

Development & discovery

Sarah Cressall, founder of children's activity franchise The Creation Station, suggests stimulating activities for babies aged 0–6 months...



Getting started

It goes without saying that children must always be supervised during creative play and that you should only engage them in activities that they enjoy – if they don't like playing hide and seek under a quilt cover then don't do it! It's also best to plan activity time for when babies most alert, usually before food or before a nap. So, how can you get started? Try these games...

Babies have a wonderful ability to learn and develop at a phenomenal rate. Our role is to allow them to experience the different elements of the world and to help them to understand and embrace their new environment.

Finding appropriate activities that provide the right level of stimulation in response to each baby's individual needs can be a challenge, so at The Creation Station we have developed 'Baby Discovery', a journey of discovery and development for babies exploring the world around them. I want to share with you some of the creative play ideas and practical activities that we've found work really well, and which will help you support babies' development in your setting.



1 Look and feel Support babies' hand-eye coordination and sense of touch

Provide a selection of safe touchable household items and products with varied textures to allow babies to experience soft, furry, rough, smooth. You could try using scarves, soft jumpers, hessian, a furry toy, cold cucumbers and carrots.

Talk to the baby and tell them what they are feeling and seeing. Demonstrate touching the items yourself too and saying how it feels. You can ask your baby questions: "How does that feel?" "Did that feel silky?" With the baby lying on their back, give their tummy, toes or hands a gentle brush against the skin.

2 Finger puppets and funny faces Support babies' visual development

Cut out a rectangle of card and staple it together to create a cylinder. Mark a simple face on the front and pop on your finger. Hold it 8–15cm from the baby's face and say "Hello 'baby's name', my name is..."

Make a range of facial expressions, changing them slowly from surprised to happy, pull your tongue out. Show the baby their face with a plastic mirror and talk about each face change you make.

3 Talking tubes and creative cones Support babies' hearing and visual development

Talk quietly into a tube into the baby's left ear, then right ear, to help them learn that each ear can hear independently. You can develop this into making a cone and drawing a simple face on it. Pop the cone on your finger and say "Hello 'baby's name', my name's Clare the Cone". Make the cone dance to some music, then say gently "I'm going to talk in your ear now". Then turn the cone over and speak into the baby's ear.

4 Peek-a-boo and where's teddy gone? Support babies' cause and effect understanding

Hiding behind an object and popping out can provide a great sense of fun for babies. Use surprised or happy facial expressions when you appear, and respond to babies' reactions. Try hiding behind a book and popping out different sides. Adapt this game with a soft toy hiding in a box. Repeat your actions and give babies a chance to make the toy hide and pop out too.

find out more

The Creation Station franchises run regular creativity classes for babies, toddlers and children up to the age of 11 across the UK. To discover more about how they can support the work you're doing in your setting, please call Sarah on 0844 854 9100, email her at sarah@thecreationstation.co.uk or visit thecreationstation.co.uk and claim your free info pack.

Please share with me your favourite baby activity! Next issue, I'll introduce some of our top tips for creative play for babies aged 6–12 months.