PLEASE TAKE ONE

HELPING INFANTS GROW HAPPY AND SMART

For Ages 0-12 Months

BASICS
DeKalb County

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The Basics, Inc. Some photos in this booklet are courtesy of
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THE BASICS

MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

TALK, SING, AND POINT

COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

80% OF BRAIN GROWTH HAPPENS DURING THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF LIFE.

During these early years of brain growth, infants and toddlers absorb massive amounts of information from interacting with other people. This early learning becomes the foundation for all future learning.

The Basics are five fun, simple, and powerful ways to help all our children become the happiest and most successful they can be!

Let's seize the opportunity!

THE BASICS

ONE

MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS.

Infants thrive when their world seems loving, safe, and predictable. When you express love and respond to their needs, you teach them that they can count on you. This is the foundation for your relationship. Over time, showing love and responding helps them learn to manage their feelings and behavior.

Infants are affected by your emotions, both good and bad. So, it is important to find strategies that help you cope with stress. Caring for yourself benefits your child.

HOLD THEM. Hold, kiss, and cuddle your infant! Do not worry about spoiling them. There is no need to hold back on sharing love.

RESPOND TO THEM. Your infant depends on you to meet their needs. Watch and listen for clues about how they feel and what they need. For example, a cry or whimper may mean that they are hungry or hot. Over time, you will learn to read your infant's signals. Respond to what you notice. This helps them learn that you care. It also teaches them about cause and effect.

COMFORT THEM. When upset, infants have a hard time calming down on their own. They depend on you to help manage their emotions, so comfort them when they get fussy or cry. Bit by bit, they will learn ways to help soothe themselves (like sucking their thumb). Some babies cry more than others. If your baby cries a lot, raise the issue with your doctor.

PLAY WITH THEM. Your baby loves to look at your face. Hold them close, smile, make silly faces, and talk in a playful voice. Around 6 or 8 weeks, they will start to smile back. This means they are happy and learning the basics of communication. Have little "conversations" where you respond to each others' sounds and facial expressions. Take breaks if your baby seems tired or overwhelmed. They might show this by looking away from you.

MANAGE HOUSEHOLD STRESS. Stress is normal, but too much stress is bad for a baby's brain. Things that cause stress for an infant are loud noises, adults who seem upset or angry, or when adults do not respond to their needs. It is important to have strategies for coping when your life gets stressful. Talk to friends, family, or your doctor about ways to deal with stress.

THE BASICS

TWO

TALK, SING, AND POINT.

Babies are learning language from the moment they are born. At first, to a newborn baby, speech is just sound. Then, day by day, they learn that the sounds have meaning. Every time you talk, sing, or point to what you are talking about, you provide clues to the meaning of what you are saying. You are providing important information to their brains about how language works and the thoughts and feelings that language communicates.

TALK A LOT. Talk to your baby from the time they are born during activities like changing, feeding, bathing, and errands. Describe what you are doing. Label the objects around you by naming and pointing to them.

GO BACK AND FORTH. When your baby makes a sound, show excitement in your face and voice! Respond to their sound with words. See how long you can keep the "conversation" going. It is very powerful when the two of you can stay focused on each other for a while.

USE A PLAYFUL VOICE. Talk with a gentle, playful voice. Exaggerate the sounds of the words. This may feel silly at first, but it is actually very important. Babies pay extra attention and learn more when you talk this way.

USE REAL WORDS. Don't just use "baby talk," also use real words. The more words your baby hears, the larger their vocabulary will grow. Think of words as nourishment for your baby's brain!

SING. Sing songs to your baby. This is a fun way for them to learn language. You might have certain songs for special times of the day, like bath time or before bedtime.

USE ANY LANGUAGE. It doesn't matter what language you speak with your infant. All languages are equally beneficial.

THE BASICS

THREE

COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE.

Infants are pre-wired to learn simple math ideas, including small numbers, patterns, and making comparisons. You don't need to be a math teacher to start preparing your child to be a problem solver. There are fun and simple activities that you do now to build math and thinking skills.

