

Top Ten Ideas for Babies and Toddlers

With babies and young toddlers, the emphasis is on the introduction and modelling of the use of maths vocabulary as part of everyday talk, but *not* an expectation that babies and very young children will repeat words like ‘square’ and ‘triangle’, ‘yellow and ‘green’ or repeat ‘one, two, three’. Learning by rote is not appropriate and not helpful. Babies and toddlers learn by doing and they learn well with adults who are co-players.

Very young children need lots of time to explore things that are the same and different, to view things from different angles, move around and explore space and position, develop their understanding of number as they play with interesting objects, play posting games, empty and fill containers and hide things. All of these experiences lay the foundations for later understanding of numbers, shape, space and measures.

- Play with three favourite soft toys with the baby. Then hide all the toys under a pillow case or towel. Take just two out – notice as the baby looks for the missing toy. Then take all the toys out and play together again.
- Make a small collection of plastic animals and look at and play with them together. put the animals into a box, one at a time. Then take them out again, one at a time. The baby or toddler may have another idea, and may tip all the animals out at once. Talk about ‘lots’ of animals and ‘empty’, ‘full’ and ‘all’.
- Build a stack of wooden blocks together, one at a time. Say ‘one more’ and ‘another one’. Keep building and then knock all the blocks down and start again. You could say ‘what a tall tower’.
- With a small bowl of warm water, play with a teapot or kettle and mugs or cups. Help the young toddler to fill the mugs with water from the teapot and then empty them again. Use words like ‘full’ and ‘empty’ and sing a song like ‘I’m a little teapot’.
- Take the baby for a walk around the garden. Sit on the ground together and look up wards, or stand on a low bridge or steps and look down. Hold the baby higher in your arms so they can see over a low fence or wall. Give the baby lots of opportunities to see the world around them from different angles.
- Give a mobile crawling baby or toddler lots of time to move around outdoors. Talk about what the child is doing ‘oh you are behind the box’, ‘you are at the top of the steps’, ‘you are going down the slide’, ‘you are under the blanket’.
- Play rolling ball games. Sit on the floor, a little way apart from the young toddler, take turns to roll the ball backwards and forwards between you. Children find out more about 3D shapes by playing with them, than by looking at pictures or being told names.
- Use a ‘posting box’ shape activity together. Look at the shapes, move them around in your hands and feel them. Then look at the posting box and post the shapes into the correct holes. Young toddlers will usually begin with a ‘trial and error’ method.
- Play games with sound makers – make two noises with a shaker, then three, or beat different drums two times, and then one. Encourage older babies and toddlers to make noises with percussion instruments too. Don’t forget that our bodies are great

sound makers – play clapping games with small babies and introduce stamping games with toddlers.

- Experiment with mark making – give young toddlers small buckets of water and large paint brushes and lots of space to move around and make water marks on the ground and walls.