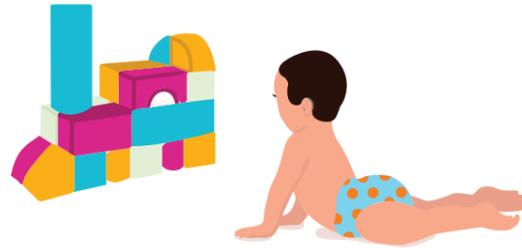


Developmental play

Playing is more than just fun; it may be the best way for deaf young children to learn. By playing, children can practise all the skills they'll need as they grow up, while advancing in all areas of development: cognitive, physical, communication, social and emotional. This chart offers lots of play ideas for children at all stages of their development and is not a milestone chart. You know your child best. If one activity doesn't interest them, try another!

Baby



- Hold your baby close and look at them often. Talk to them about things you are doing around the house. Sing them simple songs. Your baby will love funny sounds and songs with lots of facial expression. Gently touch your baby's cheek or kiss their tummy, they will love the physical contact.
- Be very expressive with your voice, face and hands. Copy your baby's sounds or facial expressions and comment on them. "Was that a yawn?" and "You're tired."
- Show your baby bright colours, colours and highly-contrasting pictures. These will help your baby's vision to develop quicker, improving their access to language as soon as possible.
- Leave spaces in your conversation. How does your baby respond? Do they pull a face or a make noise? Waiting is important, as your baby will learn that they need to communicate to get what they want.
- Put toys just within your baby's reach. When they point to the toy, name it out loud. When your child makes a noise – it could be gurgling or humming – hand them the toy. This is positive reinforcement for your baby, using sounds to ask for what they want.

- Talk to your baby in a sing-song voice; they'll be more likely to pay attention. Repeat sounds and copy faces they make. This will help with their lip-reading later.
- When your baby lies on their tummy, place toys that light up, rustle, or squeak within their reach. This will help with gross and fine motor skills and increase their attention levels.
- Tickle your baby, or gently bounce them on your knee and move their arms around as you sing to them. Comment on whatever they are looking at: "There's Daddy!" or "Look it's the cat!"
- Play 'following' games with your baby, so they follow a toy, your hand or face with their eyes. Play aeroplanes with the spoon during feeding, saying, "Wheeeee!" as the spoon goes into their mouth.
- Play waiting games with your baby. Cover your face with your hands, then say, "Peek-a-boo!" when you remove them. This teaches turn-taking and anticipation.
- Gently touch your baby to get their attention. This helps them to expect contact during communication and trains them to focus on you.
- Rock your baby gently when you sing to them. They enjoy the movement and learn about the pace and rhythm of speech.

- Name and point out things that you and your baby can see, eg TV, juice, ball, etc. Give them lots of different toys, ones they can grip, shake and squeeze. Talk about the look, feel, smell and taste of the toys.
- Start looking at books with your baby. Touchy-feely books are great for engaging your child's senses. Different textures – rough and smooth, shiny or matte – stimulate your baby's interest in the story.
- Play games like This Little Piggy, in which you run your fingers from baby's toes up to their arms and neck. This teaches your baby about their body.
- Play give-and-take games like rolling a ball to each other. This helps your baby learn to take turns, which is important when they talk to you and others. Play dropping games with your baby, such as dropping a ball and watching it bounce. Try other toys that have an element of surprise, like a jack-in-the-box.

- Look at books with bright colours and pictures and talk to your baby about what you see. Reading the words isn't as important as describing what you see at this stage.
- Give your baby a wooden spoon and a box and show them how to make a sound by hitting one against the other. Play other homemade instruments together, like a plastic bottle filled with dry rice or pasta. Show them how to shake the bottle so that it makes a sound. Talk to baby about how it feels in their hand.
- Use coloured paper or brightly coloured paint to decorate the instruments. Communicate with your children throughout, ask questions about what they're doing, what colours they're using, and so on.
- Stretch your baby's language skills by turning simple words or actions into phrases, eg "Pass the ball" instead of "ball" or, "You're tired" when they yawn.
- Let your baby explore toys by themselves, while you watch. Show your baby different ways to use the toys; use a rattle, for example, as a phone. It will bring the sound right up to their ear and feel weighted in their hands.