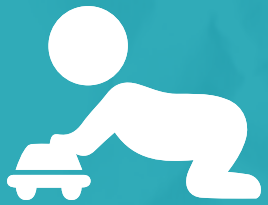
PLAY MUSIC. We all have a natural love of music. Share this love with your child. Play gentle music or sing when you are together. This is a fun and easy way to expose your child to rhythm and patterns. Lots of nursery rhymes and children's songs involve counting.

MOVE IN RHYTHM. Clap, tap, rock, or kiss your baby in a steady rhythm. Count while you do it. For example, while dressing your infant, tap their tummy three times. Repeat this. Have fun and make silly faces. This is a good way to teach your infant about counting.

COUNT OBJECTS. Count groups of things, starting with small numbers. For example, count your child's toes or pieces of fruit. Infants learn through all of their senses, so hold objects up for your child to see and touch. "Look, there's one…two bananas. Two bananas."

COMPARE. Provide opportunities for your child to touch and explore things that are the same and different. For example, let your baby shake things that make different sounds, or touch fabrics with different textures. Talk about how they are similar or different.

USE MATH WORDS. When you talk to your infant, use words related to math ideas like quantities and comparisons. For example, words like "more, less, big, small, tall, short, round, square." You don't need to set aside special time to do this. You can use math words whenever you are with your child.



THE BASICS

FOUR

EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY.

Newborns don't have much control over their bodies. As they grow, they gain more. Along the way, they learn the rules of movement. They learn by touching, reaching, banging, dropping, stacking, and pouring. When they can crawl, they are excited to explore their surroundings. Their brains form mental maps of places and spaces. Helping your child become an explorer helps develop their "mind's eye." It prepares them for sports and even for being good at math!

DO TUMMY TIME. Give your infant regular "tummy time." When they lift their head to look around, they strengthen the upper body and prepare muscles to crawl. They also get a new view of their surroundings!

PRACTICE REACHING. Hold a toy over your infant's head, or put one on the floor just beyond their reach. This will encourage your infant to reach and build coordination.

PLAY PEEK-A-BOO. This game teaches infants that objects (and people) exist even when hidden. It's also a fun way to bond with your child.

GIVE THINGS TO HANDLE. Provide objects of different colors, shapes, and textures to play with. Handling objects helps with hand-eye coordination and motor skills. Use everyday objects. You don't need fancy toys to keep your baby's attention!

SUPPORT DISCOVERY. Your infant discovers how the world works by experimenting. They also learn through repetition, so they might drop a spoon over and over to see what happens. Watch and assist!

PLAY SEARCH AND FIND. Put an object under a bucket or blanket and see if your child can find it.

LET THEM MOVE AROUND. Let your child explore their surroundings by reaching, rolling, scooting, and crawling. This is good for coordination. It also strengthens their "mind's eye" as they see things from new angles and sense where they are in space. Just make sure they are safe!

THE BASICS

FIVE

READ AND DISCUSS STORIES.

The more we read with young children, the more prepared they become to enjoy reading and to do well in school. It is never too early to begin reading.

When you read to your infant, they will be learning how books work and developing new language skills. Reading is also a special way for the two of you to bond. Turn the page for simple tips on how to make reading fun for you and your baby!

READ REGULARLY. Make book time part of your baby's daily routine.They won't understand for a while, but that's fine. What is important is that they hear your words, see the pictures, and start to develop positive feelings about books.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. If you can, choose books that are sturdy, short, and have simple, colorful pictures.

SNUGGLE UP. Hold your child in your lap as you read so they can see the pictures and feel cozy.

DESCRIBE THE PICTURES. With infants, you don't need to read the words on the pages. Instead, describe what is happening in the pictures. Talk about the colors, shapes, and what the characters are doing. Point to the page when you do this.

SPEAK WITH EXPRESSION. Use an exaggerated voice to make it more interesting!

ACTIVELY INVOLVE THEM. As your baby develops coordination, involve them more in the reading experience. Let them hold the book or turn the pages.

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD. Let your child guide the reading experience. When they start to loose interest, try another book or stop. Not being forced to keep going will keep them excited about reading!

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ONE-WEEK CHALLENGE

For one week, see how many of The Basics can you do each day.
To help you keep track, check off a box below when you do an activity from this book.

MONDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
TUESDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
WEDNESDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
THURSDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FRIDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SATURDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SUNDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For more information about The Basics, please visit:

basicsdekalbcounty.org