

Parents Guide

Helping Your Little Ones Discover The Big World

(NAPSM)—Helping babies learn to understand the larger world around them is not only vital, it's usually fun. The littlest thing can be a really big insight for babies and it can be thrilling to watch their surprise as they discover something they do can have an effect. While thinking up ways to get a response out of baby can be delightful, it's often a creative challenge for busy parents. Nationally recognized expert in child care and development Dr. Karen Hill-Scott (Ed.D., Learning and Development, UCLA) believes interaction is the key ingredient in a baby's development and she has some timely tips on how to make it happen without a lot of planning or effort:

- **Playtime.** "For a baby, any time is playtime," notes Dr. Hill-Scott, "and it's more about finding the fun during routine daily activities than it is about making structured plans. In fact, having a predictable daily routine is very helpful for baby's understanding of how the world works."

As little ones grow, they'll play alone and with others. Each situation offers different benefits. Playing with other children can help build socialization skills and playing with parents is invaluable because it strengthens language and emotional bonds. Toys are always a big hit during playtime and help to build skill sets—just be sure to look for toys that correspond to your baby's age.

- **Story Time.** It's never too early to begin reading to baby. Little ones love books with bright colors and sharp contrasts. Look for books that have pictures from everyday life so your baby will



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Discover the fun in playtime.

begin to make those connections. Books with texture or pop-up surprises are fun. Remember to put your best dramatic expression into your storytelling because hearing your voice and your language discussing what's on the page is just as important as the pictures baby sees.

- **Video Time.** Dr. Hill-Scott has had a prominent role in developing groundbreaking children's programming for Nickelodeon, NBC, Discovery Kids, PBS, The Henson Company, Sony Wonder and the Disney Channel. "There is a variety of content available on TV and on DVD these days that is very helpful in making connections between the images that babies see and hear on screen and what they experience in real life. Laughing and playing together through media is one of many ways to discover what fascinates your baby. Talk about what's on screen just as you would with a picture book."

Dr. Hill-Scott recently worked with The Baby Einstein Company in the development of the latest collection of Discovery Kits that help parents make these connec-

tions while introducing classical music, nature and the arts in playful, interactive ways. Each kit includes a DVD, a music CD and picture book or set of Discovery Cards that complement each other, giving parents a variety of ways to interact with their babies. Learn more at www.babyeinstein.com.

- **Travel Time.** Dr. Hill-Scott also notes, "With so many people on the go these days, keeping baby happy and entertained is critical." She suggests packing a baby gear bag with food and comfort toys that your baby loves. Then make sure baby has something to look at and touch from the vantage point of the infant seat. Puppets, plush toys, lighted mirrors and other interactive toys make travel time less tense.

- **Quiet Time.** With such a big world to explore and keep baby occupied, it's important to have some daily "downtime." Transitioning from activity to quiet time can be easy with music or books and can also be the best time for quiet interaction. Consider products that can help slow the pace and create a more relaxed environment you can enjoy together.



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You can help make child's play a great way for your youngsters to learn and grow.