

Baby Village

Activity Guide

*Fun & practical ideas
for playgroups*

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Playgroup Tasmania acknowledges that we live, work and play on Aboriginal land, land of the palawa people of lutruwita (Tasmania). We pay our respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, to elders past and present and to all those who continue caring for country, sharing stories and upholding rights.

Hello

My name is Amirah and I am a Baby Village Playgroup Volunteer Leader.

I love planning activities for babies and this guide highlights many of the activities that I've run at my playgroup.

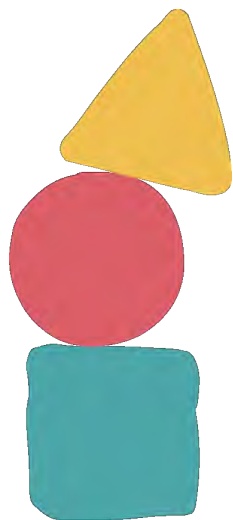
All activities have been tried and tested by real babies under my guidance.

I hope it will help you in your Baby Village playgroup.

Please note: All activities require constant supervision from parents and volunteers.



Above: Amirah with some of her playgroup friends.



Sensory play for babies

Sensory play involves the five senses.

1. Sight
2. Touch
3. Taste
4. Smell and
5. Hearing.

Using the senses helps to build nerve connections in the brain and encourages motor skills and language development. Learning is encouraged through exploration, curiosity, creativity and problem solving. Sensory play can also have a calming effect and fosters social interaction.



Sight

A baby's sight improves as they grow.

When they are first born, babies are only able to focus on things that are within 15-25 centimetres of them.

Babies are also born seeing in black and white and gradually begin to see colour over time.

Here are some activities you can do that involve baby's sense of sight.

Shapes

For this activity you will need:

- Cardboard folded into an accordion shape.
- White paper.
- Black paper cut into shapes like hearts, circles, triangles or squares.
- A glue stick.

Instructions

1. Stick the white paper to the cardboard using the glue stick, then let it dry.
2. Stick the black shapes to the white paper using the glue stick, then let it dry.

Tip

Cover the paper with contact to make it last longer.

Playtime

Place the baby in a spot where they can view the shapes, ideally about an arm's length away from the paper.

You could also place the baby so they are able to do some tummy time while looking at the shapes. Talk to the baby about what they can see.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning to see the differences between black and white. Their eye muscles will develop as they practice focusing on the different shapes.



Mirror Play

Many babies love looking at themselves.

For this activity you will need:

- A floor-length mirror placed horizontally.
- Zip ties.
- A coffee table or small table about the same size as the mirror.
- Scissors.

Instructions

1. Place the table sideways on the ground so that the top of the table is facing the sitting baby.
2. Put the mirror in front of the table, so that it is supported by the table.
3. Secure the top of the table to the mirror by joining the zip ties. Place them so that they are strapping the mirror to the table. Make sure to strap it tightly, you don't want the mirror to fall on the baby.
4. Cut the edges of the zip ties so they are not exposed to the baby. You don't want them to accidentally poke the baby.

Playtime

Place the baby so that they are sitting or lying near the mirror and show them their reflection.

Talk to the baby.

For example, you could ask them: "Who's in the mirror?"

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning that they are reflected in the mirror.

This helps them to develop a sense of self-identity.

The baby's eyes muscles will also develop as they practice focusing on their reflection.



Light-up Box

For this activity you will need:

- A small string of battery-operated Christmas lights.
- A large box.
- Scissors.
- Batteries for the lights.
- A soft pillow.
- A blanket.
- Clear sticky tape.

Instructions

1. Place the box vertically, ensuring that one side is securely closed and the other side is open.
2. Using the scissors, make small holes at the top of the box to put the lights through.
3. Make sure that there are batteries in the lights before you push the lights through the holes at the top of the box.
4. Use the sticky tape to secure the light string onto the box, making sure that the lights can't move.
5. Place the pillow and blanket inside the box to make it comfortable for the baby.
6. Place the baby inside the box.



Playtime

Make sure the baby is comfortable inside the box. Most babies will enjoy looking at the lights.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning to focus on the lights and will enjoy watching the lights as they change colours.

Light-up Tunnel

For this activity you will need:

- A large box.
- A box cutter.
- A night light.
- Something to secure the box to so that the box is prevented from collapsing: In the photo below the box is placed against a wall with a table used to support the other side.

