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# Powerful Playtimes



*Powerful Playtimes* is supported by Eastern Bank.

# Powerful Playtimes

Play is the very best way for babies and young children to develop and grow. And playing together can help you connect with your child to build a strong, positive relationship. But it can be hard for adults to know how to play. Here are some ideas of ways to play.

## Get started

**Make time.** Toys are great tools, but you matter most to your child. Make special time to play together—even just 5 minutes. Your time together is important.



**Start calmly.** Say your child's name quietly. Give a gentle tap on their nose, cheek, shoulder, or arm to get their attention. Your child can feel that you are ready to connect with them.

## Offer just enough stuff.

Too many toys can be overwhelming. Give your child one or two things to start.



## Support your child's interests

**“Try again.”** Your child might do the same thing over and over. You might feel bored and that's okay! The activity is still a challenge for your child, and they are having fun. Encourage them to keep trying—and focus on being proud of them for learning new things.

### **“You really like doing this.”**

Your child might play longer with a stuffed animal than a ball. Or they might not want to play with a ball at all. Just like you, your child has things they like and dislike. And these things can change over time. Notice what they are interested in. Then find some things you both like to do together!



**“You can do it!”** Watch and wait. Everything is new to your child, and they are just learning how to do things. They may have a hard time doing something that is easy for you. Encourage them to try it their way. Offer a little help or a new idea only after they tried it by themselves many times.



## Make it fun for yourself

**Learn something new about your child.** Even if your child is doing something simple, watch carefully. Did they throw the ball forward instead of backwards? Are they making a different sound? Watch their face and notice how they are feeling. Each time you play, you can learn something about your child.

**You play too!** While your child is playing, play next to them. Challenge yourself with the toys. Can you juggle? Or balance a ball on top of a tower? Your child might stay focused on what they are doing. Or they might watch you and be excited by your skills!

**Laugh together.** Young children are silly. Babies might make funny sounds. Toddlers might move in a funny way. Preschoolers might tell a story that doesn't make a lot of sense. Laugh and say, "That's so silly!" Your child might laugh too! Laughter is a great way to feel good and build a positive relationship.



**All play encourages learning.** When your child plays, they learn new words, find out how things work, explore ways of using their bodies, and build their confidence. But don't worry too much about what they are doing and learning. Just enjoy playing with your child—and that time together will help them develop and grow!

## Playtime with a Ball

**Get ready.** Sit on the floor. Hold a ball in front of your baby's face. Smile and say, "Ball!" When your baby looks at you or the ball, it is time to play!

### Try this!

**Find the ball.** Cover a ball with a cloth. Say, "Where's the ball?" Then uncover it and say, "Ball!" or "Here it is!" Does your baby look for the ball? Try it again!

**Try to get it!** Place your baby on their belly for tummy time. Put a ball just out of your baby's reach so they can look at it and reach for it. Point to the ball and say, "ball." As your baby gets older, they may roll or scoot to get it.



**Back and forth.** Hand a ball to your baby. Let them take it from you or put it on their lap. They might give it back to you by handing it to you, rolling it, or dropping it. Say, "For me? Thank you!" Then give it back to them. "For you." Pass the ball back and forth, again and again.



If your ball gets lost, make a new one from everyday things. Try crumpling up a piece of paper or rolling up a sock!



**Safety tip!** Tummy time can only happen when your baby is awake and you are watching them.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Is your baby looking at the ball? If they are, give them a ball to play with! Is your baby fussy, hungry, or tired? Give your child what they need and play later.



## Practice together.

Even if your baby does not say words yet, they will make lots of sounds. When your baby says “bah,” then you say “bah.” Make the same sound that they make—just like you are talking to each other!

## Say, “Yay!”

Did your baby roll the ball? Did they pick it up and drop it? When your baby does something with the ball, clap your hands and say, “Yay!” or “Wow!” Even little things are big for your baby!



## Why do it?

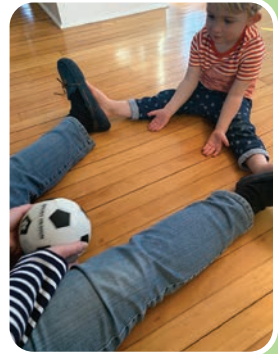
It takes two people to pass a ball back and forth. And it is a great way to connect with your baby. Even if your baby cannot speak yet, that give and take with a ball is a way of communicating back and forth!

