



Card 1 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about parents

- Sing or talk quietly to your baby while holding them in your arms.
- Watch your baby when talking quietly to them. You'll see they become still and quiet as they listen and they're most responsive to your voice.
- Stroke and cuddle your baby and see how they relax in your arms and are soothed by your voice when upset.

Showing feelings

- Look out to see how your baby shows what they're feeling – during feeding, bathing and nappy changing. Notice when your baby seems most content and happy or uncomfortable and how they show this. They may show a little smile or grimace, or make a vocal sound, or make excited or squirming body movements.
- Tickle your baby's body when they're lying down without clothes on. Kiss or blow on their tummy ([raspberries!](#)) to make them smile.

Becoming attached to parent or carer

- When your baby cries, lift them up and reassure them.
- If your baby is very quiet, talk to them and stroke or play with them to let them know that you're nearby.

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction

- When you hold your baby, feel them snuggle in and adjust their posture to your own.
- When your baby lies on a comfy mat, wave their arms and legs for them and make play noises. Then pause and wait to see if your baby waves their limbs spontaneously.
- Rock them from side to side or up and down and make play noises while you do this.
- Place your baby on your body or lap and move gently so that they can adjust to your movements.



Card 2 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent

- Talk to your baby as you approach them and watch their reaction. Babies sometimes go very still and quiet, smile, wriggle their fingers, wave their arms or legs or gurgle.
- Go close to your baby when talking. Encourage them to feel (fingering at this stage) and/or look at your face. Let them feel your lips when you're talking or making play noises. They'll find your face very interesting.
- Notice how your baby seems to respond more to your voice.
- Before you pick up your baby, call their name and then touch them gently. This gives your baby **forewarning** that they're going to be picked up. Touch your baby gently (holding them around the trunk) as you talk to them before you start to lift or move them.
- Notice if your baby starts to smile in response to cuddling and when you're talking to them. If they smile, give them a special kiss or cuddle.

Showing and understanding feelings

- Do things which get your baby to smile or chuckle. Tickle them when they're lying down without clothes on. Lift them up and down playfully.
- See how your baby shows pleasure – excited finger movements, arm or leg waving or waiting for something to happen again. This is a first sign of your baby showing their feelings. Respond to your baby with playful sounds and engage in joint physical play, eg waving your baby's arms, or rocking them.
- Watch how your baby shows frustration or discomfort during feeding, bathing or nappy changing. Then see how this changes once they're comfortable or satisfied.

Becoming attached to parent/carer

- Respond immediately if your baby expresses distress. Try and meet their needs if hungry, tired, lonely or uncomfortable.
- When approaching or lifting your baby up, pause and wait to see if they smile or show other signs of recognition when hearing your voice or feeling your touch.

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction

- Put your baby on your body, eg lying flat or propped up in bed. Move your body in different directions and feel how your baby adjusts their position in response to your movements.
- You can rock your baby or jiggle them up and down to encourage an exciting game together.
- When you're talking, give your baby time to make a coo, gurgle, movement or visual response. Babies with limited vision often take a bit longer to organise their responses so don't hurry and give your baby time to respond.
- Watch out for how your baby shows you that they've had enough and wants to stop your interaction, eg starting to cry, stiffening or leaning away from you, turning their head away, closing their eyes or mouth. Give the two of you a bit of a break and they'll show you when they're ready to play again.



Card 1 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

Talking to your baby

- Talk to your baby while cuddling and holding them – your voice and physical contact is reassuring and comforting.
- Talk with your face close to their face and take their hand to your face as you talk.
- Make your voice fun to listen to, using short lively words and phrases, repetition, varied **intonation** and higher pitch voice (**child directed speech** or baby talk), lively **facial expression** and head movement (you can put your child's hand on your face to feel your expression).
- Make it clear when you are talking to your baby by going closer to them, touching them or using their name.
- It's natural to comment on your baby's movements or the sounds they make and this is exactly the right thing to do – so when your baby burps, say something like 'Do you feel better now?'

