

6 Games to Play with Babies (6 months)

Why is play important for babies? It helps develop sturdy brain architecture, the foundations of lifelong health, and the building blocks of resilience.

Playful interactions with adults also help babies develop **executive function skills**. Hiding, finger play, and conversation games, like the ones below, teach them to focus attention, use working memory, and practice basic self-control.

When you play with a baby, **follow their lead!** Play games they show an interest in and, whenever possible, let *them* determine how long to play and when to move on to something else.

1



Peekaboo!

Babies love hide-and-find games. This type of play challenges babies to remember who is hiding, and helps them practice basic skills of self-control! You can vary the game by having baby wait for you to reveal your face or letting baby control the timing.

2



“Trot Trot to Boston”

Put baby on your knees, facing you. As you chant the words, bounce them gently up and down. You can be silly by saying the words very quickly or very slowly: “Trot trot to Boston, Trot trot to Lynn. Watch out little [baby’s name] or you might fall in!”

3



“Pat-a-Cake”

Sing “Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can! Roll it, and pat it, and mark it with a [first letter of baby’s name], then put it in the oven for the baby and me!” Clap, roll, and pat baby’s hands gently as you sing. Increase the speed as you repeat!

4



Hiding Games

Hide a toy under a cloth, cup, or box and encourage baby to look for it. Once they can find it quickly, hide it, show baby that you moved it, and encourage them to find it again.

When baby finds the object, show excitement and say, “You found it!” Repeat the game as long as they seem interested. If baby turns away or fusses, try to figure out what their mood is telling you, or what they’re interested in next. The game can change!

5



Conversation Games

Six-month-old babies begin to make sounds like “ga,” “ma,” and “ba.” Sit with baby facing you on your lap and make silly sounds. Take a pause and wait to see if baby “talks back.” When they babble, squeal, or make a silly face, make the same sounds and face back.

Tell baby a story that is meaningful to you. You can tell them about the day they were born or an important event in your life. Along the way, stop and ask them questions. Even though you won’t get “real” answers, baby will add their own colorful details.

6



Fingerplays

Babies love songs and chants with simple hand motions. They can learn to copy motions and remember sequences, with practice. Some examples in English are *Eensy Weensy Spider* and *Where is Thumbkin?* Lots of other fun fingerplays can be found in many languages and cultures.



To see more brain-building play ideas for kids of all ages, visit:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/brainbuildingthroughplay>