## Playtime with a Ball

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor. Look around and put away anything that might break if a ball hits it. Sit down with your child and say, "Let's play!"

### Try this!

**Passing game.** Sit on the floor facing your child. Make a "V" with your legs, and help your child do the same. Touch your feet to your child's feet to make a diamond. Roll the ball slowly to your child. Say, "I pass the ball to you. Now you pass it to me." Try going faster.



**Ball toss.** Put an empty container, like a cardboard box or laundry basket, on the floor. Give your child different kinds of balls to put in or toss in. "Throw the ball into the basket!" Tossing balls into something is hard for toddlers. When your child misses, say, "Oops! Try again!"



**Try catching.** Invite your child to try catching. Toss a ball gently to your child and say, "Catch the ball!" They will probably miss the ball because catching takes lots of practice. Encourage them to get the ball and try tossing it back to you.



Use pieces of paper, aluminum foil, and socks to make more balls. The more different types of balls you have, the more fun it will be!



**Safety tip!** You can do any of these activities outside. Just be sure to find a safe place where the balls cannot roll into the road.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

When your child misses the ball, what do they do? Do they laugh or do they get upset? Learning new skills, like catching a ball, can be exciting and frustrating. Both of these feelings are okay for your child to have.

## Practice together.

When your child misses the ball or throws it far away from you, what do you do? Do you get upset? Your child learns by watching you. Take a deep breath and smile—making mistakes is how both you and your child learn.



## Say, "Yay!"

Focus on having fun together. Did your child get *most* of the balls in the box? Did they *almost* catch the ball? "Well done! You are working so hard! Let's try again together."



## Why do it?

It takes two (or more) people to play catch. And one of the best ways to bond with your child is to play together. You and your child can both learn a lot from spending time with each other.



## Playtime with a Ball

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor or go outside. Have your child help you move anything that might break or get in the way. Roll a ball to your child and say, "Let's play ball!"

### Try this!

**Roll, toss, and kick.** Try out balls of different sizes and shapes to see how each one moves. Which ball goes the shortest distance? Which is best for rolling? Which is better for kicking? Ask questions like, "Which ball do you think will go farthest?" Then test it out together.

**Catch and count.** Play catch with your child. How many times can you toss or kick the ball back and forth without missing it? "Let's count together." It may be zero times or 10 times—it doesn't matter! Laugh when you make mistakes and do it for fun.



**Balls and ramps.** Lean something flat against a chair or the side of a bed to make a ramp. Try a large book, a piece of cardboard, or a baking sheet. Say, "Can you roll a ball down the ramp?" Change the height of the ramp. What do you and your child notice?



**Safety tip!** You can do any of these activities outside. Just be sure to find a safe place where the balls cannot roll into the road.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Your child likes to do different things at different times. Let them show you how they want to play. Do they want to test things out, like experimenting with balls and ramps? Or are they ready for a game with rules?

## Practice together.

Kicking, tossing, and catching take a lot of practice. If your child gets upset when they miss, help them find a way to manage their feelings. "It's okay to be mad. Take a deep breath. Let's try again."



## Say, "Yay!"

Is your child really focused on what they are trying to do? That is something to be proud of! Encourage them by saying, "I like the way you keep trying to make the ramp work."



## Why do it?

Learning what your child likes and dislikes is an important part of your relationship. Your child might like soccer or basketball. Or they might like making up their own games. They also might like different things than you. Try to find something you both like playing together.



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HORIZONS

## Playtime with Cups

**Get ready.** Sit on the floor and place some cups in front of your baby. Hold a cup in front of your baby's face. Smile and say, "Cup!" You know your baby is ready to play when they look at you or the cups.

### Try this!

**Exploring cups.** Give your baby one cup and say, "cup." Watch what they do. Do they hold or shake it? Show them how to put two cups together. Say, "in" as you put a smaller cup inside a bigger cup. Say, "out" as you take the smaller one out. Do it a few times. Does your baby try too?



**Make some noise!** Place your baby on their belly for tummy time. Or sit them up between your legs. Tap a cup on the floor to get their attention. Then put some cups close to them, so they can reach. "Bang, bang, bang!" "Tap, tap, tap!" Say the sounds the cups make when your baby hits them together or on the floor.



