



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

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



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

- Option 1** (OO) An infant explores two similar toys with opportunities to notice differences between the toys.
- Option 2** (OO) An infant plays with toys that differ in size.
- Option 3** (IG) Infants explore different types of rings and balls, including ways to arrange the objects.



Self-Regulation

Paying Attention

- Option 1** (OO) A young infant watches the movements of a puppet manipulated by a caregiver.
- Option 2** (OO) An older infant watches and manipulates a puppet with a caregiver.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

- Option 1** (OO) A young infant participates in responsive interactions with a caregiver using a toy car.
- Option 2** (OO) An infant participates in open-ended toy car play with a caregiver, with opportunities to imitate each other’s actions with the toys.
- Option 3** (IG) Older infants participate together in open-ended play with toy cars, with opportunities to notice and imitate the actions of others.



Physical/Health

Moving Our Bodies

- Option 1** (OO) An infant visually explores the room from a secure sitting position in a caregiver’s lap.
- Option 2** (IG) Infants who can sit independently practice balancing their bodies in a sitting position while extending their arms to pretend to feed a hungry puppet.

(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 the caregiver's voice and communicating about pictures of baby faces.



Key Concepts

Book
Look



Materials Needed

Baby Faces by Margaret Miller



Also Promotes

Social-Emotional

BEGIN: [Sit with the young infant reclined in your lap. Support the infant's head in the bend of your arm so your hands can hold the book and turn the pages while also securely holding the 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, do you see the baby?

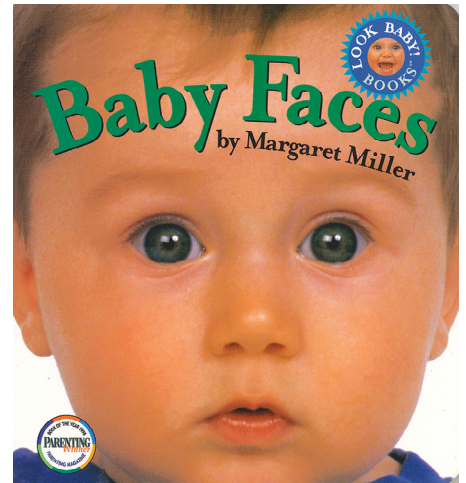
[Pause for and acknowledge the infant's response. Example: "You are looking at the picture of a baby, Aiden. You are smiling at the picture!"]

There are pictures of baby faces in our book. Let's open the book and see what's on the next page!

[Use strategies, such as the following, to engage the infant in the book:

- Point to and describe pictures. Examples: "See this baby? (Point to nose.) She is scrunching up her nose! I think she is smelling something stinky!" "Look at this baby! He is sticking his tongue out! I wonder why he is making this silly face."
- Describe the infant's reactions to pictures. Example: "You are smiling at this baby. The baby is smiling just like you are!" (Point to baby's mouth.)
- Describe and respond to gestures and/or vocalizations. Example: "You made a happy sound, Damion! I think you like this picture of the baby!"
- Use your voice to add interest and enjoyment to the book sharing.]

RECAP: [Describe what happened during the book sharing. Example: "We read a book together. Our book had pictures of baby faces. You smiled and kicked your legs when you looked at the happy baby. This was a fun book to read together!"]



Birth–12 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

An infant participates in a book sharing with opportunities to help turn the book's pages and communicate about pictures of baby faces.



Key Concepts

Book
Look



Materials Needed

Baby Faces by Margaret Miller

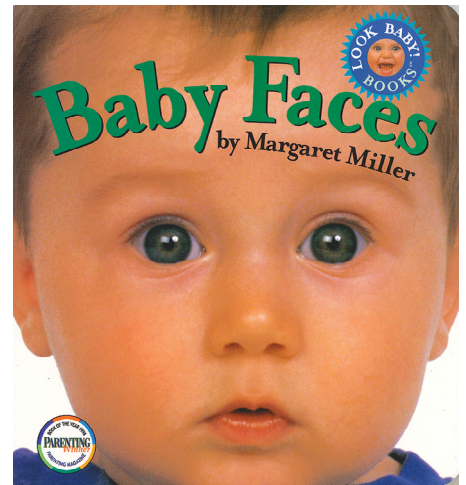


Also Promotes

Social-Emotional
Physical/Health

Invite an infant to read a book with you. Introduce the book by pointing to the cover and encouraging the infant to look at the picture with you. Example: "This is a picture of a baby. Our book is about baby faces." Use strategies, such as the following, to engage the infant with the book:

