



Parenting the First Year

MONTH

10-11

How baby is changing

Is your baby saying any real words yet? A child just learning to talk often uses one word to mean several different things.

Real words are words that mean only one thing.

Even if baby says “No” and shakes her head back and forth, she may not know what the word means. She may even say “No” when she really means “Yes.” Don’t take all “No’s” seriously.

If your baby began to pull up to stand last month, she will probably learn how to get down by herself soon. She may be fascinated by stairs. With a gate on the second or third step, she can practice climbing. You still need to be there to catch her.

Watch baby’s hand. Your child may pick up things with just a first finger and a thumb. Remember when she had to use her whole hand to smear food into her mouth? She has come a long way.

Don’t worry if your baby doesn’t seem to do things on schedule. Your baby is unique and will develop on her own timetable. As long as your baby is making progress, just enjoy watching her grow.

Activity: Teach baby the “Ahhh” game.

It’s smart to teach your child to say “Ahhh,” to open his mouth wide, and to stick out his tongue. This trick will make going to the doctor easier. It is also helpful when you want to see what he put in his mouth.

To teach baby, just say “Ahhh” yourself. Open your mouth **very** wide and stick out your tongue. He will learn by copying you.

No matter how well you baby-proof your home, baby will find something to put into his mouth without you seeing what it is. Don’t panic! You might startle him and cause him to swallow the object.

Instead, act as if you are playing the “Ahhh” game. If baby knows the game, he will imitate you, and you can inspect his mouth in no time.

Child guidance: Is baby a tease?

Does your baby ever tease you on purpose? Has she ever headed straight for a waste-basket, making sure you notice? Your child is testing her emotions and yours. She is experimenting to see where the limits are.

Teaching children to behave has always been a challenge for parents. It’s not as much a matter of keeping your baby from doing the wrong thing as it is of **making it easy to do the right thing.**

How can you make good behavior easy? First, make sure your baby gets plenty of your attention when she is doing things **right**, not just when she is doing things wrong. She loves your attention and will do anything to get it.

Give your baby safe toys and places to play. Pick her up and take her away from dangerous things. Be a teacher. Give her explanations like “Hot” and “Tastes bad” instead of just “No” all the time.

Be patient and gentle. But keep showing her what you want. If you recognize and accept some behavior as part of babyhood, you’re using good judgment, and you will enjoy your baby more.

Baby starts conversations

Baby may not be talking yet, but he is already starting conversations. Watch to see if baby looks back and forth from an object to you. This is his way of saying, "Talk about this object." Without words, baby is getting you to talk about what he's interested in. This helps him learn language.

Does your baby point to something, like the juice pitcher, while making a noise? Or maybe he raises his arms and grunts, clearly asking to be picked up. Baby is using gestures and sounds to communicate his wishes. What a clever baby!

Some babies say their first real word now, but most babies are about 1 year old when they start talking.

Children can be very different from each other. Don't worry if your child is "early" or "late" in growth.

This is important: Look for and notice your child's growth in each area. Then you can encourage each new ability.

Your baby wants you to know:

How I grow:

- ♥ I crawl up stairs, but I don't know how to get back down.
- ♥ I walk if you hold my hands.
- ♥ I may begin to sidestep, holding onto furniture, to get around a room.
- ♥ I sit down from a standing position.
- ♥ I climb up onto chairs and then climb down again.
- ♥ I'm beginning to show whether I'm right-handed or left-handed.
- ♥ I feed myself with my fingers and help hold my cup.
- ♥ I may have trouble sleeping at night because I'm restless.

How I talk:

- ♥ I may understand simple sentences.
- ♥ I can say "No" and shake my head from side to side.
- ♥ I'm interested in conversations when I hear familiar words.
- ♥ I may drive you crazy because I like to say the same words all day long. Or, I may say no words at all.

How I respond:

- ♥ I react to your approval and disapproval.
- ♥ I cry if another child gets more attention than I do.
- ♥ I still don't like being away from you.
- ♥ I like to imitate people, gestures, and sounds.

How I understand:

- ♥ I know which toys are mine, and I have some favorites.
- ♥ I will look for something if I see you hide it.
- ♥ I am beginning to think of myself as a person.

How I feel:

- ♥ I have many feelings now, such as sad, happy, mad, scared, and hurt.
- ♥ I can be very moody and get upset easily.
- ♥ I may still feel shy around people I don't know.
- ♥ I am very sensitive to other children's moods.