**Wear a cup.** Put a cup on your head like a hat. Move your head so the cup drops—it's silly and fun for your baby! Say, "head" and put the cup on your baby's head. Then say, "toes" and put the cup on their toes. Put the cup on different body parts, and say their names too.



If you need more cups, use things you already have. Most plastic drinking cups or containers are great to play with. Just make sure the plastic is not sharp if it breaks!



**Safety tip!** Tummy time can only happen when your baby is awake and you are watching them.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

What is your baby doing with cups? Are they looking at them? Grabbing them? Putting one cup on top of another? What are they interested in doing with the cups today?



## Practice together.

Your baby taps on a cup with their hand. So you tap with your hand. Then you do something first, like rolling a cup. And see if your baby copies you. It's okay if they don't. But keep rolling your cup—and they might decide to try too!



## Say, "Yay!"

Focus on having fun together. Did your baby stack two cups? Clap your hands. Point and count, "One cup. Two cups." Did the cups fall down? Keep smiling and say, "Uh oh!"



## Why do it?

You are your baby's first teacher. Your baby makes sounds with the cups and looks at you. By looking at you, they are saying, "Look what I did!" They also look at you to get new ideas, like how to put one cup on top of another.

## Playtime with Cups

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor and sit down. Smile at your child. Hold out the cups and say, "What should we do with these cups?"

### Try this!

**Just explore.** Give your child the cups all stacked together. What do they do with them? They might take them apart. Then put them back together. "Out and in. In and out." Or they might line up the cups in a row. Point and count, "One cup, two cups, three cups, four!"



**Make sounds.** Bang two cups together. Tap them with your hands or some spoons. Sing into a little cup. Laugh into a big cup. Put a smaller cup inside a bigger cup and shake it around. How many different sounds can you and your child make?



**Build together.** Take turns adding one cup at a time to make a tower. "Your turn. Put this cup on top." "Now my turn." "Now your turn again." When the tower is finished, invite your child to knock it down with a "Crash!" and lots of giggles!



**Safety tip!** Most paper or plastic drinking cups and containers are great to play with. Just make sure the plastic is not sharp if it breaks!

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Let your child show you how they want to play. They might move or carry the cups. Or put things inside them. Or stack them and knock them down. Say, “That’s interesting!” There is no “right” way to play with cups.



## Practice together.

A tower might fall while your child is building. Or your child might knock down a tower that you are building—and that might be frustrating for you. Say, “Oh no!” Then take a deep breath and say, “That’s okay. I can build it again.”

## Say, “Yay!”

Tell your child what you like about what they’re doing. “Wow! I like the sound you made with those cups!” Whether they are trying something for the first time or the fifth time, show your child you are proud of them.



## Why do it?

Children can do so many different things with cups. A good way to connect with your child is to focus on what *they* are doing and what *they* are interested in. Watch their play. Point at what they are doing. And talk together—even before they have lots of words.

## Playtime with Cups

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor or at a table. Sit down with your child and place the cups in front of you. Smile at your child and say, “What can we do with these?”

### Try this!

**Build it!** Give your child the cups. Add some clean things from your recycling bin, like yogurt containers, toilet paper tubes, and cereal boxes. Let them build in any way they choose. “Tell me about what you are building.”

**Make music.** Gather some spoons or sticks. Say, “Let’s turn the cups into drums!” Tap on the bottoms of the cups. Make different sounds using larger cups and smaller cups. Play some music on your phone and join the band with your child.

**Cups as tools.** Bring the cups into the bath or with you when you go outside. Ask, “What can you do with the cups?” Maybe scoop and pour water. Or make a sand castle. Or collect things like leaves and acorns—then sort them into different cups.



**Safety tip!** Most paper or plastic drinking cups are great to play with. Just make sure the plastic is not sharp if it breaks!

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Cups have so many different uses. Notice what your child does with them. Do they use the cups for building? Or pretending? Or making music? Or something you didn't think of?

## Practice together.

Build with your child. Or build on your own next to them. When your building falls, smile and say, "Whoops! That didn't work like I thought it would. Can you help me think of something else to try?"



## Say, "Yay!"

Show your child that you can be proud of yourself. "Wow! I did it. I'm glad I kept trying." It is important to let your child see you being happy about your own work. Then thank your child for their help. "Thank you for sharing such a good idea with me."



