

Experiment & explore

Sarah Cressall, founder of children's activity franchise The Creation Station, suggests stimulating activities for babies aged 6–12 months...



A great way to support babies' development is to provide safe opportunities for them to explore, experiment and discover new things. When introducing new food and textures, creative play provides them with the opportunity to engage in a range of new experiences, in a positive and fun way. Below are just a few ideas to get you started. As always, do ensure that your babies are supervised at all times during creative play.

1

Pop-up puppet

Skills developed:

understanding of object permanence

What you'll need:

a yoghurt pot or large paper cup; a straw; a small colourful toy (a finger puppet works best); some tape or glue.

Punch a hole in the bottom of the yoghurt pot or cup. Insert a straw through the hole, then glue or tape to the tip a small cuddly toy, plastic figure, or, even better, a finger puppet (just slip it over the end of the stick and secure it with a bit of tape). Now you have a hand-operated pop-up toy! Pull the stick down so the toy or puppet is hidden inside the can or cup, then push it up suddenly when you want the jack-in-the-can to greet your babies.

TIP Sharing the experience of the making activity helps to involve babies and there's often a greater response to playing with an item when participants in the game have been involved in its construction.

2

See-through bottle

Skills developed: dexterity, familiarity with colours

What you'll need: a clear plastic bottle (or several) with a tightly fitting screw-on lid; food colouring; washing-up liquid.

Fill the plastic bottle one-third full of water. Add a few drops of washing-up liquid and a few drops of food colouring. Close the bottle tightly and give it to the baby; show them how to shake it up and make eye-catching coloured bubbles. Make several bottles using different shades of food colouring. Try adding oil, glitter etc. and use them to introduce your baby to the various colours. Show them how to roll the bottles across the floor.

3

Story boards

Skills developed: verbal, hearing

What you'll need: a felt board

(available from educational toy shops and catalogues); sheets of coloured felt and scissors, or ready-cut felt shapes.

You can use traditional shop-bought felt shapes, or make your own. A good place to start is with simple shapes and pictures you've cut out of magazines, and to tell a story.

Sit facing the baby with the felt board propped on your knees so it's clearly visible. Now tell your story! It could be about anything, but try to include the baby in the story as much as possible: use different voices, facial expressions, try whispering, and use pauses.

4

Box peek-a-boo

Skills developed:

understanding of object permanence, fine motor skills

What you'll need: recycled boxes; teddy bear or other toys.

Playing with and hiding teddies around a room is a fun way to keep babies engaged. Use boxes to hide teddy in. Pretend the box is a house and lay teddy on a blanket to show he's sleeping. Using examples of activity in role-play can support babies' understanding of what the activity is all about. My three boys came into the office the other day and transformed a box into a very cool house. It took them hours and they were so proud of their creation. Never underestimate the power of a box!



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.

Next issue, I'll share some of our top tips for creative play for children aged 12 months to two years. Subscribe to our blog for more inspiring creative tips yourcreationstation.wordpress.com