

## Itty-Bitty Art: Play

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### Infant Brain Development:

The infant brain develops rapidly. The synaptic connections created in the first few years form the foundation for all future learning. The first two years are defined as the Sensorimotor stage of brain development. This means that the child gathers information about the world through use of the five senses and explores the world with their small and large motor skills. Infants need a variety of sensory experiences, opportunities to move their bodies, and lots of interactions with adults (playing, reading, talking). Their future ability to learn and retain new information, store and retrieve memories, regulate their behavior and emotions, engage in new experiences (like trying new foods), and succeed in school and life depend on their earliest experiences.

### Supporting Play:

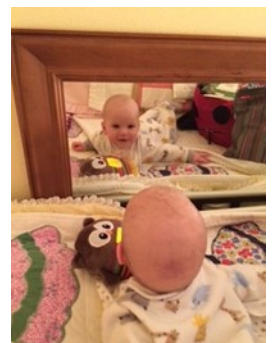
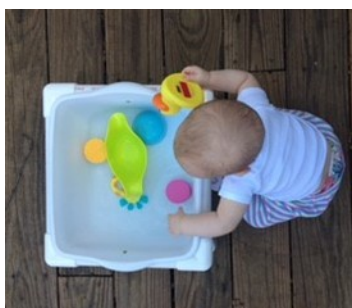
The most effective and natural way that children build their brains is through explorative play. Providing your baby with the environment, materials, and time for play builds on your child's natural urge to explore and be inquisitive.

**Limit the use of swings and bouncy seats.** A blanket on the floor is the best place for a baby to discover their bodily powers and explore—even when they are non-mobile. Containers restrict the babies muscle movements and limit sensory experiences.

**Go outside.** Babies are ready to experience all types of weather and environments. A cool breeze, a light rain, and a warm day are all new experiences filled with rich sensory experiences.

**Provide real materials, rather than toys, for your baby to explore.** Simple household items are far more interesting to your baby, particularly because they see you use them. We don't need to provide pretend items when the real ones are more interesting and readily available.

**Limit flashing/loud/complicated electronic toys.** Some simple sound toys can be fun, but an environment overwhelmed by electronic voices, lights, primary colors, and plastic can limit actual play and child/adult interactions.



## Treasure Basket Theme Ideas:

Colors  
Shapes (cubes/circles/spheres)  
Animals  
Instruments/Sounds  
Reflective Surfaces/Mirrors  
Textures (brushes/fabrics/sandpaper/sponges)

## Treasure Basket Items:

Kitchen utensils  
Brushes  
Animals/puzzle pieces  
Cups/bowls  
Shakers/rattles