How you can help me learn:

- ♥ Show me things you want me to know. For instance, clap your hands so I can learn by imitating you.
- ♥ Read books with me.
- ♥ Play hide and seek with me! If you hide behind a chair, I can come and find you.
- ♥ Put some pictures and a child-safe mirror down low, so I can see them.

Getting ready to walk

Most babies pull themselves to a standing position for the first time between 6 and 10 months. They hold on to furniture, their crib, playpen rails, or onto you as you sit on the floor.

The next step is called **cruising**. Baby holds on to furniture and slides his feet. As he gets better, he will stand farther away from the furniture, using it only for balance.

After baby is confident about walking while holding furniture, he may be ready to take steps while holding your hands. This can be scary for him. So hold his hands and go just a few steps, unless he wants to go on.

Your baby's first steps are cause for celebration. But the process of learning to walk takes many months as he gains control over his legs and arms. A few babies (25 percent) take their first steps by 11 months; others wait as long as age 15 or 16 months.

Give him lots of practice, but don't hurry him. Learning to walk takes real courage! You can increase his fun by putting chairs together so he can go farther. Remember to make sure your home is baby-proofed for your child to cruise around.

Watch for safety hazards such as dangling tablecloths, cords, or sharp corners.

Keep him in bare feet or slipper socks and provide a soft surface to ease falls. Above all, provide praise and love when he gets frightened or discouraged.

Your baby will learn to walk even without your help. But you may enjoy taking time to help him learn and practice, and he will enjoy your interest.



Q and A

My daughter crawls around and pulls everything out of drawers and cupboards. I want to let her explore. But I'm worried that this will become a bad habit if I don't do something. What do you suggest?

Don't worry about your baby developing bad habits yet. **Babies this age create clutter.** A healthy 10-month-old is doing what comes naturally: exploring.

Baby pulls things out of drawers, turns furniture over, drags toys all over the house, and examines anything she can touch. But she is not doing these things just to spite you or anyone else.

Make the most of this fun stage. Drawer and cupboard latches will keep your baby out of things she shouldn't have. Special drawers or cupboards filled with safe plastic bowls, wooden spoons, special toys, or surprises will keep her interested in staying in one place.

You are right to let her explore. Now you just have to be clever enough to guide her to explore the places you have set aside for her.

Very soon, your little one will be walking and running — and won't have time to sit still and clutter up your home!

Are dads good with babies? Household items as toys

Since women tend to do more of the care of babies, we might wonder if men are less well prepared with “maternal instincts.”

Not so, according to researchers, who find that moms and dads are just as sensitive with newborns, just as good at getting babies to feed from bottles, and have the same physical responses to a baby’s cry.

Women can breastfeed, which gives them more nurturing moments with baby. But beyond that, men can care as well as women for babies, if they put their minds to it.

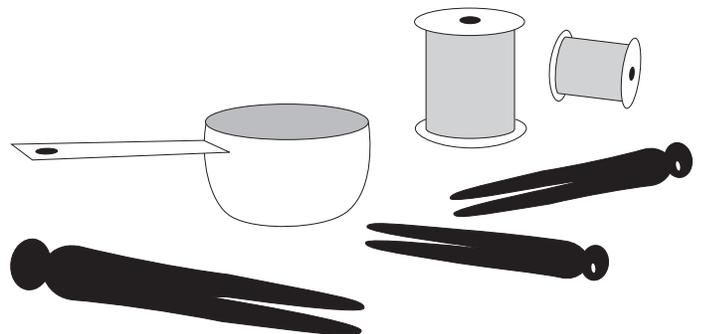
About one million U.S. children are being raised by single fathers today, and they are mostly doing fine. But they can tell you that it takes real effort to train yourself to be a good parent, just like any skill.

Anything your baby likes to play with is a toy. Look around your home. You probably have lots of safe objects to use as toys.

Be sure all toys for baby are too large to swallow, have no sharp edges, and are safe for chewing.