- Encourage the infant to help you turn the book's pages.
- Point to and name pictured objects. Example: "Look at this baby. Do you see her tongue? The baby is making a silly face!"
- Describe what the infant looks at. Example: "You are looking at the sad baby. The baby looks like she is crying. The baby has tears and a sad mouth."
- Spend more time talking about pictures that appear to be of interest to the infant.
- Describe and respond to gestures and/or vocalizations. Example: "You are sticking out your tongue! You are looking at the baby with his tongue out. You are doing the same as the baby in our book. You both have your tongues out!"
- Help the infant connect book information to his/her experiences and developing knowledge. Example: "You are touching the eyes of the baby in our book. Where are your eyes? Let's find them!"
- Use your voice to add interest and enjoyment. Example: Make a sad face and use a sad voice to describe a picture of a baby with a sad expression.
- Follow the infant's cues about the preferred pace of looking at and talking about pictures.



Conclude the session by recognizing the infant's participation in the book reading. Example: "We had fun reading this book together, Talia. You looked at the pictures of the babies. You stuck your tongue out, just like the silly baby. You helped me turn the pages! I think you liked this book."

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 the pages of a book and communicate about pictures of baby faces.



Key Concepts

Book
Look



Materials Needed

Baby Faces by Margaret Miller



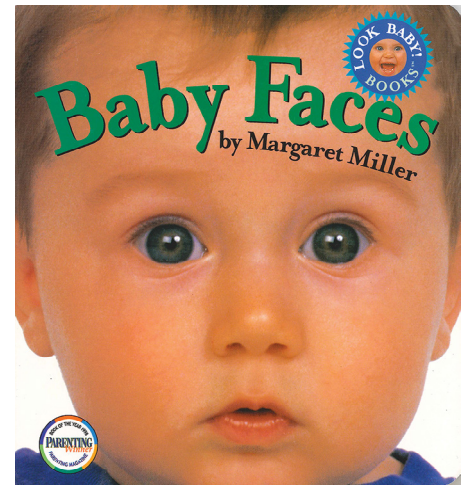
Also Promotes

Social-Emotional
Physical/Health

Invite an older infant to read a book with you. The infant may wish to sit next to you or prefer to stand close while you talk about book illustrations. Invite the infant to hold the book and turn the 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.

Explain that our book is about the faces of babies. We can look at pictures of babies and talk about what they look like. Use strategies, such as the following, to engage the infant with the book:

- Point to and provide names (or invite the infant to provide names) of pictured items. Example: “These are the baby’s eyes. Here is one eye. Here is another eye.”
- Invite the infant to point to objects that you name. Example: “The baby has a nose. Where is the baby’s nose? You can point to the baby’s nose!”
- Spend more time talking about pictures that seem to be of interest to the infant. Example: “You are pointing to the baby with her eyes closed. The word on our page says ‘yucky.’ The baby is making a yucky face! I wonder what the baby thinks is yucky.”
- Describe and respond to gestures and/or vocalizations. Example: “You said ‘uh oh!’ The words in the book say ‘uh oh!’ You said the words with me!”
- Help the infant connect book information to their experiences and developing knowledge. Example: “This baby says ‘yum-yum!’ The baby ate something that was yummy. You liked the strawberries we had for breakfast, Zachary. You thought the strawberries were yummy!”
- Read and talk about the pictures with enthusiasm. Accentuate words or characters by using different voices and facial expressions. Example: Crinkle your nose when describing a picture of the baby who seems to smell something stinky. “Ooh, ‘stinky’ says the baby!”
- Follow the infant’s cues as to how quickly or slowly he/she wishes to turn the pages. It is not necessary to look at all pictures.



**Option 3 continued**

Conclude the session by recognizing the infant's participation. Example: "You helped me hold our book, Jacob. You pointed to pictures in our book. You turned the pages to see the next baby face! We had fun reading this book together."

