

Pointers For Parents-To-Be

Guidelines For Stimulating Newborns' Healthy Development

(NAPSA)—You've just brought your new baby home from the hospital. In the midst of diaper changes and midnight feedings you anticipate a time in the future when you'll be able to play and have fun with your baby. But did you know that you don't have to wait until your newborn is older to begin engaging him or her in play? Interactive play provides the foundation for intellectual, social and physical development in children and helps to strengthen the bond between parent and child and it's never too early to start. The experts at Gymboree Play & Music, the worldwide leader in parent-child play classes, offer the following guidelines and ideas for developmentally appropriate games you can start playing with your newborn right now.

Find Balance: Help develop your child's sense of balance by laying baby on your lap and gently raising and lowering your legs or rocking him side to side. Use music or sing for additional fun and learning.

Touching Moments: To engage baby's sense of touch, lightly cover her with a scarf and pull it up and down the length of her body. Gently rub baby's arms, legs and head with the scarf. Baby will look to you for social cues, so keep in mind that using your voice and giving eye contact is important during play activities.

Get Silly: Funny songs, movements and sounds are all stimulating for baby. Remember, what they are tuning in to most is YOU, so have fun and don't be afraid to look a little silly in the process. Explore making all kinds of sounds with your voice for baby such as animal sounds, high-pitched nonsense sounds or clicking your tongue. Using sound in your play with baby helps to support social and language development.

Mirror, Mirror: Newborns are more attuned to human faces than



to any other visual object. Baby is also fascinated by his own reflection, even though he doesn't yet know that it's he. Hold a mirror up so your baby can see his reflection, then point at the baby in the mirror and say his name. This will help him learn to visually focus and track as well as to explore the social nature of faces.

The More The Merrier: Participating in a group class led by a trained teacher, such as those offered at Gymboree Play & Music, will allow you and baby to learn new games while exposing her to a small, social group. Playing in a setting outside of the home can also help eliminate distractions and allow you to further focus your attention solely on your baby, which can create some very personal and emotional moments, strengthening the bond between you and your child.

Follow Their Lead: Each baby is unique and will develop according to his or her own timetable. In order to ensure that the games you engage your baby in offer the appropriate amount of challenge and stimulation, the experts at Gymboree Play & Music recommend that parents progress play based on their child's learning pace, not just his or her age.

For more developmentally appropriate play tips, visit www.gymboree.com. To sign-up for a free Gymboree Play & Music class call 1-800-520-PLAY.