

Top Tips: Your Developing Baby 9 – 12 Months

In these final months of the first year, your baby is very active and wants to be involved in everything that is happening. Often s/he will insist on doing things his or her way and wanting to make decisions. Improved hand-eye coordination mean that some activities become easier but you will also see their temper as they can become frustrated. Many children are capable of walking around holding onto furniture and some can stand briefly without any support. Language is used to really communicate with you and your baby is now able to recognise between 20 and 50 words. This is the time you may hear the first word! Your baby loves to be with you, yet may become a little anxious in the company of others. S/he enjoys being with other babies too, although is not yet ready to play with them.

The ideas below will help you to support your baby's development.

Tip 1. Encourage your baby's walking

Many babies will walk if you hold their hands to support them, although few are as yet at the stage of walking alone. Do not be alarmed if your baby seems unready for this just yet. When the time is right it will happen. Provide opportunities and encourage your baby. Push-along trolleys are useful aids as are push chairs and help with standing and walking. Be mindful of safety. Make sure that floors are not slippery and anything that might be a hazard is put well away. Be there. Be vigilant.

Tip 2. Take advantage of better hand-eye coordination

From 9 months onwards you will see great improvements in your baby's hand-eye co-ordination. Grip is now appropriate to the task and the use of the pincer grip between forefinger and thumb is commonplace. Help to make this even better. Provide boxes with lids for baby to take off and put on, pieces of food to pick up with fingers. Let your baby turn the pages of a book when you are sharing books together.

Tip 3. See dropping of objects as learning

Your baby loves to drop objects and toys. At this stage h/she does this because she can control this voluntarily. Your baby is delighted to see an object fall and you pick it up only to repeat the action again and again. This is real learning. Baby is learning about cause and effect. If I do this, then it happens. Such learning includes finding out about weights, estimating distances and about gravity.

Tip 4. Support increased concentration and patience

You will see this a lot when your baby is playing. When stacking blocks or beakers to build towers, you will notice that your baby wants to finish the job in hand. H/she spends considerable time at this and is delighted when it is completed. Encourage this.

Tip 5. Use pointing and turn taking to help pre-speaking

Your baby is keen to point to things nearby. Vision has improved and hand-eye co-ordination with it. Your baby can track objects that move now. Use these opportunities to add language, “Yes, that is your train, isn’t it”. When you are speaking, give instructions. “Please pass me your spoon”. You can expect baby to follow this instruction and reward when this is done. In conversation, pause after you have spoken, to give time for your baby to respond.

Tip 6. Expect a first word

True! Towards the end of the first year, many babies will say their very first word. It may be “da-da” (and not “ma-ma” as the ‘d’ sound is easier for babies to pronounce). Girls tend to speak earlier than boys on average. Babbling still continues but you may notice the noises are now more meaningful. To help this you should be talking to your baby constantly so that h/she hears spoken language as much as possible.

Tip 7. Extend language skills

Do not put pressure on the baby, as they have their own individual time clock. Instead help this process. What you say provides a model for the child to copy and builds vocabulary. Use short simple sentences. Extend their babbling with complete sentences like, “Yes, this is your biscuit. It is a very nice biscuit”. Vary voice tone.

Tip 8. Start with making marks (scribbles)

Some babies are interested in making marks from this age. Let them have a go with some coloured chalks and make marks on a small board or on a large piece of paper. H/she will love making random swirling patterns. Encourage these early and important efforts with lots of praise. This is the beginning of writing.

Tip 9. Reassure in social situations

Self-confidence drops a little towards the end of the first year. Your baby may appear clingy and constantly seeking assurance from you in new situations. Provide this. Be relaxed with your baby and especially when with other people. Give praise, hugs. Let your baby know h/she is safe and secure and that being with others is a good thing.

Tip 10. Be a good role model

One way that babies learn is by copying. Let your baby see you doing everyday tasks – preparing food, getting dressed, washing. H/she will want to copy these actions. When you are playing, she will wish to copy what you do too. Model good behaviour making it clear what is expected. Model what you want to see. Your baby is learning those important social skills and this takes time.

Important Milestones

Moving	Communicating	Learning	Being with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moves along the floor with confidence and agility. ▪ Can make marks on paper with a crayon. Has a preferred hand. ▪ At 12 months, early signs of walking by some children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands the word “no”. Shakes head from side to side to say no. 10 months. ▪ By 12 months speaks one or two words although not always clear. ▪ Responds to up to 50 words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concentration much improved. Can be up to 1 minute by 11 months. ▪ Tries new things then considers these actions. ▪ Adapts strategies to new situations, e.g. a new puzzle. 12 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Loves close contact with you. Is able to give hugs as well as receive them. ▪ Likes playing alongside others. ▪ When frustrated, show it. Loses temper quickly. 11 months.