## Why do it?

As your child gets older, something as simple as cups can still be a great toy. Use playtime as a way to have a conversation. Ask your child what they are doing. Then ask more questions. Your child will love that you are interested in them!

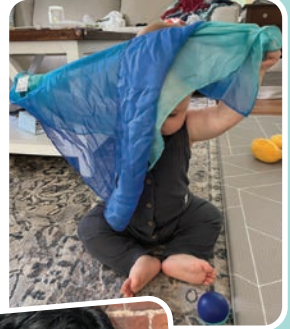


## Playtime with Scarves

**Get ready.** Sit on the floor and smile. Wave a scarf gently in front of your baby and say, "Scarf!" Drop the scarf to the floor to start playing. When your baby looks at you or the scarf, it is time to play!

### Try this!

**Scarf toss.** Throw a scarf up in the air. Say, "So high!" Watch as it floats to the floor. "Down, down, down." Throw it up again. If it falls on your head or your baby's head, take the scarf off and smile. "So silly!"



**Peek-a-boo!** Hold a scarf in front of your face. Then uncover your face or let your child pull the scarf away. Act surprised and say, "Peek-a-boo!" Do it again, but this time peek out from the side of the scarf. As your baby gets older, let them hide from you.



**Scarf dance.** Sing a song or play music on your phone. Wave and twirl one scarf in front of your baby to the music. Give another scarf to your baby. Do they hold it and flap their arms, like they are dancing? Pick your baby up and dance with the scarves together!



Do you want more scarves? Use paper towels, pillow cases, or small hand towels.



**Safety tip!** Playtime with scarves can only happen when you and your baby are playing together.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

What does your baby like to look at or do? Maybe they like watching the scarf float to the ground? Or maybe they like rubbing it gently on their cheek? What makes them smile or giggle?



## Practice together.

Your baby will move the scarf around in different ways. Say, "up" when they wave it up. Say, "down" when they wave it down. Say aloud what your baby is doing so they can hear the words you use.

## Say, "Yay!"

Is your baby surprised when you play peek-a-boo? Be excited with them. Say, "You found me!" Did your baby grab a scarf that dropped on them? Say, "Yay! You got it!" to share their joy.



## Why do it?

Playtime can often be exciting, but it is important to have calmer ways to play too. You can use scarves for both types of play. If your baby has a lot of energy, play with the scarves with lots of movement. If your child is just waking up or getting tired, play with the scarves more gently.

## Playtime with Scarves

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor or go outside. Move anything that might get in the way while playing. Wave a scarf in front of your child and say, “Let’s play!”

### Try this!

**Copy me.** Wave one scarf over your head. Invite your child to copy you with another scarf. Say, “Wave your scarf up high!” Put your scarf on your head like a hat. Let them copy you again. Do one movement at a time. Then let your child be the leader—and you copy them!



**Freeze dance.** Say, “Let’s dance!” Sing a song or play music on your phone. Then stop the music and say, “Freeze! Stop dancing and stay still!” Try again. It may take a few times for your child to understand how the game works.



**Get it!** Hold a scarf in one hand. As you move the scarf around, say, “Can you catch it?” Wave the scarf up and down. Swish it back and forth. Go fast. Go slow. Let them catch the scarf, sometimes. Other times, keep moving it just out of their reach.

Sometimes it helps to set some clear rules for playing together. “Ouch! That hurts. Please do not pull on my scarf.” You might have to remind your child a few times.



**Safety tip!** Do not wrap or tie scarves tightly around people. That can hurt!

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

How does your child move with the scarves? Do they dance quickly or slowly? Do they copy your actions? Or do they try new ones of their own? Your child learns a lot by watching you—and you can learn from watching them too!



## Practice together.

Being a good leader is an important part of playing and working together. Invite your child to lead. During freeze dance, say, “This time you stop the music. Then we will both freeze.” And let them control the music.

## Say, “Yay!”

What do you love about what your child did? Tell them. “I liked the way you jumped with the scarf.” “I loved the way you waited for your turn to dance!”



## Why do it?

Having a good time together helps make your relationship with your child stronger. Be silly—you can wear a scarf as a hat or do funny dances. Take turns. Make mistakes together. And laugh a lot!



