

# Baby's First Wish

New Mexico State University  
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AN EXTENSION *Just in Time Parenting* NEWSLETTER



## Plan a Special Time for You and Your Baby

It's so easy to get caught up in daily routines that you may overlook the need for a special time for you and your baby. Think about setting aside a time each day when you can give your baby your undivided attention with no interruptions.

The length of time is up to you. Even a small pocket of time, maybe 10-15 minutes a day, can mean a lot for both of you.

How can you spend this special time? Sing, read, play, or listen to music. Relax together. Cuddle. Enjoy being together.

Babies are happier and learn how to amuse themselves if parents give them moments of their time and attention.

It takes less than a minute to give your baby a hug and a kiss or to play pat-a-cake.

## Act— Don't Just React

To learn, babies and children need to be able to explore their surroundings and to experiment. Listen to yourself. If you find yourself saying no all the time because you are afraid she will break something or hurt herself, think about changing the way things are arranged in your home.

For example, move that fancy clock to a higher shelf. Put safety latches on the kitchen and bathroom cupboards. Move the houseplants to a spot where your baby can't go. Figure out a way to cover up the buttons on your radio or television.

This will make life easier for you, and you won't have to stop your baby from exploring so often. It's easier and better to change your home than to discourage your child's curiosity.

Sometimes you will have to say no to your baby. If you save it for the times when you need to protect her from getting hurt, it will be a much more powerful word.

# What's It Like to Be 9 Months Old?



## How I Respond

- I like to watch people scribbling on paper.
- I like to show people what I can do and love it when they clap their hands for me.
- I sometimes want praise when I do something well.

## How I Grow and Talk

- I may crawl and turn around while holding something in one hand.
- I crawl up steps, but I may not be able to crawl back down yet.
- I may sit by myself and turn my body all the way around without losing balance.
- I may be able to stand for a little while if you hold my hand and I sidestep along furniture.
- I don't really need shoes to help me learn how to walk. When I start walking, shoes will protect my feet.
- I try to build towers with blocks or toys.
- I poke my fingers into holes or into anything that looks interesting, including electrical outlets.

## How I Grow and Talk

- I pick up small things with my first finger and thumb, and larger things with both hands.
- I like to bang things together.
- I feed myself finger foods. I'm pretty messy!
- I play with a spoon and a cup, but I'm not good at using them yet.
- I understand some words, my name, and simple sentences.
- I repeat one or more sounds over and over.
- I like to cough, click my tongue, and make hissing noises.
- I listen to people talking and try to copy the sounds.
- I say two-syllable sounds such as "choo-choo," "da-da," and "ma-ma."

## How I Understand and Feel

- I'm very sensitive. If I see another baby crying, I will cry, too.
- I am afraid of a lot of things that didn't bother me before, such as taking a bath. I may be afraid of heights.
- I am very determined—that's all part of my growing up. I may "test" you by trying to throw food when you feed me or by crying when you put me to bed.
- I try to figure things out by myself.
- I know that if I partly cover my eyes or look upside down, everything will look different.
- I know which toys are mine and get upset when they are taken away.
- I can remember a game, person, or toy from the day before.



# When Will My Baby Walk?

When babies walk depends on:

- Their weight
- Whether they are aggressive, timid, or passive
- Their general rate of development or the speed at which the bones, muscles, and ligaments are growing

Most children go through the same stages but at different paces. Your baby may be a little ahead or a little behind other 9 month old babies.

There's really not much you can do to hurry or slow down your child's growth. However, it's a good idea to help

your baby use and exercise his large muscles. Help him kick, splash in the bath, wiggle his toes, stretch, and roll over. Give him lots of freedom to move about. Put a toy just out of his reach, and see if he scoots, stretches, rolls, or crawls to get it.



## Learning to Talk

Talking and explaining helps your baby to understand. While you might feel silly talking to your baby, research shows that when you imitate and respond to your baby's sounds, it helps him learn language.

What is that noise? Have you heard some strange shrieks coming from your baby? He is trying different sounds to see which ones get the attention he wants. Keep listening. You may hear certain tones of voice and sentence patterns in your child's babbling.

Your baby may be getting ready to say his first word soon! Your baby may make a sound such as "ba" that

he uses for many different things. These sounds indicate that talking isn't

far away. When your baby is between 9 and 12 months of age, don't be surprised to find a real word or two mixed in with the babbling.

