

# Getting Children Off To a Strong Start



Easy tips and activities for  
you to do with your  
**Infant**



  
**BROOMFIELD**  
**Early Childhood Council**  
In partnership with Bal Swan Children's Center

Colorado Early Learning  
Development Guidelines 

[www.earlylearningco.org](http://www.earlylearningco.org)

**The Broomfield Early Childhood Council was founded in 2007 as a partnership based community organization. We focus on building awareness of the whole child and supporting best practices in health and well-being through health, mental health, family support and engagement, and early learning and care. Creating a Broomfield community where all children are valued, healthy, and thriving happens best when people and agencies serving children and families work together in partnership to create lasting solutions that will meet the needs of children, families and their providers.**

Learn more at [www.broomfieldecc.org](http://www.broomfieldecc.org) or contact us at [info@broomfieldecc.org](mailto:info@broomfieldecc.org)



## Why Activity Cards?

**Learning begins long before children start school and teaching isn't just for teachers.**

**No matter how we interact with young children – whether we're first-time parents, grandparents or involved friends and neighbors – we all play an important role in giving them a great start.**

**These cards have been created by the Broomfield Early Childhood Council quick reference for anyone working with or caring for young children to help create activities that will foster strong development. They are taken directly from the Colorado's Early Learning & Development Guidelines, [www.earlylearningco.org](http://www.earlylearningco.org)**

**The research-based Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines provide descriptions for what children can know and be able to do so that everyone who interacts with young children can prepare them for a lifetime of success. Encourage children to show independence in self-care tasks, helping when necessary (e.g. brushing teeth, wiping nose, toileting, washing hands, feeding oneself)**

# Play!

## Why it's important:

**Infants are becoming more alert and mobile. They learn about their world through their senses and emerging physical skills. Babies at this age are gaining muscle strength and may achieve a series of physical milestones, including head control and sitting up, which is later followed by creeping or crawling. They explore objects with their mouth and by kicking, reaching, grasping, pulling, and letting go. They delight in discovering new skills and may become deeply engrossed in practicing a newly discovered skill.**



## 0-8 Month-old Activities

- Gently turn, roll, bounce, and sway the infant to increase her muscle strength and to help develop important connections between the brain and muscles
- Provide opportunities for the infant to move and engage in a variety of physical activities, such as lying on a blanket (both on stomach and back) on the floor in a safe area
- Place objects of interest just beyond the baby's reach to encourage stretching and body coordination

## 9-18 Month-old Activities

- Allow and encourage the infant to move to get what he wants, such as a toy that is out of reach
- Provide solid props such as ottomans to use for support as the older infant experiments with standing and walking
- Provide toys during tummy time and floor time that promote reaching and movement, such as musical stuffed animals or soft rubber vehicles
- Play games that require physical actions, such as using different kinds of balls to roll, throw, or kick

## Make Friends

### Why it's important:

**Young infants are skillful at attracting and holding the attention of those around them. They can smile, laugh, coo, and reach out to engage their parents and other caregivers.**

### 0-8 Month-old Activities

- **Provide time for child-to-child interaction (e.g., placing infants facing one another during tummy time, sharing a sand box)**
- **Provide the infant with opportunities to be around and observe other children, including those slightly older than themselves**
- **Observe the infant's expressions and mirror back similar expressions**
- **Sing and speak face-to-face with the infant using an expressive face**

## 9-18 Month-old Activities

- Acknowledge pro-social behavior (e.g., “thank you for bringing me Tracie’s hat”)
- Provide enough space in the play area for two or more children to play side-by-side
- Model empathetic feelings for others.
- Talk about another child’s expression of feelings (e.g., “Mia is laughing because the puppet is so funny”)
- Model strategies of care and comfort for other children; talk about your strategies (e.g., “Jake feels better when I pat his back”)





## Express Feelings

### Why it's important:

**Babies learn to express more complex emotions and learn to recognize and interpret emotions of other people and respond to them and they learn some ways of regulating their own emotions.**



## 0-8 Month-old Activities

- **Express your feelings with your facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language when interacting with the baby**
- **Observe the infant to determine different cries or actions that demonstrate feelings and needs**
- **Talk about what other children are feeling or expressing with their sounds, gestures, or facial expressions**
- **Label the infant's feelings as they are expressed through actions (e.g., "you seem so sad that mommy had to leave")**

# Talk!

## Why it's important:

Newborns' preference of speech sounds over other types of stimulation indicates that babies are “hard-wired” to learn human language. However, just having this prerequisite will not guarantee babies' mastery of language—a rich and stimulating environment is essential. It is important to pay attention to the rapidly changing ability of infants to understand words and gestures addressed to them (receptive language) as well as their ability to communicate to others (expressive language) in multiple ways—from cooing and smiles to words to simple sentences.



## 0-8 Month-old Activities

- **Talk with the baby and allow the baby time to respond to you, perhaps by turning to look at you, smiling, or cooing**
- **Greet the infant by name and repeatedly use the name in conversations with the infant**
- **Repeat familiar words and gestures that accompany your actions when taking care of or interacting with the baby**
- **Use everyday routines, such as leaving, to role-play social language games (e.g., wave goodbye, blow kisses)**

## 9-18 Month-old Activities

- **Provide a language-rich environment through conversation, books, and family stories**
- **Play games and sing songs that use gestures and words that involve one-step directions (e.g., “show me your eyes,” “Wave bye-bye”)**
- **Provide play opportunities to “talk” to peers and adults, with guidance.**
- **Ask simple questions (e.g., “Where is bear?”)**

## Think!

### Why it's important:

**Engaging interactions with infants and toddlers about the world around them, including book reading and storytelling, are the best way to build foundations for reading. The ideas children form in the course of these interactions and the new words they learn will help them make connections when learning new concepts such as the ones in science and social studies at later ages.**



## 0-8 Month-old Activities:

- **Provide toys that respond when played with (e.g., toys with large switches, toys that light up when pressed or shaken)**
- **Provide a variety of 2D and 3D objects of different sizes, shapes, colors, and textures for the baby to look at, hold, mouth, and manipulate**
- **Comment positively when the older infant learns a new action or skill to affect things**

## 9-18 Month-old Activities:

- **Provide a variety of sound instruments that respond when shaken, such as containers with rice or beans, maracas, bells, or shakers**
- **Provide boxes to fill with objects or try to fit their body into**
- **Encourage matching similar toys when putting them away in bins**
- **Provide real and/or toy objects, such as a cup, spoon, or telephone, for pretend play**

## Learn!

### Why it's important:

Babies are born to learn; their eagerness to learn, curiosity, and openness to new experiences seem to come naturally. Nurturing these characteristics in infants and toddlers is important for building foundations for their learning in the more structured environments that they will experience in the future. It is important to make sure that infants have multiple opportunities to explore the environment and that they are offered a variety of materials that stimulate all of their senses. The key is to engage children in learning in the ways that are meaningful and enjoyable for them.



## 0-8 Month-old Activities:

- **Provide time for one-to-one interactions, including games such as peek-a-boo**
- **Imitate the baby's faces or noises and watch to see if the baby imitates you**
- **Play with familiar toys, such as shaking a rattle or patting a soft toy, and allow time for the baby to imitate your actions**
- **Use vocabulary words or gestures that indicate quantity (e.g., all done, more)**

## 9-18 Month-old Activities:

- **Encourage them to solve problems. For example, say, "You are working hard on that puzzle." Help only when they show that they need it**
- **Provide consistent songs or games that link to a specific activity, such as the same song at naptime or the same game prior to lunchtime**