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HORIZONS

## Playtime with Scarves

**Get ready.** Clear some space or go outside. Have your child help you move anything that might break or get in the way. Toss the scarves up in the air and say, "Let's play together!"

### Try this!

**Mirror me.** Stand so you and your child are facing each other. Hold one scarf in your hand and give one to your child. Say, "You do what I do." Then move! Wave your scarf up and down. Zig zag it in front of you. Invite your child to mirror your moves. Then let them lead.



**Wear it!** Make a scarf into a costume. Put it on your head and say, "This is my party hat!" Or tuck it into your child's pants as an animal tail. Let your child tell you what the scarf could be—and pretend together.



**Scarf tag.** Find some open space to play. Chase each other and try to touch or "tag" the other person with a scarf. Or tuck one end of a scarf into your pocket. Then encourage your child to chase you. Say, "Try to pull the scarf from my pocket!"



**Safety tip!** Do not wrap or tie scarves tightly around people. That can hurt! Make sure your child is tying and untying the scarves safely.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

What are your child's favorite ways to play? Do they like to pretend or play games with rules, like tag? Do they prefer being loud or quiet? Watching how your child plays can tell you about their likes and dislikes.

## Practice together.

Learning something new, like tying and untying scarves is not easy. And your child might get frustrated. Work together. Loosen a knot just a little. Or start a loop for tying. "Okay, I started it. Now you finish."



## Say, "Yay!"

Show your child that you like how they are being creative. Laugh together when they wear a scarf as a tail. "What a good idea! You look just like a cat!" Maybe you wear a tail too—it's okay to be a little silly!



## Why do it?

Sometimes you and your child might want to run. Other times you might need quiet moments together. Scarves are great for both types of play. Having a good time together helps make your relationship with your child stronger.



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HORIZONS

## Playtime with a Stuffed Animal

**Get ready.** Sit on the floor and put a stuffed animal in front of your baby. Smile and wave the stuffed animal's arm, and say, "Hello." When your baby looks at you or the animal, it is time to play!

### Try this!

**Head and toes.** Touch the stuffed animal's head. Then touch your baby's head and say, "head." Let your baby touch the stuffed animal. If they touch its toes, say, "toes." Touch your baby's toes, and say, "Your toes!" Name other parts too.



**Animal sounds.** Let your baby hold the stuffed animal. You can try this during tummy time, when your baby is laying on their back, or when they are sitting in your lap. Talk to your baby. "What sound does a bear make? Roar!" "What sounds can you make?"



**Read together.** Sit with both your baby and the stuffed animal on your lap. Read a story together. Use the stuffed animal's paw to point to a picture. Say, "sun" as the bear points at the sun. When your baby points at something, say the name of what they are pointing at.



**Safety tip!** Stuffed animals are for playtime with babies. Do not leave a stuffed animal with your baby while they are falling asleep or sleeping.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Is your baby pointing at the stuffed animal's nose gently? Or are they squeezing and poking at it? Either one is okay! They are still learning how to be nice. Say what you see, "Bear's nose!" or "Squeeze!"



## Practice together.

If your baby poked the stuffed animal's eye, you can say, "Ouch!" for the stuffed animal. You can pet the stuffed animal, and say, "Gently, please." Your baby might not say words yet, but the stuffed animal can talk to them.

## Say, "Yay!"

Is your baby excited about something they did? Say, "Yay!" and make the stuffed animal jump with joy. If your baby claps their hands, make the stuffed animal clap its hands—and you clap your hands too. Everyone can be happy together!



## Why do it?

You are the first person your baby connects with. Some babies take a long time to feel comfortable with others. A stuffed animal is a nice first friend that you and your baby can play with together.



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## Playtime with a Stuffed Animal

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor and sit down with a stuffed animal. Smile at your child. Make the animal wave and say, "Bear wants to play!"

### Try this!

**Animal feelings.** Ask the stuffed animal how it is feeling. "Bear is happy because we are going to the playground!" Act out different feelings together with your child and the stuffed animal. "Let's be happy! Clap hands with Bear." Try another feeling, like being sad or scared.



**Play pretend.** Invite your child to act out a familiar routine with a stuffed animal, like lunchtime or naptime. "Bear looks very sleepy. Can you help it get ready for bed?" Together, you and your child can give it a pretend bottle, read it a story, and tuck it into bed.