 **What to Look For—Options 1–3**

Infants will likely delight in looking at the pictures of baby faces. Look for instances of the infant gazing, pointing, touching, or using his/her hands to bat at or tap the pictures. Infants may also express interest in the book by vocalizing, including cooing, babbling, or word-like sounds. Very young infants are developing the ability to focus on pictures and may be more interested in the sound of your voice as you read and talk about pictures. Older infants may imitate your sounds and/or intonation as you read and actively point to pictures. With all ages, you may return to particular pictures or pages that seem to be of interest to the infant.

If the infant seems to lose interest in the book, you may wish to offer one gentle attempt to interest the infant in a picture before ending the activity. Example: "Let's look at the baby on the next page!" Some book sharing activities will be longer than others. It also is helpful to recognize the infant's shift away from the book. Example: "I can see you are squirming away from the book. I don't think you want to read our book right now, Amelia. I can hold you or we can find another activity."

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3**

Extra support ■ Have another object available for infants to mouth or chew instead of the book. ■ Help an infant focus on a picture by pointing to and naming specific aspects of the picture. Example: "Here is the baby's hair. Here are the baby's eyes."

Enrichment ■ Provide an object or prop related to the book for the infant to hold during or after the book sharing. While reading *Baby Faces*, young infants may enjoy holding a baby doll. Older infants may enjoy looking at their reflection in a mirror after the story. ■ Imitate the faces of the babies in the book. Hold the corresponding face picture close to your face. Example: "I am making a silly face. The baby is making a silly face. We are both silly!"

 **Interest Area**

Materials Needed: assortment of age-appropriate books

Place an assortment of books in a special, familiar place for infants to explore. Infants may manipulate the books by patting, turning, sucking, or chewing. Provide soft cloth or vinyl books in addition to board books. Older infants will enjoy chunky board books with pages that are easier to grasp and turn.

 Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *Baby Faces* by Margaret Miller

Children of all ages enjoy looking at faces of other children. As part of Option 2 or 3, invite toddlers and older children to imitate the faces of babies shown in the book. Talk about some of the simple expressions shown in the pictures.



Birth–12 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

An infant explores two similar toys with opportunities to notice differences between the toys.



Key Concepts

Soft
Hard



Materials Needed

Soft round rattle—1 per infant and caregiver
Cylinder-shaped hard rattle—1 per infant and caregiver



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

BEGIN: *[Begin the activity when the infant is sitting comfortably. Hold on your lap an infant who cannot securely sit alone.]*

EXPLAIN: *[Give the infant one hard cylinder-shaped rattle.]*

Let's play with these rattles. Here is one rattle for you. Here is one rattle for me.

[If the infant does not grasp the rattle, hold the rattle near the infant so he/she can touch it. You may wish to lightly touch the infant's hand with the rattle.]

Pause for the infant to respond by touching or manipulating the rattle, looking at you, and/or vocalizing. Acknowledge the infant's response. Example: "You are looking at the rattle."]

ACT: *[Describe the infant's exploration of the rattle. Examples: "You are putting the rattle to your mouth." "You are feeling the rattle with your fingers."]*

Point to and describe rattle characteristics the infant seems to be exploring. Examples: "We can feel little bumps on our rattle." "We can shake our rattle and make a sound."]

Here is a different rattle.

[Hold the soft, ball-shaped rattle near the infant's chest. Encourage the infant to touch or take the rattle. The infant may drop the hard rattle in order to grasp the soft rattle, or reach for the soft rattle with his/her other hand.]

Point to and describe 1–2 characteristics of the rattle the infant seems to be exploring. Examples: "This rattle is very soft. You can squeeze it with your hands." "We can hear a little bell when you shake the rattle. We cannot see the bell."]

Describe the infant's actions with the rattle(s).

Offer an opportunity for the infant to explore two different rattles positioned near each other. The infant already may be holding two different rattles, or you may be able to hold one rattle within the infant's reach while the infant is holding a different rattle.



**Option 1 continued**

Point to and describe a difference between the rattles. Encourage the infant to feel the differences. Examples: "This rattle is soft. You can squeeze this rattle. Our other rattle is hard." "This rattle has bumps. This rattle is smooth."

RECAP: *[Describe the infant's exploration of the rattles. Emphasize differences the infant may have noticed. Show rattle features you describe. Example: "You played with two rattles. One rattle was soft. One rattle was hard. The rattles made a sound when you shook them."]*

 **What to Look For—Option 1**

Infants are likely to explore the rattles by looking, touching, moving, and mouthing. Repeated, active exploration helps infants develop an understanding of an object.

