



Attention

The ability to “**pay attention**” is key to learning. Most of us take this ability for granite but there are activities you can do with your child to help build his or her attention. Think of attention as a system including your 5 senses and various structures of the brain. Your baby is born *alert*. He or she can distinguish your voice from that of a stranger with ease. Over the first fourteen months *alertness* and the ability to *shift* are developing rapidly along with your baby’s senses. This means it’s never too early to stimulate and enhance these skills. The third component, *maintaining*, develops more slowly. It requires inhibitory response, or the ability to repress impulses. The ability to maintain focus and repress impulses is a key indicator for future success.

Attention Magnets:

Intensity: The brain notices great contrasts in sound, sight, and all of the other senses. This is true for babies too. You may notice your baby prefers simple picture books with high contrast colors like black and white or bright, bold colors. Play with sound volumes, too. See how your baby reacts to you whispering the next time you change him or her.

Research shows newborns see only in Black, White, and Gray. After a few weeks your baby will begin to see color, starting with Red. By three months your baby can see the full color spectrum

Size: Just like intensity, babies notice large size differences. Provide toys for your child to play with of varying sizes.

Novelty: Curiosity drives learning. When you see something new, you can’t help but be curious about it. The same holds true for your baby. Your baby will notice if dad shaves his beard or the room has been rearranged. Keeping your baby interested in toys doesn’t mean getting new ones all the time. Simply rotate toys you provide.

Incongruity: You may be familiar with the phrase, “One of these things is not like the other.” Children are great at spotting things that are out of place. To get your child interested in using a sippy-cup put it in a line of bottles. This new and different item will grab your child’s attention.

Emotion: Our emotional state affects our ability to pay attention. If your child is hungry or sleepy it will be hard to pay attention very long if at all. Emotions at the other end of the spectrum play a role, too. If you want to teach your child how to behave at a restaurant, practice table manners with a tea party of your child’s favorite stuffed animals. Your child’s attachment to the stuffed animals will help create a memory about how to behave.

Personal Significance: When you hear your name being called from across a crowd you automatically think the person is calling for you even if you are in a new place surrounded by strangers. Hearing your name instantly creates a personal attachment. Your child will respond the same way. By simply changing the main character’s name to that of your child’s you make a book infinitely more interesting.

The Importance of Downtime

Downtime feeds creativity. Allows for the opportunity to play with and reconstruct what we already know.

Downtime aids memory. Gives time for the brain to make connections for all of the information it takes in throughout the day.

If your child says he or she is bored, that is ok!



Mengle Memorial Library
324 Main Street
Brockway, PA 15824
Menglelibrary.org

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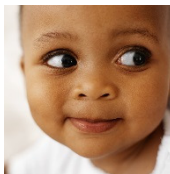


Attention-Builders for Infants (0-6 Months)

Face Games: The goal of this game is to get your baby to mimic the face you are making. It is important to use only one face at a time to not overwhelm your baby. Start by getting your baby's attention and making eye contact. Then make a face (rounding your lips to make a oooh sound, or stick out your tongue) while coaxing your child to do the same. Your baby will take time to study your face before trying to imitate you, so be patient.

Peek-a-boo with Laundry: Though this game seems silly, it teaches a very important fact; just because your baby can't see something temporarily doesn't mean it is gone forever! Fortunately this is a game that can be played while getting housework done as you pick each article out of your laundry basket.

Looking and Listening to a Book: Choose a board book with very simple, bright and colorful pictures. Label each object in the pictures, remembering to go slowly. Give details about what each object can do.



Attention-Builders for Babies (1-18 Months)

The Reaching-Out-and-Grasping- Game: Hold your baby in your lap on his or her back. With a rattle or other toy (rattles with sound may get your baby's attention easier), move the object up and down and side to side at about 8-12 inches above your baby. As he or she goes to reach for the object, put it in her grasp. Use this occasion to talk with your baby. Talk about how you are moving the object. Then, as your baby grabs and holds it, narrate what he or she is doing. Remember your baby is still learning language so speak slowly.

Scoop and Fill: Put a mat down on the floor or table. (This not only contains the activity it helps focus your baby's attention on what's going on in its perimeter.) Place two bowls, a spoon and some cereal with large pieces on the mat. Fill the dish with some cereal. Then, using the spoon, scoop some cereal into the empty dish. Give the spoon to your child so they can try to do the same thing. Give your baby praise when he or she scoops the cereal into the second dish.



Attention-Builders for Toddlers (18-36 Months)

Nifty Nest: Collect several household items that can nest together, or fit inside each other, like different sized bowls, Tupperware containers, or measuring cups. Show your child how you can stack these items inside one another from largest to smallest. Then, unstack the items, lining them up from smallest to largest. Give your child time to figure out how to do it. If your child gets confused help guide his or her choices.

Grocery Store Hunt: When you come to a familiar aisle you can play "I Spy." If you are in the cereal aisle you can say "I spy a box that is purple, has a sun on it, and starts with the letter R." If your child is riding along in the cart he or she can simply point to the box out or reach for it. If your child is walking along with you and the object is in reach, have him or her grab it and bring it to you. You can also give hints as to how close he or she is to the box.

* Activities are from Bright from the Start by Jill Stamm, PH.D.



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