Here are some ideas:

- ♥ Your baby is probably ready for nesting containers — things that fit inside other things. You can buy a set of nesting cups or let him use plastic measuring cups or food storage bowls. These let him practice the ideas of “**bigger** and **smaller**” and “**in** and **out**.” These make good bath toys, too.
- ♥ Use old-fashioned wooden clothespins — not spring-type — and a box or coffee can for baby to learn “on and off.” Show him how to put the clothespins on the can or box edge and then pull them off. Baby can practice “in and out” by putting the clothespins in the container and then dumping them out.
- ♥ Cut a hole in the top of an oatmeal or cornmeal box into which he can drop large, empty thread spools or other round objects. He can take off the lid to get the objects out.
- ♥ Babies like to do other things with toys besides examining them. Making towers out of blocks or fitting rings onto a pole helps his hand-eye coordination. You can make blocks out of empty, rinsed-out paper milk cartons. Open the top, and fold down the sides to make a cube. Tape each block shut. Rinsed-out, square baby-wipe containers also make good blocks.
- ♥ Baby may enjoy larger toys, too. A cardboard box with the ends cut out can be a **tunnel**. Baby can also roll over a pillow or beach ball and crawl into a paper grocery bag.
- ♥ Children love to do things their parents do. By 12 months, about 1 in 4 babies will imitate housework. If you paint, let your child “paint” with water. Or give the child a broom, toy hammer, dusting cloth, or other object to do work just like you do. Have fun with your baby!



Special for employed parents

“Sometimes I feel guilty. Am I a lousy parent because I have to be away at work all day?”

Of course not. But it is hard to be both a good parent and a good worker today. If you arrange good quality child care for your baby and do your best to be a sensitive parent the rest of the time, your baby will usually do fine.

Research on employed mothers shows that on average, mother-child relationships are somewhat better when women work part-time outside the home instead of full-time. But the research also shows that **what you do with your baby when you are together** is more important than the number of hours you work outside the home.

For example, babies usually form their first strong attachments to fathers and mothers during the same period (about 6 to 8 months), even when one parent works full-time and the other is home with the baby.

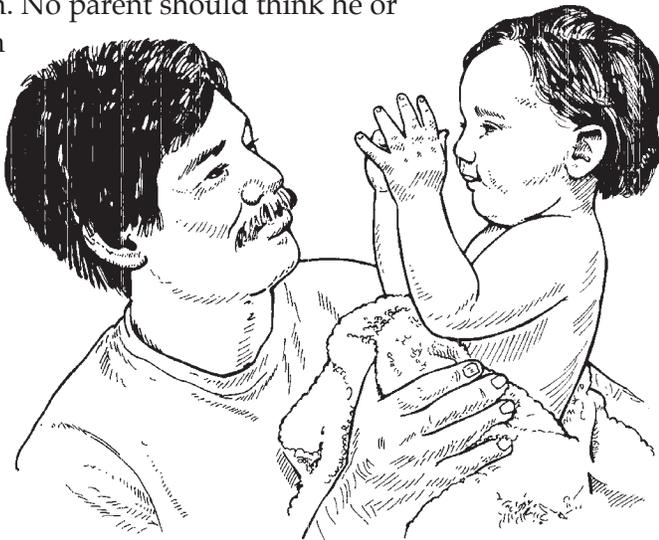
From your baby’s point of view, the important thing is to have quality care all day long — whether with a parent or a child care provider.

“So it doesn’t matter how much time I spend with my infant?”

We wouldn’t say that. For example, some fathers spend almost no time playing with their babies. That is not enough time! Research indicates that these infants would benefit from more stimulation and care from their fathers.

Uninvolved fathers may believe that babies are women’s business. Or maybe these men just don’t know what to do with a baby.

Researchers believe babies benefit from having a close bond with more than one person. If baby has only one parent, other people — such as grandparents, siblings, and child care providers — can be important to him. No parent should think he or she must be with the baby all day, every day. This is hard on you and may not be best for your baby.



For stay-at-home parents

If you made the decision to stay at home with your baby, that’s terrific. You and your baby can benefit from this time together. Babies thrive on the loving, sensitive care parents can provide.

You will be able to spend more time holding, playing with, and talking with your baby. Parents are baby’s first and most important teachers. The loving relationship you and baby develop helps baby feel secure in exploring and learning about her world.

Some parents make a regular date to get together with other stay-at-home parents and their babies. Consider getting together once a week with two or three parents for an hour or so. Your baby will enjoy these playgroups, and you may enjoy them even more!

If you are at home all day with baby, be sure to take some time for yourself and to be with other parents and friends. Babies do best when their parents are happy.