Tailor your description of rattles to the infant's exploration. Your description of rattle characteristics will be more meaningful to the infant if you describe and point to features that the infant is exploring rather than offer a planned presentation of rattle characteristics. Differences you describe should be in response to the infant's interests.

Infants will not be familiar with many or most of the words you use to describe rattle characteristics. Young children learn words through repeated exposure to a word. It is very important to point to a rattle feature you are describing (and the infant is exploring). You may wish to mention a rattle's color, but keep in mind that at this age, infants are not expected to know colors.

If an infant's focus on the rattles is interrupted by something and the infant does not shift attention back to the rattles within a few seconds, invite a continuation of rattle play by talking to the infant and giving the rattles a little shake.

A walking infant may grasp a rattle(s) and carry it away. Stay with the walking infant and continue the activity when the infant stops or sits. If an infant throws the round rattle, it may be he/she views the rattle as a ball.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ If the infant shows little interest in the rattles, select two different objects for the infant to explore. Infants at this age are learning differences between objects and are not expected to sort them. ■ For an infant who prefers to stand, move the rattles to a low surface the infant can easily reach. ■ Use your rattle to point to and describe things that the infant is exploring with his/her rattle.

Enrichment ■ For an infant whose interest is high, arrange all four rattles where he/she can easily reach them. Encourage the infant to take a rattle. Watch and describe the infant's action. Examples: "You picked up two round rattles." "You picked up one long rattle and one round rattle."



Birth–12 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

An infant plays with toys that differ in size.



Key Concepts

Big
Little
In
Out
Truck



Materials Needed

1 large toy truck (see Be Prepared)
2 soft toys of different sizes



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: The toy truck should be large enough to hold two toys, as shown. The activity description assumes the two toys are soft bears of different sizes.

Invite an infant to join you in playing with two bears and a truck. Begin the activity with the bears in the dump box of the truck and invite the infant to take the two bears from the truck. Emphasize the words big and little as you and the infant play with the bears.

Through a playful interaction with the infant, also introduce the idea the bears go in and out of the truck. Encourage an infant to put the bears in the dump box of the toy truck. Some infants may enjoy making a truck sound.

Observe the infant’s reaction to the play materials and focus on what is most interesting to him/her. Allow the infant to lead the play. Infants may show interest in different aspects of items, such as hugging or manipulating the bear toys, moving the bears in and out of the truck, manipulating the dump box on the truck, turning the wheels of the toy truck, and/or pushing the toy truck, with or without the bears.

Describe the infant’s actions. Use simple sentences as you emphasize key words in, out, big, and little. Example: “You put big bear in the truck!”

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Infants may respond to the terms “mommy” or “daddy” to represent the larger bear. “Little” and “baby” may be used to describe the smaller bear. It is not important for an infant to say the words big and little, but hearing the terms while seeing the differences can help the infant begin to understand this distinction.

Be prepared to extend the activity to include other interested mobile infants by having similar toys close at hand. You may shift your attention to a second child when the activity ends. You can simply state “Bree is here to play. Let’s look at her toys.”





Option 2 continued

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Demonstrate putting one bear into the truck. Encourage the infant to put the other bear into the truck. ■ If the infant begins pushing the truck out of the activity area, follow along to maintain the play interaction.

Enrichment ■ Add a prop to represent food. Pretend to give food to the bears.



Birth–12 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Infants explore different types of rings and balls, including ways to arrange the objects.



Key Concepts

Ball
Ring



Materials Needed

Cloth bag (see Be Prepared)
Balls with distinct differences—1 per infant
Stacking rings—1 per infant



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Collect rings from stacking ring toys and small balls that have observable differences, such as an O-ball, which has bumps or ridges an infant can feel. Place all the toys into a cloth bag. If possible, prepare for each infant one bag that contains one ball and one ring.

Sit on the floor next to 2–3 infants and present the bag(s). Peek into the bag as if it contains a surprise. Give each infant an opportunity to remove 1–2 toy(s) from the bag. Seeing familiar play materials appear in a novel manner may foster curiosity. Use facial expressions and voice inflections to communicate your pleasure in the infants’ explorations. Example: “Charles, you got a ball from our bag!”

