

Top Tips: Your Developing Baby 6 – 9 Months

Your baby is now beginning to be able to sit up without your help and does so with much confidence. Mobility is increased through moving or crawling which means the world is opening up to your baby on a wider scale and offers new opportunities for play and exploration. Some children can stand by the end of this period. You will hear increases in speech sounds. Babbling becomes more controlled. Good listening skills means h/she can detect where words begin and end. Self confidence and an awareness of others also increases. The ideas below will help you to support your baby's development.

Tip 1. Let your baby feel successful

Just as adults want to feel we are doing well, so does your baby. Feeling success helps to build a child's self-esteem and confidence. Continue to show your love for your baby and reward them with praise when they do things. Squeezing a soft toy to make a sound is quite a challenge for a baby and a good opportunity to show them that you are impressed with what h/she has done and the skill and persistence shown. Words of praise as well as cuddles tell your child why you are so proud of them.

Tip 2. Help with socialisation. Meeting other children

Your baby may or may not be used meeting children of a similar age. Babies of this age do not play with others directly. That comes later on. Play is still quite separate but your baby is still very curious about other babies. They will communicate with each other – moving forward to each other, and exchanging stares and sounds. Help with socialisation with regular opportunities to meet children of around the same age.

Tip 3. Help your baby become aware of him/herself and others

By this stage, your baby has 'person permanence'. H/she knows that a person exists even though that person may not actually be present in the room. Children begin to build a mental picture of those people who feature in their lives and those with whom they have formed a strong attachment. This is usually mother, father and carers. Being aware of others helps them become aware of themselves and their individual identity.

Tip 4. Develop spoken language skills

On average girls have greater language skills than boys and language develops faster with girls. Do not be alarmed. This is normal - children develop at their own pace. Do encourage your child's language as much as possible. Notice how h/she responds when you say his or her name. Continue to use eye contact when you talk. Allow time for your baby to respond in conversation. H/she will do this with two syllable utterances by combining sounds already learned, for example, "ma –ma" or "dad da".

Tip 5. Promote understanding of words

Children's understanding of words (receptive language) is better than their ability to say the words (expressive language). Connect words to objects and people and very quickly they will learn the association and repeat the words correctly. Here is a technique. Say: "Where is Gemma's cup?" and watch as your baby looks around for the cup. Picture books are an ideal way to help babies to recognize a familiar image and associate it with a word. You should continue reading stories to your child and sharing the pictures and stories together.

Tip 6. Build concentration and memory skills

All the time your baby's memory and concentration is improving. A very good way of learning and improving both of these is through playing games. Children of this age love playing "Peek-a-Boo". Children love this game and eagerly anticipate you showing your face. Regular routines also help with memory skills

Tip 7. Help improve hand-eye co-ordination.

Now that your baby is able to sit upright quite comfortably, now is a good time to provide activities to build hand-eye skills. Stacking plastic rings one on top of another, building towers of wooden blocks are firm favourites. Encourage the use of the pincer grip: between forefinger and thumb and give lots of time to practise this skill. Tipping up a cup to reveal a smaller cup inside is another favourite.

Tip 8. Support but do not rush the crawling stage

Crawling is a natural pre-standing and pre-walking stage in development. It can take time for this to be achieved though and calls for considerable core strength to support the body and much co-ordination to move it around. When your baby is able to roll confidently from back to tummy and tummy to back, achieving this skill is not too far away. There are important learning implications for crawling.

Tip 9. Play with improvised items

Playthings can be improvised from items found around the home – or that cost very little – for example a chiffon scarf can be waved in the air or gently floated down on to baby's head. A clear, well-sealed plastic bottle filled with pasta, dried peas or coloured water can become an interesting rattle as well as something to watch.

Tip10. Play with different toys

Now that your baby can sit up and is more mobile, you should provide a range of different types of toys to help stimulate learning. Toys that make sounds and musical instruments help with hearing skills. Many toys move and help to involve your baby physically by pushing and pulling them. Helping your child to have a special toy at bedtime can also be comforting.

Important milestones

Moving	Communicating	Learning	Being with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By 7 months can grasp objects with one hand. ▪ Will take hold of objects with a pincer grip of thumb and index finger by 8 months. ▪ Sits without assistance. Crawls proficiently. Some children will stand by 9 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses gestures like arm waving to be picked up. ▪ Listens well to familiar words, like “mummy” and “daddy”. Follows instructions. ▪ Often says first word by 9 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copies more actions of others, including waving. ▪ Enjoys dropping things and watching them fall. By 7 months explores this cause and effect. ▪ At 9 months tries to arrange objects into patterns and shapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enjoys company of other babies. Finds them fascinating! ▪ By 8 months loves playing “peek-a-boo” type games. ▪ Shows distress when another is upset. 9 months.