For babies with very limited vision always talk to them to let them know you're there or are about to lift or move them. Touch your baby gently (holding them around the trunk) as you talk to them before you start to lift or move them (**forewarning**). Encourage other family members to talk to your baby and to use **forewarning** before they lift them, too...

Listening

- Watch how your baby shows that they're listening to your voice or other sounds. They may go very still and silent, or wriggle fingers or wave arms.

Understanding language and meaning

Structuring the environment

Begin to set up predictable routines for feeding, bath time, nappy changing and sleep. Talk to your baby during these routines.

Take your baby slowly through each part of their daily routines so that they have time to pick up and adjust to the different textures, smells, sounds and movements.

As you walk around with your baby, comment on different sounds and smells.

Communication

- The first step in **communication** is when parents notice and respond to their baby's signs of distress or pleasure. This leads on to babies trying intentionally to gain your attention and communicate their needs.

Attracting attention

- At this very early age responding and soothing your baby helps them learn that they're communicating their needs to you successfully.
- Respond by lifting and soothing your baby if they begin to cry.
- Respond to your baby's attempts to gain your attention for social contact through other means. Go and cuddle and talk to them when they coo.

Communicating needs

- Observe and listen out for separate cries for hunger, wetness, tiredness – and respond in the way that you think your baby needs.

Expressive language – talking

Making vocal sounds

- Encourage your baby's early cooing and gurgling by copying their sounds as if having a conversation and sharing their pleasure.



Card 2 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

Talking to your baby

- Babies enjoy patterns in your speech so repetitions of rhymes or lively word routines are very useful.
- Talk about what you and your baby are doing during everyday activities, eg 'You're going to have your bath now', 'Let's take off your vest'.
- Guide your baby's hand to your face when you're talking – you could kiss their hand. Talk from different sides of your baby's face to encourage them to turn to you as you talk.
- Spend time with your face close to their face and talk to your baby about what you're doing or how they're feeling eg, 'Was that a yawn? You're tired.'

Listening

- Notice how your baby responds differently to different sounds including sudden loud noise, soothing music and different voices. Your baby may become quiet, still, distressed or make excited body movements.

Understanding language and meaning

Structuring the environment

- Babies learn a lot about their home world through the regular patterns of daily routines, which you set up for them and for the family using words, sounds and smells which link to regular activities.
- Where possible, stick to predictable routines for feeding, bath time, dressing and nappy changing, play and sleep.
- Different rooms or areas in the house can be recognised by babies by different sounds, textures, smells or sights. Develop this by pointing out links to activities like the sound of water splashing, the smell of bath bubbles, the feel of warm water, wrapping your baby in a warm towel in the bathroom, or the light reflecting on the mirror.
- Give your baby time to prepare for activities and to respond (eg use the sound cue of water splashing before putting your baby in the bath, or use touch or a tactile cue like pulling at your child's nappy to indicate a nappy change).

Communicating needs

- You'll soon learn to recognise your child's different cries for when they're tired, hungry, lonely, and how to respond differently to them.
- Observe your baby in different situations and see how they're beginning to show what they need, eg cuddling in for more cuddles, wriggling fingers to be lifted up, crying to show they're uncomfortable, wet or hungry.

Expressive language – talking

Making vocal sounds

- Copy your baby's sounds, pause and give them time to make a sound again and soon you will be having your first 'conversation'. Play vocal games – repeating your baby's first sounds back to them will become a playful game and encourage your baby to make more sounds.

Talk time. Play time.

Have some quiet times in the day when you talk to or play with your baby when there are no distracting sounds like TV, radio, other people talking, so that your child can hear your voice clearly.



Card 1 · Play and learning

Making connections

Learning about sound

- Your baby will begin to show a different response to your voice and with your help, learn where your voice is coming from. When talking to your baby take their hand to your face – do this when talking immediately in front and then when talking at either side of them.