Use hand motions and actions to help your baby understand what you mean; point to different objects. Say the word as you point. Point to show which direction you want him to go.



## Watch Your Baby's Cues for Hunger and Fullness

Does your baby give you the "raspberries"? That is, does he sputter with his tongue and lips? This is sometimes a clue that he has eaten enough food for now.

Watch carefully for signals of "I've had enough." When your baby is still hungry, he may cry if you stop feeding him. Your baby will probably follow the food with his eyes when he is hungry.

# Helping Curiosity Grow

Researchers have learned that curiosity is very important for success in school. Curiosity for your baby is an interest in exploring and finding out what is happening all around her. A child who is interested in what is going on around her watches to see what happens and learns from it.

You can't really teach curiosity with flash cards or similar teaching methods. Young children learn best when they are in charge of their own learning, not when you try to force something on them.

Your child's first year is a very important time in laying a foundation for a lifetime of curiosity.

You can help your child develop curiosity about her world. People who study children say that encouraging a child to explore is very important. This helps the child develop the curiosity skills needed to answer questions she faces as she gets older.

Here are some ideas that you can begin working on right away:

**Hearing** Let your child listen to soft music. Help her make sounds by banging blocks together. Talk and sing to your baby.

**Sight** Use brightly colored clothes, toys, and room decorations. Show your baby the pictures that hang on your walls and the pictures in books and magazines.

**Touch** Give your child many textures - soft, hard, smooth, and rough. Touch your child and let her touch your skin, hair, and clothing. Tell your baby what she is touching as she touches it. Say things like, "Feel how soft the kitten is?" or "The ball is hard."

**Taste** Encourage your child to try new and different foods.

**Smell** Give your baby many chances to smell safe things, such as soap, food, flowers, and feet.

The child who is curious is a child who is learning.

Try to see and hear things as your baby does. Share the experience. When your baby gets excited about something, she probably has had a "wonderful idea" about it. That is what learning is all about!





## Feeding Your Baby

Does your baby hold most foods while eating? Does he drink from a cup with a little help? Does he hold and lick the spoon after it is dipped into food?

These are the first steps in learning how to eat by himself. You can help your baby practice by giving him some of the following finger foods:

- Dry, unsweetened, round and puffed cereals
- Small pieces of soft, mild cheese
- **Cooked** (never raw) vegetable strips or pieces (carrots, peas, green or waxed beans, zucchini, or sweet potatoes)
- Peeled, soft fruit wedges or small pieces (bananas, peaches, pears, plums, avocados, or melons). Be sure they will “mush” easily in your baby’s mouth.
- Cottage cheese, shredded cheese, and small pieces of soft tofu

## Picky! Picky!

Sometimes a baby will not like a certain food one day and will eat it a few days later. Every once in a while, try giving your child a food she has not liked. You may find that this is the day she likes it.

Make foods into finger foods. Nine-month-olds like to feed themselves. They like to feel grown up. Cut your baby’s food into very small pieces.

Avoid foods that could cause your baby to choke. Avoid small hard foods like popcorn, nuts, seeds, or raw vegetables. Avoid round and slippery foods, such as whole grapes or hot dog circles.

Mealtime should be a pleasant time for you as well as for your baby. She will eat more on some days than on others. Don’t force your baby to eat. She will eat if she is hungry.

You should not put seasonings in your baby’s food. Although you may find your baby’s foods bland or tasteless, he likes it that way.

Your baby can now eat most of the things you cook for the rest of the family. Just take out his food before you add salt or other seasonings for the rest of the family.

Praise your baby while he is feeding himself, even if he is very messy. If the mess really bothers you, spread some newspapers or a plastic tablecloth under your baby’s chair to catch food that he drops.

## Brothers & Sisters

This can be a hard time for brothers and sisters. Now that your baby is moving around, he can get into toys and the older children's favorite things. It is also common for older brothers and sisters to rush by your baby as he tries to stand up, knocking him down. Sometimes, they grab their toys from your baby's grasp.

Babies need to form a good relationship with their older brothers and sisters. You can make this happen.

**Prevent problems.** Give older children a place of their own where their things are safe from your baby. A drawer that's out of your baby's reach will do. Or let them play on the kitchen table, away from your baby.