Instructions

1. Place the box vertically so that there is an opening at either end (it should look like a tunnel).
2. Using the box cutter, carefully cut a circle to allow the night light to fit in the centre of the tunnel's roof (or the side of the box).
3. Make sure the box is secured against a wall or another stable object to prevent it from collapsing.

Playtime

Turn on the light and allow the baby to sit inside the box and watch the light show.

Babies that can crawl can go in and out of the box when they wish.

What is the baby learning?

By looking at the light the baby's vision is stimulated.

Because the box is smooth to touch, the box also stimulates the baby's other senses like touch and hearing.

To increase the stimulation to the baby's hearing you could also try tapping the box or running your fingers along it to make other sounds.



Touch

Sensory Bags

These bags are bright and colourful and invite babies to try touching and feeling them. The sensory bags can be used to introduce a variety of textures to babies and provide a great opportunity to talk to the baby about colours. You can make many different types of sensory bags. Little ones love to squish them.

For this activity you will need:

- Plastic resealable sandwich bags.
- Clear hair gel.
- Food colouring.
- Duct tape.
- A hard surface (such as a floor, high chair table or a mat like the in the photo).
- Optional extras: googly eyes, pom-poms or feathers.

Instructions

1. Place about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of hair gel inside the sandwich bag.
2. Add some food colouring to the gel: you can make it as brightly coloured as you like.
3. Squeeze all of the air out of the sandwich bag and seal it shut.
4. Seal the opening of the sandwich bag with duct tape to prevent any accidental spilling.
5. Place the sandwich bag on a hard surface, or you could duct tape the bags to the hard surface.



Tip

To add texture, before sealing the bag you could add feathers, googly eyes or pom-poms to the hair gel.

Playtime

Encourage the baby to explore the different textures. Show them how to squish, tap, push or poke the bags.

What is the baby learning?

By allowing the baby to touch, look at and play with different textures and colours they can learn more about the world around them.

Frozen Pea Sensory Bags

This activity is perfect for summer weather. The baby will love the cool feeling and texture of the peas; older babies can also squish the peas.

For this activity you will need:

- Frozen green peas.
- Resealable sandwich bags.
- Duct tape.
- Water.
- A hard surface to stick your bag to (such as a hard floor or sturdy mat).

Instructions

1. Fill the resealable sandwich bag with as much or as little frozen peas as you like. Around $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of frozen peas tends to work well.
2. Add a cup of water to the peas in the sandwich bag (or more if you desire).
3. Remove as much air as possible from the bag and seal the opening shut with duct tape.
4. Place the bag on a hard surface (or the floor) and tape it down on all sides.

Playtime

Allow the baby to feel the cool peas. Encourage them to squish the peas as they thaw out.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning the differences between temperatures, as well as exploring hard and squishy textures.



Hearing

Musical instruments are a great way to stimulate a baby's hearing.

Xylophones, maracas and toys that talk or sing are always fun for babies. Not only do the instruments make sounds, but they also make vibrations that can be felt on the skin.

You can even use simple things such as small pots and a wooden spoon to make noises; they will achieve the same result as instruments!

Maracas

It's easy to make maracas like in the photo below.

For this activity you will need:

- Small bowls or bottles.
- Dried peas, pebbles or uncooked rice.
- Duct tape or a hot glue gun.

Instructions

1. Put a small amount of dried peas (or whichever filling you choose) into the container.
2. Secure the opening of the container with duct tape or glue so that it won't open.



Tip

You could also put some coloured tape around the bottle if you'd like to introduce some colour.

Playtime

Let the baby explore the sounds the maraca makes; you can also sing or play some music for the baby to play along to.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning about the different sounds they can make using different items.



