

INFANTS



Art, Music and Movement: **Shake it Up**

Bring your infant to a safe space, and tell them that you are going to explore sounds and shakers. Shake the shakers near your infant so they can see and hear them. If your child can hold objects, offer a shaker for them to use. Be sure to have a few shakers prepared, as your child may want to hold one in each hand. Comment on your infant's reaction about the noise produced by the shaker. If your child can't yet hold items, describe the noise the shaker is making when you move it and repeat the sounds that he or she seems to enjoy (e.g., "Your eyes got really big when I shook the shaker"). If your child can hold items, describe how he or she is moving the shaker and the noise that is produced (e.g., "You're holding one shaker in each hand; one shaker makes a very loud noise and one makes a softer noise"). Your infant may enjoy mouthing the shaker, passing the shaker back and forth between hands, shaking one in each hand, and repeating these actions to continue to produce the same noises over and over.

Children experience:

- Responding to sounds
- Creating sounds and music

To create homemade shakers, choose a variety of different containers like: Plastic eggs, plastic spice jars, formula bottles, plastic baby food containers, travel shampoo containers, or water bottles. Then you can fill each container with something like: fish tank gravel, pennies, sand, beads, rice, beans, screws or nails.



Communication, Language, and Literacy: **Rhyme Time**

Children experience:

- Hearing words that rhyme
- Repeating rhyming words and nursery rhymes

Rhyming (words with the same ending sound, e.g., clock and dock) is an important element of learning how to read and sound out words. Playful experiences with rhyming can increase your child's enjoyment and ability to remember new vocabulary and rhyming sounds. To start this activity, let your child know that you will be saying and singing nursery rhymes. Some suggested rhymes to start with include "Hickory, Dickory, Dock,"

"Row, Row, Row Your Boat," "Baa, Baa Black Sheep," "Little Miss Muffet," "Rub-a-Dub-Dub," and "Jack and Jill."

As you say the rhymes, place emphasis on the rhyming words: "Hickory, dickory, dock. The mouse ran up the clock." After you finish the rhyme, point out the words that rhymed: "Dock and clock; those words rhyme!" Drawing children's attention to the rhyming words also helps them catch on to the cadence or rhythm of the rhyme. Repeat each rhyme several times so your child can learn all the words in the rhyme and specifically hear the rhyming words you emphasize. Children may request that you repeat the entire rhyme again, a few words from the rhyme, or the rhyming words. Repetition is important to build familiarity, support interest, and give children an opportunity to join in and spontaneously say rhymes. Acknowledge both common rhyming words and nonsense rhyming words.

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Early Math and Discovery: Exploring Objects

If your infant can't yet grasp objects, simply hold an interesting toy over their face to watch. An infant who can sit supported but can't grasp objects can watch toys that you hold in each of your hands. Give your child plenty of time to look at a toy and then shake the toy in your other hand.

Children experience:

- Looking at or handling one object and then another
- Gathering three or more objects

If your infant can grasp objects and sit, either with your support or independently, give them a toy to hold and explore a toy. Younger infants may simply hold on to the toy with one hand, while older infants may transfer the toy from one hand to another. Present a new toy and observe what your child does (e.g., they might glance at the new toy but choose to continue exploring the first one or drop the first toy and grab the new one). Older infants will enjoy sitting on the floor with toys spread around them and may reach for and pick up two toys, one in each hand; exploring toys by looking first at one toy and then at the other; or placing one of the toys in their mouth, followed by the other one.

Older infants may start collecting toys and placing several in a pile. When children gather toys or objects in this way, you will know that they can attend to more than one object at a time, which is a milestone in their development.



Myself and Others: Emotions

Children experience:

- Expressing emotions with their face and/or body
- Initiating physical contact with other people to express emotions

As you spend time with your infant, observe how your child communicates different emotions — by crying, tensing up, smiling, kicking their feet, babbling, laughing, or simply gazing contentedly. Older infants will begin initiating physical contact with others by kissing, patting, hugging, hitting, or even biting. How you respond to your child will depend on their needs, emotions, and developmental level.

When infants cry, they are typically communicating a need. Talk to your child and identify their emotions and needs (e.g., “You’re so sad right now. You have such a hungry tummy”). In doing so, your child learns to be comforted by your voice and physical contact. When infants smile, they are communicating that they are happy and enjoy your company. Smile back, talk to, kiss, and gently touch your child to express that you enjoy their company too. As infants grow, so will their repertoire of emotional expression (e.g., fear, anger, amusement). Pay attention to the cues you receive, and continue doing whatever is amusing your child, or conversely, find a different toy, position/location, or activity if your child shows signs of disinterest.

Older infants will begin initiating physical contact with you and others. Some physical contact infants might initiate may not be

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pleasing; when your child bites you out of anger or frustration, you might feel shocked. It's important to calmly say to your infant something like "You're angry I took that away from you, but it's not safe to chew on." By responding this way, you're acknowledging your infant's anger, naming the emotion, and explaining the reason behind the emotion. This equips infants to deal with emotions in appropriate ways as they develop.



Physical Development and Healthy Habits: Kick It

For nonmobile infants: With your infant sitting up or lying down, touch the bottom of your child's feet with the palms of your hands. This will likely result in your child pushing against or kicking your hands.

For mobile infants: Choose a space where your infant has room to move, and offer some balls to kick. Accept that your child might instead choose to throw the balls.

Children experience:

- Stretching their leg muscles and kicking their feet
- Cause and effect – moving their bodies and causing objects to move

Describe your infant's actions. For example, you might say something like, "You're kicking against my hands! Kick, kick!"

For nonmobile infants: Repeat this activity with your infant's feet up against a sturdy, padded piece of furniture (e.g., a couch). You can also dangle ribbons or a small blanket near your child's feet for them to kick. Infants will enjoy watching the way the ribbons move and feel them against their feet as they kick. This increases children's awareness of their bodies and different ways they can use them.

For mobile infants: Comment on how your child chooses to use the balls, and use them in the same way. Describe how your child is moving their body and the effect those movements have on the ball. For example, you might say, "You swung your leg back and kicked the ball. It rolled all the way over under the window" or "You held the ball in both hands and threw it way up." These comments increase children's awareness of their bodies and the different ways they can use them.