Make sure each infant has one ring and one ball without taking any toys away from an infant. Talk about characteristics of the balls and the rings. Remember that at this age infants are not expected to learn color names.



The assortment of balls and rings offers multiple opportunities to explore. Infants may roll a ball, peek through the hole in a ring, put a ball on top of a ring, or put a toy into the bag. Although infants are not expected to sort items, some infants may form groups of balls and/or rings.

Support each infant’s interest in the play materials by pointing and describing each item. Example: “You have a big ring. Here is a little ring.” Talk about the way each infant is exploring the materials.

What to Look For—Option 3

Some infants may participate for several minutes and some infants will leave the activity sooner. Some infants may explore the objects by mouthing them. The interest and enthusiasm you demonstrate during the activity will foster exploration and participation. Use clearly spoken words to talk about each infant’s interests. Think of yourself as the announcer of the various strategies the infants explore. Over time, infants will begin to associate words with the balls and rings.

Option 3 continued More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Place a ball on a ring (as pictured above in this plan) if infants seem uncertain about how to explore the objects. Encourage infants to remove the ball from the ring, to emphasize there are two (not one) objects.

Enrichment ■ Use the ring as a pretend hat for the ball, especially as a contrast to placing a ball on a ring.

 Interest Area

Materials needed: Sets of similar but not identical toys, as described below. Board books displayed on a shelf and books in baskets in several areas of the room are important. Plan to have at least three books per child in your group.

For non-mobile infants, provide several balls with different textures and describe how the balls feel as you sit and play with an infant(s).

For early mobile infants, display play materials that are similar but different, such as two balls and two animal figures made of different materials in different areas of the room. Infants may wish to play again with the Option 3 items.

Place several items of different shapes and textures into a basket for crawling and walking infants to explore. Contrasting item possibilities include a washcloth, a square of a light silky fabric, and a square of denim or corduroy. Encourage mobile infants to cover soft bears with the cloth squares.

 Family Child Care

Materials needed: rattles; soft and rigid animals and people figures; bag with matching objects; such as two small animal figures, two small blocks, two spoons, and/or two small socks

You may find time to again present the Option 1 rattles to an infant who is seated in a high chair before or after a meal or snack. Toddlers will enjoy exploring a variety of soft and hard objects in a basket. Provide soft and rigid animals and people figures. Talk with toddlers about the similarities and differences. Preschool-age children may enjoy reaching into a bag and finding two matching objects using the sense of touch only. Items for the bag could include two small animal figures, two small blocks, two spoons, and/or two small socks.



Birth–12 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Concentration

A young infant watches the movements of a puppet manipulated by a caregiver.



Key Concepts

Watch
Touch
Feel



Materials Needed

1 hand puppet



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

BEGIN: [*Hold the infant in your arms with his/her head well supported in the bend of your arm, ensuring the infant can clearly see you.*]

Hold the puppet about 12 inches from the infant and begin moving it slightly from side to side.]

ACT: The name of our puppet is (name of puppet).

[*Pause for and acknowledge the infant's response. Describe any visual attention the infant gives to the toy. Example: "I see you are watching our tiger puppet, Juan. Our tiger puppet is moving back and forth."*]



Move the puppet a little farther to one side and back toward the infant's middle. Describe the infant's response. Example: "You are moving your eyes. You are watching the puppet move."

If the infant maintains a visual focus on the puppet, move it closer to the infant and move the puppet's head to say hello to the infant. Example: "Hello, Juan. I am a little tiger. Do you see me?"

Slowly move the puppet toward the infant's middle. Describe your actions. Example: "I am moving the tiger so you can touch it." Invite the infant to touch or grasp the puppet. If the infant is not able to grasp the item, hold it near the infant's hands so he/she can touch and feel it. Use the following strategies to support the infant's attention to the puppet:

- *Describe the infant's actions with the puppet. Example: "You are reaching out and touching the tiger."*
- *Describe some characteristics of the puppet. Example: "The tiger feels soft and furry! Let's touch it."*
- *Acknowledge infant vocalizations. Example: "I hear you talking. You are cooing. I think you like the tiger puppet!"*

Transition out of the activity when the infant shows signs of disinterest, such as looking elsewhere.]

