with the balls. Recognize facial expressions and repeat and extend infants’ vocalizations.



### Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** medium-size soft ball

Invite older children to play a game of passing the ball to a named peer. Encourage children to sit in a loose circle and pass the ball to the child you name. The children may hand the ball to the peer or roll the ball across the circle. Invite children to repeat the name of the child holding the ball. Ensure that each child has a turn to hold the ball and hear his/her name spoken. Babies may enjoy holding an age-appropriate ball and hearing their name spoken during the activity.





## Birth–12 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Gross motor development

A young infant touches a ball with his/her feet.



#### Key Concepts

Ball



#### Materials Needed

1 6–8" cloth ball



#### Also Promotes

Social-Emotional  
Communication/Language

Greet an infant who is alert and ready for some activity. Position the infant on his/her back on a carpet or mat. Sit on the floor facing the infant. Talk with the infant in a cheerful manner and pause for him/her to react by moving or looking.

Hold the cloth ball for the infant to see. Explain the infant is looking at a ball. Then touch the ball against the bottom of the infant's feet. Hold the ball steady in one place where the infant can reach it with both feet. The infant may push against the ball with both feet, stretching one or both of his/her legs. If the infant begins to kick the ball, encourage him/her by smiling and describing his/her kicking.



Bring the activity to a close after a minute or when the infant signals a need for change by looking away or fussing. Hold the infant in his/her preferred position. Sometimes infants prefer a holding position that allows looking outward.

### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Talking about the infant's foot contact with the ball can be a valuable part of this activity. Even though the infant does not understand specific words, he/she will develop an awareness that his/her actions can elicit talking. The infant may also feel a sense of security hearing you speak in a warm and friendly manner.

A nonmobile infant may shift focus from touching or pushing the ball with his/her feet to looking at you. If the infant shows no interest in touching the ball (or your hand) with his/her feet, sit with the infant well supported to show and talk with him/her about the ball. Short periods of play may last less than one minute. Infants are never expected to throw or kick a ball.

### 📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

**Extra support** ■ Use your hand instead of the ball for the infant to touch or push with his/her feet.

**Enrichment** ■ Move the ball a little closer to the infant's feet to promote a stronger push and/or a slight bending of the infant's knees.



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 2 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Gross motor development

An older infant explores rolling and catching a ball with a caregiver.



#### Key Concepts

Push  
Ball  
Roll



#### Materials Needed

1 ball made of soft material



#### Also Promotes

Social-Emotional  
Cognitive  
Communication/Language

**Be Prepared:** This activity is designed for an infant who is able to sit unsupported with good balance.

**BEGIN:** [*Invite an infant to sit on the floor close to and across from you. Place the ball in the infant's two hands.*]

Here is a ball for you to hold with two hands. We can roll our ball!

**ACT:** [*Wait for the infant to explore the ball independently. Describe the infant's responses to the ball. Example: "I see you are moving the ball! It looks like you want to push the ball."*]

Do you want to play a game with me?

[*Hold your hands out toward the infant and encourage him/her to hand the ball to you. Next, gently roll the ball toward the infant.*]

*Describe each key action with the ball. Examples: "I push the ball. It rolls to you." "Great, you got the ball!" Encourage the infant to push the ball forward. Use your hands to demonstrate the motion as you say "push the ball."*

*Encourage the infant to complete two exchanges of the ball with you by making the game lively and fun.*]

**RECAP:** [*Describe what happened. Example: "We rolled the ball! You pushed the ball to me. You used two hands to get the ball."*]

### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Infants will differ in their experiences with a ball. Some may associate holding the ball with throwing the ball. The activity plan emphasizes rolling (pushing) the ball, not throwing. Pay close attention to the different sets of emerging skills involved in holding, pushing/rolling, and catching a ball. Catching and pushing (rolling) skills do not always develop at the same time. Catching a ball involves watching and anticipating when the ball is close enough to touch or grab. Pushing a ball is easier to do with both hands than with one hand. Eye-hand coordination is involved in each action. You may wish to make accommodations, such as moving closer to the infant, that provide challenging yet achievable tasks for the infant. Promote the use of both hands, beginning with the presentation of the ball as suggested in the opening segment of the activity. The activity is intended to offer exploratory experiences with a ball, not formal instruction in rolling and catching.