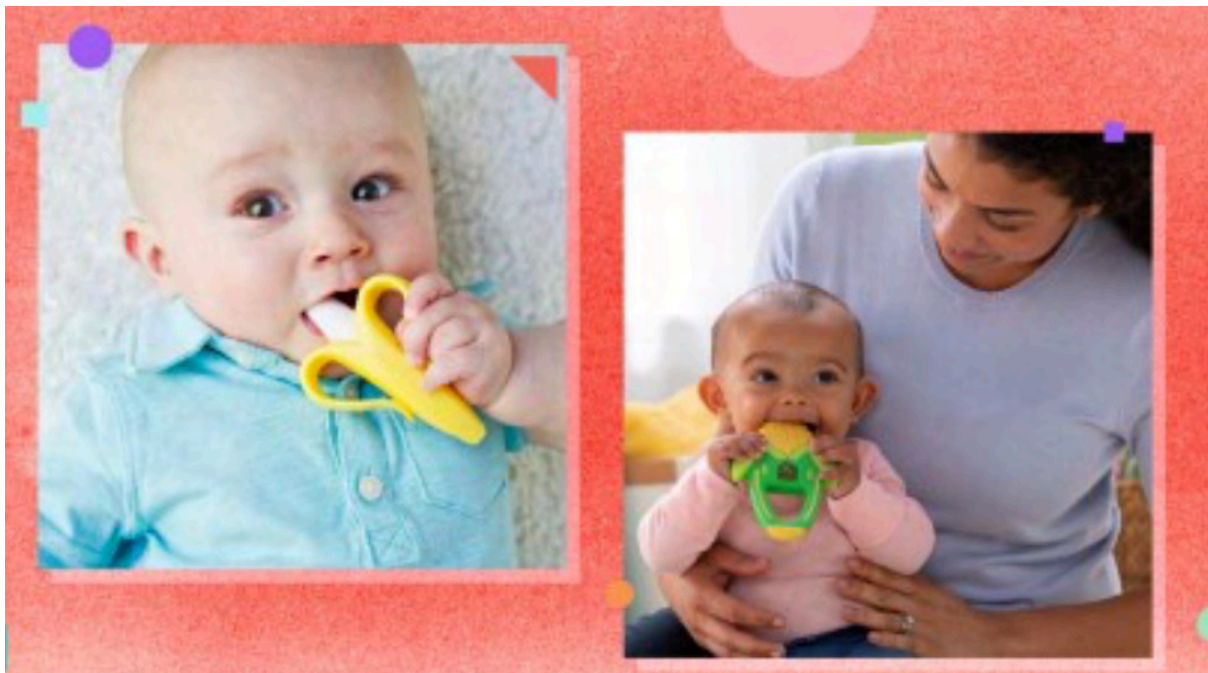
Taste

Oral sensory input is something that babies seek constantly. They enjoy putting their hands, fists and sometimes toes into their mouths, as well as all sorts of other things that they find around them. Sometimes babies bring their own teething toys to playgroup.

Playgroup Snack

Some playgroups share fruit at snack time as part of their routine.

This is a great opportunity for parents and caregivers to introduce different tastes and food textures to their babies.



Touch

Balloon Play

This activity includes three different types of balloon play:

1. Hanging balloons
2. Helium balloons
3. Textured balloons



1. Hanging balloons

For this activity you will need:

- Balloons in various colours.
- String.
- A balloon pump or person who is able to blow up and tie the balloons.
- Two small chairs.
- Scissors.

Instructions

1. Blow up the balloons to a medium size and tie the ends.
2. Attach the string in pieces of about 30 centimetres to each balloon.
3. Place the two small chairs opposite each other (approximately 2 metres apart).
4. Attach string from one chair to the next chair, ensuring that the line of string is pulled firm.
5. Attach the balloons to the string between the two chairs. Let the balloons hang low to the ground, but not so low to the ground that they are touching.



Playtime

Place the baby next to the balloons so that they can kick or hit them. The baby can sit, lie on their back or have some tummy time while facing the balloons.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning motor coordination as they move their body to hit or kick the balloons.

2. Helium balloons

Helium balloons can be purchased already inflated, (try purchasing them from shops like Big W or Spotlight) or you could hire a helium tank to inflate the balloons yourself.

Instructions

1. Attach the string from the helium balloons to a hair tie.
2. Put the hair tie on the baby's wrist or ankle or tie the hair tie to a weighty object.

Playtime

Encourage the baby to kick and pull the balloons.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning motor coordination as they move their body to hit or kick the balloons. They are also exploring cause and effect as the balloons move up when they let go!

3. Textured balloons

For this activity you will need:

- Balloons.
- Different items to put inside the balloons (such as flour, rice or beans of various sizes).
- A funnel.
- String.
- Two small chairs.
- Scissors.

