From the beginning, your baby is learning by watching you. Your baby’s brain is growing quickly and there are lots of ways you can help them to discover their world.

- make your baby feel safe and comfortable by looking at them, talking to them and giving them lots of gentle cuddles.
- help your baby’s thinking skills by giving them lots of different things to look at, listen to and touch.
- watch for tired signs – look out for signs like crying, jerky movements and when baby is not looking at you. It might be time for a sleep!
- understand your baby will cry for lots of reasons – feeling hungry, tired or uncomfortable. They are not crying to annoy you or be naughty. Help them feel safe and cared for by holding and comforting them when they cry.
- help them feel safe and protect their brain by supporting their head and neck when you hold them.
- watch out for them as they start to roll and move about – never leave your baby on the bed or couch by themselves.

Your new baby will enjoy gentle play – try soft music, soft toys, talking to them and lots of hugs. Try these ideas:

- give your baby lots of different things to look at – flowers, coloured shapes, toys and mobiles. Talk with them about what they are looking at.
- give your baby lots of different safe objects to feel – rough, smooth, soft and hard, but only things that are safe for them to have in their mouth. Let your baby hold on to a soft toy or rattle.
- listen to gentle music, wind chimes and musical toys. Sing to your baby. Remember that loud music can frighten babies and can damage their hearing.
- spend time together talking and playing on the floor. Help your baby get ready for sitting and crawling by helping them to spend a few minutes on their tummy each day.
- look at a mirror together – talking about the different parts of their face and have fun making lots of different funny faces.
Talking to your baby helps them feel secure and will develop their ability to use words. Here are some ways to get talking:

- notice how they respond to your voice and touch. You will soon notice your baby is looking at you more carefully and can look at you for longer periods.
- make funny faces, play peekaboo games and smile! Smile as much as you can and watch for when your baby is able to smile back at you.
- talk gently about what you are doing – ‘it’s time for your bath’ and ‘we need to put your socks on so that we can go outside’.
- tell them a story – it’s fine to make the story up or talk about what you are doing.
- copy the sounds your baby makes and have fun sharing new sounds – da da da and ma ma ma.
- sing songs and nursery rhymes to your baby – in the car, in the bath and at bedtime. Singing is a great way to connect with your baby.

Remember you don’t always need to read a book. Photo albums, magazines and even the mail can be fun to look and talk about too!

Dads make a difference

NSW Department of Community Services August 2009