**Hide and seek.** Have your child cover their eyes with their hands (it's okay if they peek!). Hide a stuffed animal with its head peeking out as a hint. "Where did Bear go?" When they find it, hide the stuffed animal again. Or let them hide it for you!



Sometimes your child might play a little rough with a stuffed animal. They might throw it or hit it. As long as they are not hurting themselves or anyone else, it's okay to let them express their feelings.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Is your child giving the stuffed animal a cuddle? They might be feeling sad themselves. Are they playing a bit rough? Your child might be feeling upset about something. Watch and ask, "Are you feeling sad? Do you need a hug?"



## Practice together.

Your child has lots of different feelings. Help them practice putting words and actions with those feelings. "Bear is jumping up and down. Is Bear excited about seeing grandpa?"



## Say, "Yay!"

"I like the way you are helping your stuffed animal brush its teeth!"  
Praise your child when they are helping or showing care to others—even stuffed animals!



## Why do it?

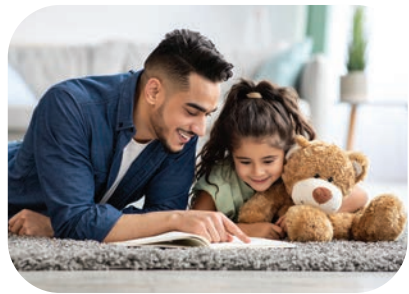
You show your child you care when you play with them, make them lunch, put a band-aid on for them, and say "I love you."  
Your child notices your caring actions and practices them too.

## Playtime with a Stuffed Animal

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor and sit down with a stuffed animal. Make the animal hop over to your child and say, "Let's play!"

### Try this!

**Story time.** Invite your child to read a book to you and a stuffed animal. Encourage them to turn the pages and tell parts of the story. Say, "Bear wants to know what will happen next!" Your child may not be reading the words yet, but they can tell the story by looking at the pictures.



**Play school.** Encourage your child to play "school." They may want to be the teacher. And you and the stuffed animal can be the children. "Bear and I are hungry. Is it time for snack?" Help your child guide you through the day.

**Dance party!** Sing a song or play music on your phone. Dance with your child and a stuffed animal. Pick a slower song and change your dance moves to match. Then pick a faster song. What dance moves are good for fast songs?



Sometimes your child might be rough with a stuffed animal. That's okay. As they get older, help them think about why they are playing that way. "I see that you are not treating Bear very nicely right now. Are you feeling upset?"

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Is the stuffed animal excited or worried about school? Is it scared to go to bed by itself? Your child's play can tell you a lot about what they might be thinking and feeling.

## Practice together.

A stuffed animal can be a great friend to your child. If you see your child is feeling upset, give their stuffed animal a hug. "That hug made me feel better. Thank you, Bear!" Hand the stuffed animal to your child—they might want to hug it too.



## Say, "Yay!"

Notice when your child says or does something nice for their stuffed animal. "You told your stuffed animal, 'I love you.' That's a kind thing to say!"



## Why do it?

Giving your child time on their own is important for both of you. Your child might want to play with or talk to their stuffed animal—and not you. That's okay! Watch, wait, and listen. Be ready when it is your turn to play again.



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HORIZONS

## Playtime with Lots of Toys

**Get ready.** Sit on the floor. Put two toys in front of your baby. Point to each toy and say its name, like “cup” or “ball.” You know your baby is ready to play when they look at you or the toys.

### Try this!

**Find the scarf.** Put a scarf in a cup and say, “in.” Pull the scarf out and say, “out.” Then stuff the scarf back into the cup and give it to your baby. Do they pull the scarf out? Do they try to push it in? Put the cup with the scarf upside down on the floor. Does your baby find the scarf?



**Things that roll.** Roll a ball to your baby. Then roll a cup to them. Balls and cups move in different ways—and the cup might even move away from them! What does your baby do? Try this when your baby is sitting or crawling. Or if your baby is still very little, try it during tummy time.



**Unwrap it!** Wrap a ball or cup in a scarf. Tie the ends of the scarf loosely around the toy. Hand the wrapped toy to your baby. Let them shake it and pull on it. As the scarf loosens up, they will find what’s inside! Tell your baby what they found, like “Ball!”