RECAP: [*Smile and make eye contact as you describe what happened. Example: "We watched the tiger puppet today. The tiger said hello! You watched the tiger go back and forth. You smiled when you touched the tiger's soft fur."*]

Birth–12 Months

Option 2
One-to-One



Skill and Goal
Concentration

An older infant watches and manipulates a puppet with a caregiver.



Key Concepts

- Watch
- Touch
- Hold



Materials Needed

- 1 hand puppet



Also Promotes

- Communication/Language
- Physical/Health

Invite an infant to sit with you and a puppet on the floor. Sit facing the infant with a smile and introduce the puppet. Hold the puppet in front of the infant and pretend to make the puppet walk slowly from side to side. Encourage the infant to watch the puppet move for a few moments. Example: “You are watching our tiger puppet. You are moving your eyes to watch our puppet.” Move the puppet’s head to say hello to the infant.



Invite the infant to reach for and move the puppet. Example: “Now it is your turn to play with our tiger puppet. Would you like to touch it?” Encourage the infant to move the puppet around. Describe the puppet’s movements and the infant’s actions to move the puppet. Example: “You are holding the tiger puppet with your hands and moving the puppet up and down. You are watching the puppet move around.”

Conclude the activity by describing the infant’s focus on the puppet. Example: “You watched the tiger puppet walk back and forth. Then you held the puppet and made it move up and down. You used your eyes to watch our puppet.”

👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–2

Most infants will enjoy watching you move the puppet. Carefully monitor the infant’s reactions (especially his/her gaze) to determine how much to move the puppet and when it is time to conclude the activity. The activity may run less than a minute with some infants. Acknowledge the infant’s efforts to concentrate on the puppet. Some infants may prefer to hold and look at the puppet. Fully recognize this important way to concentrate on an object.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ Support an infant’s attention to the puppet by bringing the puppet closer to the infant and using slower movements. Repeat a simple movement, such as gently touching the infant’s toes with the puppet, moving it away (while still in view), and then bringing it back. Describe your actions and how the infant is paying attention. ■ If the infant appears to be uncomfortable with a puppet, use a familiar stuffed toy that is likely to be a pleasant experience for the infant to watch and perhaps manipulate.

Enrichment ■ Provide two puppets for the infant to watch and manipulate.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: several stuffed animals

Incorporate Option 1 or 2 into infants' floor time. Support infants' concentration on a puppet by describing your actions and actions of others with a puppet. Give each infant an animal to touch and hold. Older infants may enjoy moving their puppet along with you. Talk with infants about their actions and responses.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: several simple hand puppets and stuffed animals

Children of all ages enjoy watching puppets. Use a hand puppet to read a familiar book to the group. After the story, invite the older children to use the puppets to help tell the story. Younger toddlers and infants can participate by holding their own puppet or stuffed animal. Younger children will enjoy watching the puppet show.



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 toy car.



Key Concepts

Look
Car



Materials Needed

Toy car



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

BEGIN: [Place the infant on his/her tummy on a blanket or mat in front of you. Sit on the floor very close to the infant so he/she can see your face and hear your voice.]

ACT: [Smile and begin talking with the infant. Example: "Hello, Catalina! I am happy you are here today. You look ready to play! Acknowledge the infant's reactions, including vocalizations, facial expressions, or gestures.]

[Place the toy car in front of the infant.]

Here is a car. Look, the car has wheels that move.

[Pause for the infant to respond.]

Slowly drive the car back and forth in front of the infant.]

Our car can drive. Vroom, vroom.

Would you like to touch the car?

[Encourage the infant to touch and explore the car. Describe the infant's reactions to the toy. Examples: "Your eyes got wide when you saw the car. Your eyes are following the driving car!" "You reached for the car, Leon. I moved it closer. Now you are holding it!" "You are holding the car. You are touching the wheels on our car. There are four wheels. The wheels turn around and around! You are looking at the wheels go around."]

Continue interacting with the infant as he/she explores the car. Wrap up the activity when the infant begins to show signs of disinterest.]

RECAP: [Offer a brief description of the interaction. Example: "We had fun with our toy car today! You watched me drive the car. Then you reached for the car! You touched the wheels. Thank you for sharing time with me, Elizabeth!"]



Birth–12 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

An infant participates in open-ended toy car play with a caregiver, with opportunities to imitate each other's actions with the toys.