Instructions

1. Using a funnel, fill the balloons with your chosen items. Use a different filling for each balloon (for example: fill one balloon with rice, one with flour, one with lentils, and one with chickpeas). Using a funnel is helpful as it can be tricky to get your filling inside of the balloon. You do not need the balloons to expand, any amount of filling is okay.
2. Tie the balloons to seal them shut with your filling inside.
3. Attach 30cm of string to each balloon.
4. Place the two small chairs about a metre apart.
5. Fasten a piece of string between the chairs.
6. Fasten the balloons to the string between the chairs and let the balloons hang close to the ground, but not so low that they are touching.

Playtime

The baby can explore the different textures of the balloons.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is being exposed to different textures and touching items which look the same but feel different.

Ball Play

The balls used in ball pits are colourful, smooth and small enough for babies to hold. They usually come in packs of 100 and are not too expensive. They cannot fit in babies mouths to swallow, so are perfect for babies to play with.

Following are four activities you can set up using these balls.

Tummy Time Ball Play

For this activity you will need

- A hula hoop.
- About eight balls of different colours.

Instructions

1. Place the baby inside the hoop with the balls.

Playtime

Watch as the baby tries to touch and hit the balls. The hoop will prevent the balls from rolling too far from the baby.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning motor skills. By moving their hands, arms and legs the baby is learning what happens when they touch a ball (cause and effect).



Vertical Ball Pit

For this activity you will need:

- A small table.
- Balls.
- Wide clear sticky tape.
- A blanket.

Instructions

1. Turn a table upside down, so that the table legs are in the air.
2. Place clear tape around the legs of the table with the sticky side of the tape facing in. Repeat 3-4 times so that there are a few lines of tape about 50 cm apart.
3. Put a blanket on the inside of the table where the baby will sit to make the space soft and comfortable.
4. Stick the balls to the tape inside of the table.



Playtime

Place the baby inside the upturned table and encourage them to remove the balls from the tape.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning motor skills and hand/eye coordination as they use their fingers and hands to pull the balls off the tape.

Balls on the Wall

This game is a lot of fun for babies who can sit or who are learning to stand.

For this activity you will need:

- Balls.
- Masking tape.
- A wall.

Instructions

1. Cut the masking tape into 20cm pieces.
2. Use the masking tape to stick the balls onto the wall at various levels.

Playtime

Let the baby reach for and pull down the balls.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning motor skills as they use their fingers and hands to touch and move the balls.



Sorting Balls

For this activity you will need:

- A muffin tin.
- Balls.

Instructions

1. Put the balls in a muffin tin and place it in front of the baby.

Playtime

Watch as the baby removes and replaces the balls. The baby can play this game while doing tummy time or while sitting down.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning motor skills. This activity encourages the baby to develop hand/eye coordination and practice their reaching and grasping skills. If the game is played while the baby is on their tummy, their core and upper body muscles will also be strengthened.



Object Permanence



You will need:

- Two cardboard boxes (one larger than the other).
- Clear tape.
- Coloured pencils (the same colours as the balls).
- Coloured balls (of at least two different colours).
- A box cutter.

Instructions

1. Place the smaller box inside the larger box. The larger box should not have a lid.
2. Using the box cutter, cut two holes in the top side of the smaller box (see photo above). Ensure that the holes are big enough for the balls to fit through.
3. Using the pencils, colour around the holes to match the colours of the different coloured balls.
4. Reinforce the holes with clear tape.
5. Make sure that the lid of the smaller box is open so that the balls can be dropped in the hole and are able to flow from the small box into the larger box.
6. Tape both boxes together.

Playtime

The baby can play by pushing the balls through the holes. Extend the game by helping the baby to match the colour of the ball to the colour around the hole.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning object permanence. When the ball goes in the box it isn't gone forever. The baby is also learning motor skills, hand/eye coordination and cause and effect (for example: if they push the ball in the top of the box it comes out the bottom).

Playing with Bubbles

For this activity you will need:

- A large bottle of bubble mixture.
- A small tray.
- A small bowl.
- A straw.
- A plastic mat or towels (this activity can be a bit messy).

Instructions

1. Pour some bubble mixture into a small bowl.
2. Blow into the bubble mixture with a straw to create a mountain of bubbles.
3. Use the straw to carefully transfer the bubbles onto the tray.