**Safety tip!** Tummy time can only happen when your baby is awake and you are watching them.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Give your baby just one or two toys first, then add another. Do they look at one kind of toy more than another? Do they spend more time playing with one than the other?

## Practice together.

As your baby plays with different toys, they may push or hand one to you. Say, "A ball! For me?" Then point to a different toy and say, "Can you give me the cup?" If your baby does not do it, that's okay. They are just learning—and they might be too busy playing!



## Say, "Yay!"

When your baby discovers something, be excited with them. If they find a scarf in a cup, say, "Wow! A scarf in the cup!" You knew where the scarf was, but your baby did not!



## Why do it?

When you offer your baby different types of toys, they have even more ways to play—and you have even more ways to learn about your baby! Enjoy your time together. Be proud of how they are growing!

## Playtime with Lots of Toys

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor and sit down. Put out two or more different types of toys in front of you. Smile at your child and say, "Hmmm... what should we do with these?"

### Try this!

**Just play.** See how your child chooses to play with different types of toys. Do they put the scarves inside the cups? Or cover the stuffed animal with a scarf, like a blanket? Say what you see them doing. "You put the cup on Bear's head, like a hat!"



**Knock it down.** Work together to stack two or more cups on top of each other. Roll a ball to knock the cups down. "Crash!" Try again. "Let's build a taller tower!"

**Tea party.** Put a scarf on the floor as a picnic blanket. Pour some pretend tea into the cups. "Would you like some tea?" Offer a cup to your child and a cup to the stuffed animal. What kind of tasty pretend snack could the balls be?



**Safety tip!** Before you play with a ball inside, look around and put away anything that might fall or break if the ball hits it.

Let your child pick other toys they have to add to their play, like blocks or cars. Or offer them some clean things from your recycling bin, like toilet paper tubes and egg cartons.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

How does your child choose to play? The choices they make can show you a lot about what they are interested in. Do they like to build? Or play pretend? Or do they bounce from one way of playing to another to try everything out?



## Practice together.

Sometimes your child might have trouble getting a toy to work the way they want it to. Practice thinking together. "I see that the ball is too big for cup. What else could you try?" Give them some time to think before you offer an idea. "Maybe try a smaller ball?"



## Say, "Yay!"

Some ideas your child has might seem silly to you as an adult. You know that a ball is not an apple—and your child knows that too! But you can pretend together. "Good idea! That looks yummy!"

## Why do it?

Sometimes you might be too tired or too busy to play. Other times your child might not want to play with you. That's okay. Just being together while you each do your own thing shows that you care about your child. And doing things on their own is part of growing up!



## Playtime with Lots of Toys

**Get ready.** Clear some space on the floor. Place two or more different toys on the floor and say, “Hmm... what should we do with these?”

### Try this!

**Cup bowling.** Work together to build a tower that is wide at the bottom, like a pyramid. Give your child a ball. “Can you roll the ball to knock our tower down?” Then build a tall, thin tower. Try to knock it down. Take turns building and knocking down towers.



**Pretend worlds.** Use the cups, scarves, and some clean things from your recycling bin to make a pretend world for a stuffed animal. “Where will Bear sleep?” “Where will it find food?” An empty tissue box could be a cave. A scarf could be a pond. “What else does Bear need?”



**Challenge yourselves!** Try some physical challenges. Balance a ball on a cup and say, “Can you carry it across the room without the ball falling?” Or try to jump three times with a cup on your head. Let your child make up some challenges for you too!



**Safety tip!** Take these activities outside. Just be sure to find a safe place where the balls cannot roll into the road.

# While you play...

## Watch carefully.

Does a scarf become a shirt for a stuffed animal? Or maybe a pinecone from a walk becomes a tree in your child's pretend world? Watch your child's actions and listen to their words. They have so many new ideas as they grow!



## Practice together.

Using toys in new and different ways is a great way to practice being creative. Invite your child to share their ideas for how to play. "That idea sounds really exciting. Can you show me?"



## Say, "Yay!"

Your child has lots of ideas. Show them you are interested in their thinking. "Wow! I never thought of playing with the ball and the scarf like that! Let's try it your way."

## Why do it?

Sometimes it is good to play with the same thing again and again. Other times it is nice to try something new. Mixing different types of toys together can help make playtime more exciting for both you and your child.