



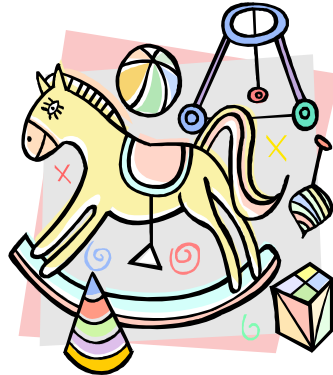
Welcome Words for your Six Month Old

Playthings for Babies: How Much Is Enough?

With so many baby toys now on the market, it's hard to know what's best. How much is enough? And what about homemade toys? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following for a 4- to 7-month-old baby:

- unbreakable mirror attached to inside of crib or playpen
- soft balls and textured toys, including some that make pleasing sounds (avoid loud noises that could damage baby's hearing).
- toys with fingerholds
- see-through rattles that show the pieces making noise
- musical toys, such as bells or maracas (make sure none of the parts can come loose)
- old magazines with bright pictures you can show him and baby books with board, cloth or vinyl pages.

When choosing toys, be sure they are sturdy and larger than your baby's fist (anything smaller could cause choking). Make sure there are no strings, ribbons or cords longer than 6-inches, which could cause strangulation. Toys that can be washed are best, particularly since your baby will be mouthing them.



There are also a number of simple playthings you can make. Here's a simple suggestion from Learning Games for the First Three Years.

Discovery Box: Take a sturdy cardboard box and cut a small hole in the top and a larger hole in the side. With your baby sitting on the floor in front of the box, show him how to drop a small object (a rattle or small stuffed toy) into the small hole. Ask, "Where's the toy? Can you find it?" If he tries to reach through the small hole, turn the box on its side so he can see the toy and take it out. You can continue the game with other small toys. Your baby may begin turning the box himself, or, once he's able, he may crawl around to find the larger opening.

Don't be surprised if your baby wants to play this game until you're exhausted!

Milestones

At 6 months (24 weeks), you—

- Can push up from your stomach and rock on your hands and knees
- Say "ah-goo" or similar sound combinations

During the next month, you may—

- Be able to sit fairly steadily without support (6 ½ months)
- Support a bit of your own weight for a short time when I hold you in a standing position
- Grasp a toy or other object with speed and accuracy
- Be able to feed yourself a cracker
- Get your first tooth, probably one of the lower front teeth

Source: What to Expect the First Year (Workman, 1989) and You and Your Baby (Ross Laboratories, 1987)

Suggested Reading

Complete Baby and Child Care
by Dr. Miriam Stoppard

Infants and Mothers:
Differences in Development
by T. Berry Brazelton

Laughter and Tears:
The Emotional Life of New Mothers
by Elisabeth Bing and Libby Colman

Parenting the Fussy Baby and High-Need
Child
by William Sears & Martha Sears

Entertain Me
by The Riverside Mothers Group

Balancing Baby, Work and You

As the parent of a 6-month-old, you've probably returned to full-time work, become a full-time stay-at-home parent, or worked out some combination of part-time work and parenting. Whatever you're doing, it's easy to envy what you've given up. As you get ready for work in the mornings, you may be thinking how nice it would be to stay home in your pajamas snuggling with your baby. Or maybe you're at home with your baby feeling alone and lonely as you struggle to find time for your partner and yourself. Isn't it tempting to remember adult conversation and a paycheck at the end of the week?

Like most parents, you probably feel that there just aren't enough hours in a day. And certainly not in a night. At 6 months, many babies are still waking during the night. Everything seems harder when you aren't getting enough sleep. Too little REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, the period when we dream, makes us more vulnerable to stress.

According to surveys, the job benefit parents want most is flex-time, or flexible hours. If at all possible, try to negotiate this with your employer. Let your supervisor know that in return you are committed to getting the job done and doing it well.

Be sure to hold up your end of the bargain. When your baby is sick, you may be able to bring some work home with you. Maybe you & your partner can alternate taking your baby to doctor's visits & caring for him.



If one parent is staying at home, remember that caring for an infant is more than full-time job, one that requires breaks (even though they aren't mandated by law). Let the parent who's been away share child care in the evening and on weekends, as well as take responsibility for other household chores.

Express your support and respect for your partner's style of child care (and cooking and cleaning), even though it's different from yours. Enjoying your baby, your partner and some free time for yourself are higher priorities than housekeeping.

Survival Tips:

- Find support. Whether it's an organized support group or parents hanging out together by the baby swings at the park, it helps to talk about what you're going through. Call Welcome Baby at 560-7150 for ideas on how to meet other parents.
- Try exercise. Taking a brisk walk every day, working out with a TV exercise program, or enrolling in an aerobics class can help boost your mood as well as your energy level.
- Pamper yourself. Forget you ever heard "a parent's work is never done." Hire a sitter or trade time with another parent. Go out and have fun with friends, your partner, or all by yourself.

Baby on the Move

Whether your baby is mobile or not, now is a good time to prepare for the burst of physical activity ahead. Don't forget that every home your baby visits, whether Grandma's or a friend's, holds potential hazards. If you can, share these safety tips. Your child is still exploring his world by putting everything in his mouth, whether he's indoors or out.

Childproofing

- *Clutter:* Keep candy, nuts, scissors, knives, lighters, sewing materials, plastic bags, batteries, small light bulbs, jewelry, balloons and small toys (or those with small pieces) safely out of baby's reach.
- *Windows:* If they aren't ground level, adjust them so they can't open more than 6 inches. Keep cords tied up out of reach. Keep crib and chairs away from windows.
- *Electrical cords/outlets:* Keep cords out of reach (behind furniture). Cover outlets with caps or shields or place heavy furniture over them.

- *Bathroom:* Babies should never be in the bathroom alone. If necessary, place a gate in the door. Keep toilet lid down with suction cups or another safety device. (Curious infants can topple in headfirst.) Use skid-proof stick-ons in the tub and a safety cover over the spout. Hot curling irons are another hazard.
- *Unstable furniture:* Remove anything rickety - tables or chairs - that baby might try to pull up on. Be sure bookcases are fastened to the wall. Keep dresser drawers closed. Remove or secure loose knobs smaller than baby's fist, which could cause choking.
- *Stairs and steps:* Block with a gate at the top and another three steps up from the bottom.
- *Hot spots:* Put up protective grills or barriers around fireplaces, heaters, stoves and floor furnaces.
- *Tables:* Cover glass-topped tables with a heavy table pad or remove. Remove tablecloths that your baby might use to pull up on.