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Toddler



- Start giving your toddler choices, eg “Do you want the ball or the rattle?” They will love playing with toys that make a lot of noise or have lights.
- Toddlers love singing nursery rhymes. Try singing rhymes that use different parts of the body, such as the counting rhymes *Once I Caught a Fish Alive*, *Round and Round the Garden* or *Five Little Speckled Frogs*.
- Finger painting or playing with shaving foam is a great way to develop your toddler's hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills.
- Open-ended toys – toys that can be used in many different ways, such as blocks, pegs, balls, ice cream containers and cardboard boxes are great for developing imagination. Wooden blocks can be used to build towers, or pretend they are telephones, cars, planes etc.
- You can teach your toddler to look after themselves when you play. Pretend to eat and wash, encouraging your toddler to copy the actions. Use your toddler's favourite doll or teddy to copy the actions too. Try using familiar household objects to help your toddler join in.

- Continue singing nursery rhymes with your toddler. Rhymes with actions are great, such as *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* or *Wind the Bobbin Up*. If you do the actions with your toddler, it will make it easier for them to remember.
- Make the rhymes special by including your toddler's name. Make sure you sit in a position where they can see your face so that they can lip-read if they need to. Try using signs as well.
- This is a great age to start drawing too. Using crayons or markers, try drawing simple faces with a smile or a laugh. Take turns in drawing each other's faces while you change expression. This activity will help your toddler understand facial expressions and emotions better. Let your toddler take the lead.
- Share books that have everyday experiences in them, such as shopping, going to school or to the park. Play games that need both of you to concentrate, like copying each other's faces or hide-and-seek with toys.

- Repeat words when you're talking to your toddler. It will help them remember. Eg “Where are your shoes? They're blue shoes, aren't they? Let's put your shoes on.”
- Ask your toddler, “Where's your coat/hat/doll/spoon?” Use everyday moments to help them understand questions. Pretend to get things wrong – giving your toddler a spoon when they've asked for a sock. This creates a great moment for laughter.
- Role-play with objects that your toddler can talk to, like phones or doors to knock on and answer. Use different voices, happy, sad, loud and quiet.
- Show your toddler photos of people they know. Name the people and get them to point to them. Name objects and get them to point to them too.
- Keep sharing books with your toddler. Books that pop-up and have flaps to reveal new elements can be great fun at this time.
- Make a scrapbook with photos, drawings, leaves and all sorts of materials. It's a fun activity to share and will help your toddler understand memories and things they've done in the past.

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Child



- Look out for opportunities to engage your child in role-playing activities. They may enjoy pretending to be a police officer or shop keeper.
- Introduce two-step instructions like, "Go and get the toy and put it in the box." Or "Put on your socks, then go get your shoes." To encourage this, you can play Simon Says, an action game of ask and respond.
- This is a good time to introduce throwing. Throw a ball or beanbag between you. This helps with turn-taking and general physical development. Another game that improves coordination is water play. Pouring from jugs and cups, finding out what floats or sinks.
- Don't forget to talk or sign about what you're doing in these games, it will help your child to follow and they'll learn a lot more words and signs.

- Repeat or sign back to your child what they say, adding one or two words. If your child says, "Sock off", you can reply, "Yes, we're taking your sock off."
- Introduce search and guess games, like I-spy. You can play with words or signs and change the game to make it simpler. For example, "I spy something orange/tall/smelly."
- Add the element of turn-taking to throwing games. Say your child's name before throwing to them.
- Include your child in everyday activities like shopping. Talk about what you are going to buy together. Make a list, choose the items together, name them as you place them in the basket.
- Try role-playing jobs, like doctor, police officer or teacher. Swapping roles with your child can be great fun too.
- Share books and talk about what you see in the pictures and what happens next. Re-enact the story together, making models out of used cartons and bottles to make toys and buildings.
- Remember to turn off noisy machines like the TV or the washing machine and find a quiet place to play with your child so they can hear your voice as much as possible.

- Memory games are great fun at this age. Try playing I went to the shop and I bought... adding one item. Your child then repeats this and adds one item that they bought. Continue this until one of you forgets something! It's a really good way to improve listening, lip-reading, signing and taking turns.
- Continue with songs and rhymes, adding more actions like *Incey Wincey Spider* and *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*. Doing these actions will help your child's fine motor skills, which is great for signing. It will also help develop your child's ability to follow instructions, copy actions and to hear different pitches and tones of voices.
- Encourage your child to help out with jobs around the house, like helping you sweep up, wash their toys, tidy up their play space, and clear up their dishes and cups. This will teach them invaluable communication skills for later life. They will also learn about routine, gross motor skills, and cause and effect (making a mess means cleaning up a mess).

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