**Teach children to help.** Show your baby's brothers and sisters some of the amazing things he can do, and point out problems he cannot yet solve. Show them how to teach the baby new things. Suggest things they can do with the little one, such as rolling a



ball to him or reading him a book. Another good activity is to say, "Where is Baby's chin (or other body part)?" Naming body parts is a great game that brothers and sisters can play with the baby in the car. Be sure to compliment the older children when they play with the baby.

**Point out to your older children how much your baby looks up to them.** Show your baby's older sister when your baby tries to copy her, how he wants to be like her. By treating an older child as a partner in caring for the baby, you will help her gain a sense of cooperation and responsibility.

**Try to give each child some of your full attention each day.** Your children may resent your baby if he always interrupts their time with you. You can also make special activities for "big children only." This could be something as simple as inviting a friend over or going to a friend's house.

When problems arise, take the time to teach children how to share, take turns, or stay out of each other's way. You don't have to get angry or take sides. It takes a long time for children to learn to see things from someone else's point of view.

# The Secret to Good Behavior: **REWARD IT!**



At this age, discipline is simple. It means loving care and guidance. The key is reward. Many parents pay attention to their children's behavior only when it upsets them. This teaches a child that attention only comes when she does something bad.

Reward your baby with your loving attention when she plays well. Don't become a parent who only notices his child when she has done something wrong. Notice the good times, and give your baby a smile, a laugh, or a hug. Your attention is your baby's best reward. Use it to encourage good, not bad, behavior.

Prevent situations in which your baby might do something you don't like. Move the TV control to a higher shelf. Put a gate across the stairs. If your baby does something you don't like, think of ways you could keep it from happening again. Create a trouble-free environment.

Ignore behavior that is annoying but not harmful. If your baby pulls everything out of your sock drawer, take a deep breath and ignore it. If you pay too much attention, it teaches your baby to do things such as this to get attention from you.

Save "No!" for times when your baby's safety is in danger.

Distract or redirect your baby from things you don't want her to have or do. If she has your keys and you need them, don't grab them out of her hands. Instead, hand her an interesting toy. Your baby will let go of the keys then. It's easier to get a baby started on something else than to take something away from her.

Provide freedom within limits. Your baby needs freedom to explore, but she also needs limits. You need good judgment to provide both. For example, your baby should not be in the

bathroom when you're not with her; shut the door to the bathroom. Babies kept in playpens or high chairs for much of the day don't have enough freedom. They miss opportunities to learn. They don't get a chance to move and exercise. Your baby needs freedom on the floor to safely explore.

Your baby may cry about the limits you have set. You may be tempted to give in to her demands. Keep in mind that setting limits is necessary for your child's safety. Say, "I know you are angry, but you are safe. I would rather have you cry because you are angry than because you are hurt."

You can set limits while giving your baby freedom to explore and to grow. Make the area where your baby plays as safe as possible. Stick to the limits and be firm in your guidance. Offer your baby safe activities, like playing with plastic bowls and cups.



## Roughhousing with Your Baby

Some parents like to swing babies around, lift them high in the air, bounce them high and low, and tickle and chase them. Babies enjoy this. But keep it safe!

Never shake a baby! This can lead to blindness, brain damage, or death. Never jerk a baby's arm. The joints could easily be dislocated. Hold him under the arms by his chest instead. Don't throw your baby in the air. Instead, lift



him over your head without letting go.

Some fun and safe ways to play with your baby include:

- Chasing him as he crawls
- Rolling him along the floor
- Holding him so he flies like an airplane
- Dancing with your baby

## Want to Learn More?

For an online version of this newsletter go to [www.extension.org](http://www.extension.org) and choose parenting.

If you have questions, contact your local Extension office.

When reading this newsletter, remember: Every baby is different. Children may do things earlier or later than described here. This newsletter gives equal space and time to both sexes. If he or she is used, we are talking about all babies.

Credits: This newsletter was adapted from Extension Just In Time Parenting Newsletters in California, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Tennessee, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Wisconsin.

**Months 1-12 of this newsletter are available in print by postal mail and electronically by the Internet. To receive the free electronic version of this newsletter through baby's fifth birthday, go to [www.babysfirstwish.org](http://www.babysfirstwish.org) and choose "Newsletter Subscription".**

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