Key Concepts

Look
Car



Materials Needed

2 toy cars



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Invite an infant to join you in playing with toy cars. Introduce the cars and give one to the infant to hold and explore. Example: "I have two cars for us to play with! Which car would you like to play with?"

Describe the infant's actions with the car. Look for opportunities to imitate the actions of the infant. Example: "You are driving the car in the air, Liam. I am driving my car in the air too! Where are the cars going?"

If the infant pauses to watch your actions with a car, demonstrate a way to interact with the toy that has not been part of the current play. Example: Pull the car back and then gently push it forward. Encourage the infant to imitate your actions. Example: "Look at my car go! Let's pull our cars back, like this. Watch! Vroom, vroom! There go our cars!"

Continue to encourage imitation (yours and/or the infant's) with car play. Remember to pause for the infant to respond to your words and to the activity itself.



Birth–12 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Older infants participate together in open-ended play with toy cars, with opportunities to notice and imitate the actions of others.



Key Concepts

Look
Car
Drive



Materials Needed

Toy cars—1–2 per infant



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Invite several infants to play on the floor with you. Place the toy cars in front of the infants and invite each to select a car to play with. You may wish to provide more cars than infants to avoid conflict over specific cars. Keep a car for you to play with. Encourage infants to interact with the cars. As the infants play, watch for opportunities to draw attention to infants' actions and to suggest imitation. Examples: "Look, Jada is driving her car on the floor. Vroom, vroom goes Jada's car! Let's all drive our cars on the floor like Jada. Vroom, vroom!"

Continue to describe the infants' actions with the cars, encouraging imitation behaviors. Acknowledge efforts to imitate your actions or those of another.

What to Look For—Options 1–3

Infants will differ in their awareness of your attention and the actions of others with a toy car. Some may enjoy exploring a toy car independent of you or others, whereas other infants may watch and perhaps imitate another. In Option 3, some infants may enjoy holding a car while watching you or their peers play. Remain flexible about the type and length of infant participation. The toy car is simply a means toward connections with others. Use a different type of toy if a car is of limited interest to an infant(s).

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ In Option 1, adjust the infant's tummy position if you observe signs of discomfort or fussiness. ■ Acknowledge an infant's preference to hold rather than manipulate a car. Observing others is a valuable way to learn.

Enrichment ■ Provide another type of toy car for an infant(s) to explore.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: assortment of toy cars

Provide opportunities for infants to explore the cars during floor time. Play alongside the infants and describe their actions with the cars, as well as your own. Encourage imitation as the infants play by imitating their actions and inviting them to imitate yours. Invite infants to imitate the actions of a peer.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: assortment of toy cars—1 per child

Invite older children in your care to participate in an imitation game with toy cars or other types of desirable toys. Invite one child at a time to be the leader of the game. Invite the leader to drive his/her car on different appropriate surfaces. Encourage others to follow the leader. Infants may enjoy holding a car and being held while watching others.



Birth–12 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

An infant visually explores the room from a secure sitting position in a caregiver's lap.



Key Concepts

Sitting
Looking



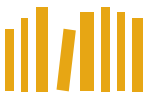
Materials Needed

None



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Social-Emotional



Optional Reading

Baby Faces by DK
Publishing

BEGIN: [*Hold an infant securely on your lap in a comfortable chair. Support the infant's neck and back with your body while ensuring infant can freely move his/her arms.*]

EXPLAIN: [*Explain to the infant that you are holding him/her so we can look around the room. Example: "Diego, I am holding you in my lap so we can look at things in our room."*]

ACT: [*Describe parts of the room to the infant, including descriptions of the actions of other caregivers and infants. Shift your body so the infant has a direct look at specific parts of the room. Offer pauses for the infant to react to what he/she hears and sees.*]

If the infant does not seem interested in looking at parts of the room, hold a colorful toy for the infant to see. Talk about the toy. Move the toy close to the infant and encourage him/her to touch the toy. Move the toy away from the infant and then slowly back to his/her mid-line. Touch the infant's toes and fingers with the toy in a playful manner.]

RECAP: [*Describe what happened. Example: "You sat on my lap. We looked around our room. You are getting stronger and can see things in a different way."*]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

At about 3–4 months, an infant may begin to hold his/her head up without support. It is not uncommon for an infant to wobble slightly as you support a sitting experience. Maintain your focus on the infant at all times. The infant may be mostly focused on the feeling of sitting. Some infants may be interested in looking. The period of time the infant sits with your support may vary from 30 seconds to 3–4 minutes.

