

How Do Babies Learn?

There is nothing more delightful in the world than watching your baby revel in the experience of the new world around him or her. Watching your baby play around, touch things, hold them, babble endlessly and explore everything and anything that fascinates him/her are moments you want to cherish all your life. But while doing all this, your baby is more than just playing and having fun. Your baby is in fact trying to make sense of the world around him/her, through touching, hearing, seeing, smelling and tasting.

While your baby makes sense of the world, you will notice that your baby will slowly start remembering things - familiar faces, toys, repeated actions and slowly even responding to familiar sounds - as your baby's memory begins to develop. Your baby will howl when you are not seen around, or in the presence of unfamiliar places and will sleep soundly to the sound of your humming.

This early period, from the time your baby is about 6 to 12 months, is actually a very formative and crucial period for your baby as it begins to grasp things. Research shows that babies learn much faster than adults, and with age the learning ability of an adult is actually on the decline.

Your Baby - the first 6 to 12 Months

What are the important milestones your baby will cross in this period? During the first 6 to 8 months, babies begin crawling and due to the increased mobility, they come in closer contact with their surroundings. Their perception and visual skills help them register objects around them. Your baby may show preference for a particular toy, look for it if he/she drops it, may even stop crying if you give it to your baby, indicating that your baby's memory is at work.

Next at 9-12 months of age you can really see your baby grow. Sitting up without support, trying to hoist him/her to a standing position, not just holding but actually playing with the toys are some of the important transitions you may come across. You will see that your baby may try to find a toy that has been hidden, and learn by observation and experience. If your baby drops something, and likes the sound it makes, your baby may do it again. If your baby cannot hold on to a toy, or it keeps slipping out of your baby's hands, you may notice that your baby leaves it alone the next time, and picks up something else. Your baby is now familiar with the things around, and tries to use previous experiences to react to something.

Giving Your Baby a Headstart

With all this happening, you can see that your baby is trying to learn and has a lot of extra energy. Scientific research has offered strong reasons for scientists to conclude that the period during the first 6 to 12 months for a baby is critical for learning. In fact, learning during this period is faster and easier than it will ever be. If enough stimulation is not offered to your baby during this period, then your baby's ability to process things faster and use brain optimally may be affected as compared to other babies who are offered challenges in the form of learning new things to help them understand and pick up things faster.

Left to themselves, babies may endlessly spend the day experiencing new sensations and objects, some that will help them learn and some that they will soon forget. This is the period of vast mental growth and development of the ability to understand/process experiences. This is also the period that shapes your baby's future learning and interaction process. It is here that your role as a parent needs to be emphasized. Experiments have helped scientists determine that babies who are exposed to cognitive stimulation have a headstart over other children right up to middle school and even

high school.

Your Role and Responsibilities as a Parent

You could let your baby learn by random trial and error, or help your baby grow through introducing tried and tested techniques that will ensure optimal mental and physical growth for your baby. You know what's best for your little one. Exposing your baby to an environment where stimulated learning will help the baby from a very early age on, is something that you cannot choose to ignore. Today with child prodigies and geniuses taking the world by storm, your baby is never too young to start learning.

Technology to your Rescue

Shapes, colors, light and sound, and slowly moving alphabets and numbers - the sooner you familiarize your baby with learning in a stimulated environment, the stronger are the chances that your baby will grasp things much faster making his/her educational base very sound.

Thanks to computer technology, you have the luxury of easy education in the comfort of your home, an option that you probably never had for yourself. Learning has been revolutionized as images and sounds come alive and animated on your screen, and your baby watches in wonder, while learning something new and meaningful.

Research has proved that a stimulated learning environment from an early age helps certain areas of the brain develop much faster than babies who are not exposed to it.

While books and toys may work only to a certain extent, with educational software programs you will have your baby's undivided attention. Education is liberated from the bounds of books and made interactive, so that your child learns and plays at the same time.

Educational Software Programs

Who would've imagined that the computer sitting on your desk could also provide fun learning for your baby? Today, educational programs are hugely popular in the market as more and more parents are concerned about their child's mental and intellectual development from a very early age.

Sure playing around and exploring things around is something that every baby does. Your baby on the other hand, will be a little better off. Not only will your baby have just as much fun as he/she does when playing, but will also pick up new things and concepts through pictures, sounds and animations, that will create a lasting impression on your baby's mind.

Programs such as Fingaroo and Alfaroo by AGUGU, for instance, designed for babies aged 6 months and up, and 12 months and up respectively, acquaint your child with shapes, colors, objects, alphabets and numbers. Different levels help you gauge when your baby is ready to learn something new. The computer keyboard is locked, and your computer data is protected.

Exposure to Learning with Interactive technology

It is a truth universally acknowledged, and proven by research that babies learn new things, sounds, motion, and even language by imitation, and constant repetition.

Educational softwares for babies are designed in such a way that they are actually learning, when they think they are just playing and having fun. Images and sounds are assimilated in their minds through repetition. Watching your little one grow and learn is every parents dream, and with exposure to educational softwares and interactive technology, you will be rewarded with the special

feeling much sooner.

Babies and Learning

Studies have proven that by the age of 12 months, millions of brain cells in babies develop to such an extent that they are able to first hear things and then reproduce the sound. In a recent experiment conducted in France and America, babies were exposed to a few pictures for 3 weeks and it was discovered that they reacted to these pictures more than to pictures that were previously not shown to them.

This proves that babies react favorably to familiar sounds and images, and educational softwares make use of this very fact. Instead of wasting the sponge-like retaining power that your baby has in the first 6-12 months, and leaving education to an age when your baby is already grappling with so many other new experiences in life; beginning when your baby's brain is most receptive to learning is only logical.

In the first 6-12 months your baby thrives on sounds and images. Instead of these being just random ones -- the baby talk you spend hours on, or eclectic pictures and images that change every day, and hardly create a lasting effect on your baby's mind -- a more defined approach should only work to your baby's advantage. Not only will your baby learn and remember images and sounds faster, but also will be more receptive to learning through them.