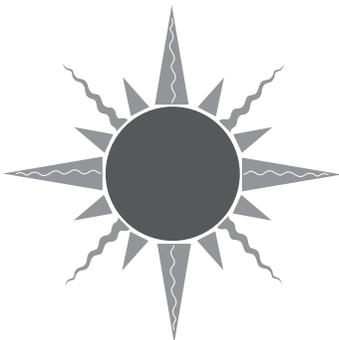
Do yourself a favor...

If you feel overly stressed by being a parent, you may need to give yourself a present — some time just for you. Even if you're a single parent, you can trade baby-sitting with another parent, or trade a service such as cooking a meal in return for a few hours to yourself. You've earned this time, you deserve it, and you don't need to be embarrassed to ask for it.

Here are some suggestions for spending time on yourself:

- ♥ Take a long bath, a walk, or a swim; watch a movie or read a book without interruption.
- ♥ Plan your future. Investigate classes you might take, jobs for which you could apply, and activities you would enjoy.
- ♥ Spend time with a friend—without children.
- ♥ Talk to someone about the stress you feel and what you might do to reduce it.

Taking time just for yourself will help you feel refreshed and ready to face parenthood again.



Practicing to use a spoon

Most babies don't learn how to eat with a spoon until long after their first birthday. But offer your baby a spoon as soon as he wants one.

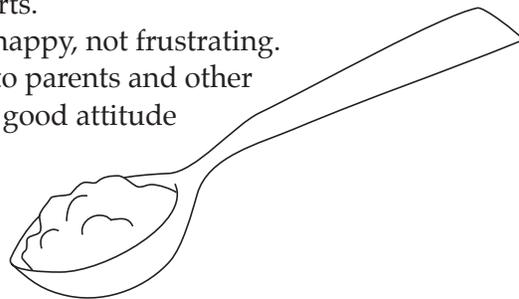
The food he tries to pick up with a spoon sometimes lands on the floor. But he is learning. And he needs practice to become skillful with a spoon. Here are some foods that will stay on the spoon when scooped up. Your baby can enjoy them while practicing spoon skills:

- ♥ applesauce
- ♥ cooked cereal (oatmeal, cream of rice or wheat)
- ♥ cottage cheese
- ♥ macaroni and cheese
- ♥ mashed cooked beans
- ♥ mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes
- ♥ puréed or mashed vegetables or fruits
- ♥ yogurt

If you're worried about your baby not getting enough food, try two spoons — one for you and one for him. If he will let you, give him a mouthful in between his efforts.

Remember to make mealtimes happy, not frustrating. Hungry babies want to eat. It's up to parents and other caretakers to help babies develop a good attitude about food.

With lots of praise, a little patience, and encouragement, your baby can learn a wide variety of tastes and textures in new foods. Good food habits start in infancy.



Eat together as a family

Baby loves to eat with the rest of the family. And it's good for baby, too. Research shows that families who eat dinner together frequently have children who do better in school and develop more positive behavior patterns.

Regular family mealtimes also promote more healthful eating habits for children. More fruits and vegetables and fewer sugary foods and unhealthy fats are consumed when families eat together, rather than on the run.

So set aside time most days for dinner together, and include baby. You might even make a family tradition of each person talking about one nice thing that happened that day or one nice thing they did for someone else. But the most important thing is spending time together as a family.

My baby called the child care teacher “Mama.”

Mothers who use full-time child care sometimes worry that their babies will feel more love for the child care provider. When your baby calls another woman “Mama,” you may feel hurt, jealous, guilty, or confused.

Research shows that infants in child care do form strong bonds of love with caregivers. Your infant uses the caregiver much as she uses you: to calm fears and to feel secure.

But research also shows that caregivers do not replace the parents. Some of the research was done in communal towns in Israel, where babies live and sleep in special infant houses with trained caregivers and only see their parents for about 3 hours each evening. Even in this extreme case, babies are still more strongly attached to their parents than to their caregivers. Babies form these same strong attachments to adoptive parents, too.

The research is clear: Your care provider doesn’t compete with you. He or she helps you raise your baby, but never replaces you.

From your baby’s point of view, having a strong attachment to the child care provider is good. Your baby needs to feel secure and loved in every place she spends time — both at home and in child care.

If your baby calls the child care teacher “Mama” by mistake, you can tell yourself, “How nice! My baby feels safe and loved by her teacher.” But you’ll know no one can replace you.



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