Playtime

The baby can explore and pop the bubbles while sitting in front of the tray or lying on their tummy.

Please keep an eye on the baby while they play as some babies like to try to taste the bubbles.

It is a good idea to have some towels ready to wipe away any spills or mess.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning cause and effect by playing with the bubbles and watching as they pop when they move or are blown around.



Painting

This activity is a mostly mess free way for babies to play with paint. You might get some paint on your fingers.

For this activity you will need:

- Acrylic paint (in differing colours).
- Paper.
- Large resealable bags (big enough to fit the paper).
- A sharpie.

Instructions

1. Choose the colours that you want to paint with.
2. Write the baby's name on the front or back of the paper.
3. Place the paper inside the resealable bag.
4. Drop dots of paint inside the bag on the paper.
5. Seal the bag and place it on the floor or another hard surface.

Playtime

The baby can roll, slap, kick or use their fingers to move the paint around the page.

Be careful when you are taking the painting out of the bag: try holding the painting up, separating the bag from the paper, opening the bag and then removing the paper.

Once you have removed the painting from the bag, allow it to dry.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning cause and effect. By squishing the paint, the baby can change the way it looks. The baby also learns motor skills by practising hand/eye coordination.



Ribbon Play

This is a vibrant visual colour presentation. Babies will love running their fingers through the ribbons, kicking the ribbons with their feet, holding the ribbons, or trying to put the ribbons in their mouth.

For this activity you will need:

- Ribbons of different colours cut to the same length.
- Duct tape.
- A small table.

Instructions

1. Stick a line of duct tape along the end of a small table with the sticky side facing up.
2. Stick a row of ribbons along the tape and allow them to hang down close to the floor.
3. Stick another line of tape along the top of the ribbons, so that you are sticking both pieces of tape together with the ribbons in between.
4. Stick the row of ribbons to the table using more tape.

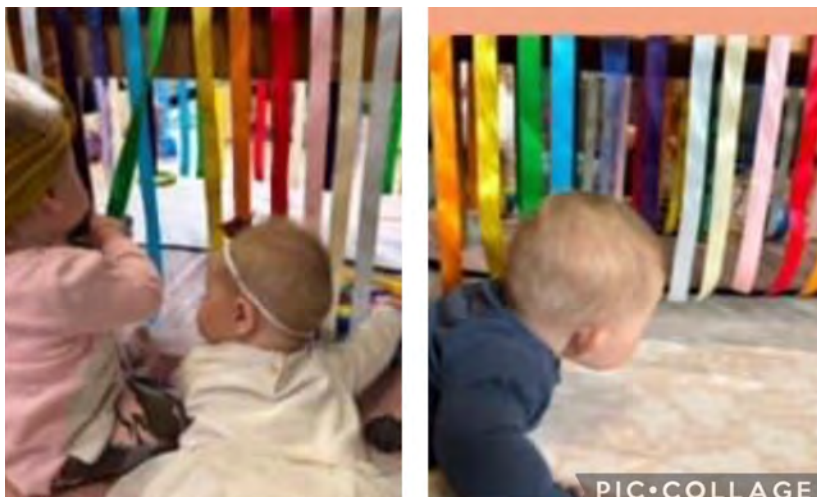
Playtime

Place the baby next to the table, talk to the baby about the different colours.

Encourage the baby to touch and feel the ribbons and crawl through them.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is exploring their sense of touch and hearing the names of the different colours.



Vertical Play

For this activity you will need:

- Contact paper.
- Light weight toys.
- Double-sided tape.
- Scissors.
- A wall.

Instructions

1. Cut out a large square of contact paper. Be careful not to expose the sticky side of the contact paper.
2. Attach the contact paper to the wall using double-sided tape. Make sure that the paper backing of the contact paper is facing you as you attach it to the wall.
3. Once the contact paper is attached to the wall, gently peel the paper backing off.
4. Stick the light weight toys at various heights across the contact paper.

Playtime

Allow the baby to sit next to the wall and watch as they try to remove and stick toys.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning cause and effect by pulling the objects off the wall.

The baby is also learning motor skills and hand/eye coordination.



Tunnel Play

Many crawling babies love moving through small spaces. Placing large boxes which are open at both ends under small tables can make this game a lot of fun.