**Option 2 continued****More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

**Extra support** ■ Help the infant position himself/herself to capture a rolled ball. Encourage the infant to sit balanced with legs apart and arms forward. ■ Move closer to the infant if it appears it is too challenging for the infant to anticipate when the ball might reach him/her. ■ Offer reminders, such as “Here it comes.” ■ Show an infant how to push the ball forward with two hands to make it roll. Emphasize “push” by demonstrating with your hands as you say the word.

**Enrichment** ■ Adapt the game for an infant who prefers to stand. Roll the ball toward the infant and encourage him/her to get it with two hands. ■ The activity can easily be adapted for two infants who can readily manage a ball.



## Birth–12 Months

### Option 3 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Gross motor development

Older infants practice rolling and catching a ball in a small gathering.



#### Key Concepts

Ball  
Roll  
Push



#### Materials Needed

1 beach ball



#### Also Promotes

Social-Emotional  
Cognitive  
Communication/Language

Invite 2–3 mobile infants to sit on the floor with you. Welcome each infant by name. Roll the beach ball toward one of the infants. Use a repetitive phrase with the rolling action, such as “I roll the ball to (child’s name).” Encourage the infant to push the ball toward you. Say your repetitive phrase for the infant’s action, such as “(child’s name) rolls the ball to me.” Get the ball and roll it to the next infant while saying your repetitive phrase. You may wish to demonstrate how to push the ball with both hands.

Infants are not expected to remember what to do with the ball when it reaches them. Provide gentle clues throughout the activity. The enjoyment is pushing the ball and watching it roll while interacting with you.



### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

You will notice the infants using one hand or both hands to push the ball.

A beach ball is used in this activity because it is lightweight and will roll slowly, giving an infant a moment to prepare to touch or catch the ball with both arms or hands. Your repetitive phrase also provides a friendly notice that a ball is on its way. Emphasize the concepts of “push” and “roll.” The game has a back-and-forth pattern similar to conversation. If the activity is not working because an infant(s) wants to hold the ball, use a second ball with the infant(s) who is interested in pushing and catching the ball you roll. Positively acknowledge an infant’s preference for holding and looking at a ball. If an infant prefers to stand, encourage him/her to bend to use his hands for pushing and catching the ball. No kicking or use of legs/feet with the ball should be allowed.

### 📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

**Extra support** ■ Sit closer to infants if distance seems to cause too many challenges in pushing and/or catching. ■ Let some air out of the beach ball if it is rolling too fast.

**Enrichment** ■ If infants find it relatively easy to push and catch the ball, encourage them to push the ball to one another (rather than to you only).



### Interest Area

**Materials Needed:** balls of various sizes, laundry basket

Nonmobile infants will enjoy holding small balls when supported in a sitting position on your lap. Position nonmobile infants so they can see one another. Arrange a few balls of different sizes on the floor near nonmobile infants for them to see.

Place balls made for infants in easy-to-reach places for early mobile infants. Balls made for youth or adult sports are not appropriate for infants because they are too hard and heavy.

Encourage mobile infants to drop a ball into a laundry basket. A few minutes of exciting ball play will be fun for infants. Bring the ball play to a close by using a quieter voice and asking the infants to put their balls into the bag.



### Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** lightweight balls

Toddlers may enjoy participating in Option 3 with older infants. School-age children will enjoy practicing toss and catch with smaller balls that are soft on their hands. Preschool-age children will enjoy playing with balls that are easy to hold and manipulate, but they should not be expected to manage a game of catch on their own.