Look carefully for an indication that the infant wants a shift in position. The infant's muscles may begin to tighten and/or the infant may vocalize discomfort. At any signal of distress, respond to the infant by repositioning him/her and offering comfort if needed. A slight rocking motion is often comforting to an infant. An infant may feel tired or quite stimulated by a sitting experience. Provide soothing support to help the infant return to a calm, alert state, if needed. With repeated daily practice, the infant will gain balance and strength in his/her neck, back, and other muscles of the torso (core).

**Option 1 continued****▀ More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ The infant may want assurances he/she is safe. In addition to your comments, turn the infant slightly toward you in a comfortable holding position.

Enrichment ■ For a few seconds, hold the infant so his/her back and neck are no longer resting against you. Use your voice to offer reassurance and encouragement. ■ If the infant seems interested in a particular aspect of your room, stand and walk with the infant held securely in your arms for a closer look and description.



Birth–12 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

Infants who can sit independently practice balancing their bodies in a sitting position while extending their arms to pretend to feed a hungry puppet.



Key Concepts

Reach



Materials Needed

1 puppet



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Social-Emotional
Self-Regulation

Introduce several infants to a friendly and hungry puppet! Demonstrate how to feed the puppet. Then encourage the infants, one at a time, to hold their arms out from their bodies to feed the puppet. Begin with an infant who seems especially eager to feed the hungry puppet. Add a fun challenge by having the puppet tell a mobile infant “I cannot reach the food. Can you hold it up higher?” Encourage the infants to reach toward the puppet. Infants may also enjoy offering a toy for the puppet to play with. See Extra Support tips for alternatives to a puppet and/or feeding a hungry puppet.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Pretending to feed the hungry puppet is a way for infants to practice balancing their bodies in a sitting position while also extending their arms. Some infants may feel uncertain about feeding or touching the puppet. Hold the puppet still for an infant who seems unsure about feeding the puppet. Suggest the infant pat or pet (instead of feed) the puppet if it appears the infant does not wish to feed the puppet (see Extra Support tip). Some infants may be more comfortable with a familiar soft animal, such as a teddy bear or doll, instead of a puppet. What is important about the activity is the infant’s practice in balancing his/her body in a sitting position while moving his/her arms.

Infants generally enjoy pretending to engage in basic care routines, such as feeding. At a young age, infants often try to put things on their parent’s mouth, and may need a reminder (including a demonstration) that the puppet is hungry. Wait until the infants are confident with the puppet to add exaggerated puppet actions. If infants get very excited about the puppet, change the tone of the activity by using a quieter voice for the puppet and moving it slowly.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Bring the puppet closer to the infant’s hand. Open the puppet’s mouth wide for the infant to pretend to feed it. ■ To encourage an infant to pat (rather than feed) the puppet, move closer to the infant and place an open hand in front of the infant’s chest. Invite the infant to pat your hand. Then use the puppet to demonstrate a pat.

Enrichment ■ Hold the puppet up higher to encourage the infant to reach higher to feed the puppet pretend food. Hold the puppet lower for the infant to reach down low to feed the puppet.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: art cards, small container, animal figure, balls, stacking cup, shape sorter, mailing tube

Create interesting arrangements for infants to see as they lay on their backs in a play area. Infants enjoy looking at faces and at contrasts between light and dark. Use art cards to add interest to the area designed for non-mobile infants.

For early mobile infants, select two types of toys for a special play area. Stacking cups with toys inside are fun to explore. Use a small container to cover an animal figure. Infants will enjoy discovering the toy!

Infants who crawl and walk enjoy finding surprises to manipulate, such as a ball inside a stacking cup. Place toys at different levels for crawling and walking infants to discover.

For infants who stand or walk, provide toys to drop into containers, such as a potato chip container and balls. Infants will also enjoy playing with a small ball that fits through a mailing tube.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: small boxes, newspaper, tape

Extend Option 2 balancing practice to young toddlers by providing small boxes that are empty or stuffed with newspaper. Tape the boxes closed. Toddlers will enjoy passing the boxes to one another while seated near one another and/or carrying the small boxes from place to place.