You can create three types of tunnels:

1. A grass tunnel, using artificial grass and a small table covered with a cloth.
2. A light or disco tunnel, using a large box with both ends open.
3. A bubble wrap tunnel, with bubble wrap stuck to the bottom, using a small table and cloth to cover the table.

What is the baby learning?

All three types of tunnels provide textures for the baby to feel as they go through them.

You can use toys to encourage the baby to move through the tunnel.

This activity improves the baby's physical strength, mobility, concentration, response to stress and mood.

When this activity is used at playgroup it can also help the baby to engage in social interactions.



Above: A grass tunnel creates a fun space for baby to crawl

Bubble Wrap Road

For this activity you will need:

- Bubble wrap.
- Sticky tape.
- Scissors.

Instructions

1. Cut the bubble wrap to your preferred size.
2. Stick the bubble wrap to the floor or a plastic surface using sticky tape.

Playtime

Place the baby next to or on top of the bubble wrap to experience the feeling of the bubbles.

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning to explore the different textures and sounds (especially if the bubbles pop!)



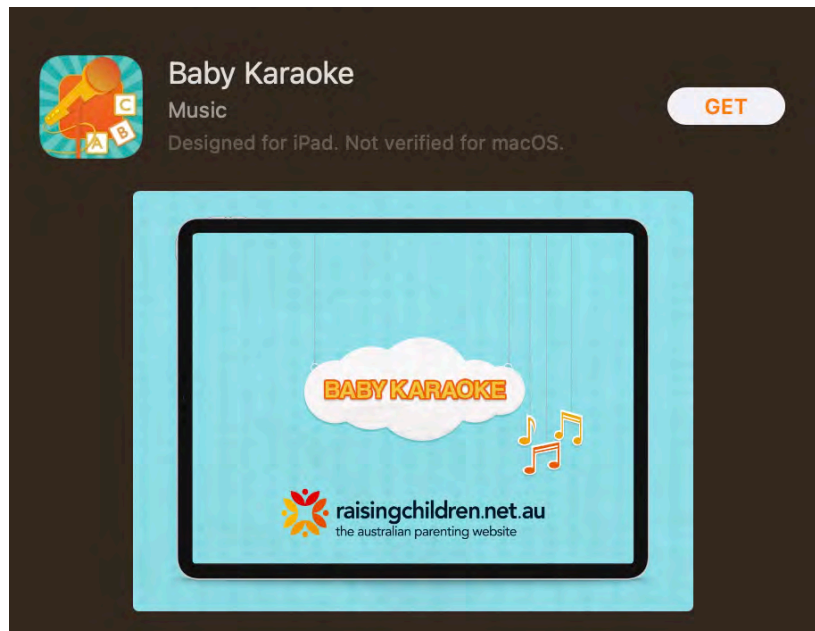
Singing/ Baby Karaoke

What is the baby learning?

Singing to a baby can have many benefits. The baby can develop their listening skills, learn new words and gain confidence. It is also a great way to bond with the baby and express your love.

It doesn't matter what you sing or how you sound. The baby will be comforted by the sound of your voice.

Nursery rhymes are a great place to start singing. The Raising Children Network also has a baby karaoke app, it's free to download and use and you can find it in the Apple App Store or Android PlayStore.



Dress-up Days

Dress-up days can be a lot of fun!

Amirah says: *"I love getting dressed up. Most carers also enjoy dressing up with their babies. I usually dress up for Book Week, Christmas and Pyjama Day. Pyjama Day is usually held during winter on a day of my choice."*

What is the baby learning?

The baby is learning about having fun at playgroup!



You can find even more fun activity ideas for babies online.

- The Play and Learn Together Website
<https://www.playandlearntogether.com.au/play-experiences/>
- The Great Start Website
<https://greatstart.tas.gov.au/0-12-months/>
- The Raising Children Network
<https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/play-learning>

Playgroup Tasmania is the peak body for playgroups in Tasmania.

Our Vision

Families with young children and babies are supported to flourish physically, emotionally and socially through their connections to Tasmania's playgroup community.

Our Purpose

We recognise parents and caregivers as their children's first teachers, and emphasise the importance of play and attachment in early childhood development.

We work collaboratively with organisations, volunteers and families to build resilient, inclusive and supportive playgroup communities that connect families and young children.

More information

If you have questions or need support with your playgroup, please contact Playgroup Tasmania:

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