Learning about objects – mats and surfaces

- Lie your baby down on a few different mats or surfaces so that they start to feel secure on different surfaces, eg their own change mat, their crib mattress and on a soft blanket on the floor. A brightly coloured mat may be helpful. Keep them consistent so that your child starts to recognise them.

Using hands

Learning with touch and response to different textures

- Gently massage and stroke your baby all over with a soft cloth or brush or your hand with baby oil – this will help your child to become familiar with and enjoy a range of different touch sensations.
- Let your baby feel you in different clothes, eg in a fluffy dressing gown, woolly cardigan and in soft cotton. They'll start picking at your clothes to feel them.
- Let your baby feel your skin and body with their hands. Your baby's first touch experiences will most likely be of you.

Discovering hands

- Stroke or gently massage your baby's hands – tickle them gently or blow on their hands ([raspberries](#) again!) to provide a pleasurable experience.



Card 2 · Play and learning

Making connections

Learning about sound

- Remember to let your baby know where you are when talking by taking their hand to your face while you talk. Notice how they start responding more to your familiar voice.

Understanding that objects are there

- Let your baby finger familiar objects that they come into contact with, eg your shiny bangle or necklace, their milk bottle, a soft rattle in cot.
- Lie your baby under a 'baby gym' or hanging frame. Choose or make a first version with just one or two soft hanging toys, such as a woolly pom pom with a bell inside or a fabric rattle ring. A light-reflecting ball may be helpful too. Hang the toys from the frame just above your baby's hands or legs so that they can make accidental contact with them with their hands or feet when they move. Use toys that make soft noises so they don't startle your child.

Understanding about actions on objects

- Help your baby pat and swipe at objects on the 'baby gym' or frame hanging over them so that they start to do this by themselves. Gently move their arms by the elbow or forearm until the tips of their fingers find the dangling toy. Gentle pressure behind the elbow is all that's needed ([guiding hands](#)).
- At the end of this stage, help your baby to grasp a light soft toy, eg a squeaker (see [Using hands](#)). Then gently putting your hand over their hand, briefly shake the rattle or squeak the squeaker together.
- The first squeakers and rattles should make a gentle sound so as not to startle the baby. Look for soft squeakers that only need a gentle squeeze.

Using hands

Learning with touch: responding to different textures

- Let your baby naturally feel and experience different textures that they come into contact with during their everyday routines, eg different mats, fleecy blanket, their milk bottle (if they're using one), water in their bath, a fluffy towel. As babies discover their hands, they'll start to finger things more. Give **forewarning** (see below).

Discovering hands

- For a short play, tie a **light band** with bells onto your baby's wrist or ankle so that they get more feedback about the movement of their hands and legs. This will also encourage them to find their other hand.
- For a short play, put brightly coloured mittens on your baby's hands or shine a light on shiny or fluorescent coloured mittens.
- Bring your baby's hands together to encourage mutual finger play and make them aware that they have two hands.

Co-ordinating hands and fingers – grasping finger or object

- When your baby's hand is spontaneously open, touch your finger to the palmar surface (ie the palm side) of the finger tips. Your baby will soon be able to curl their fingers deliberately round your finger and hold onto it.
- Once they can do this, you could begin to introduce a very soft squeaker (usually not before the end of this stage). If your baby's hand is spontaneously open, bring the item to touch the palmar surface of the finger tips. Let them curl their fingers round the toy. Look for soft squeakers that only need a gentle squeeze.

Taking a finger or toy or texture slowly over the back of the fingers and then over the finger tips gives the baby **forewarning** and helps them adjust their hand position to grasp an object. This will become very important in Stage 1b.



Card 1 · Movement and mobility

Body awareness

- Give your baby the experience of lying in different positions, eg lying on their back, on their tummy (while you're with them), sitting propped up and lying on each side. Movement in these different positions makes your baby aware of the muscles in different parts of their body. Lie them on a towel on your lap and with two fingers, gently stroke down each side of the spine from the neck downwards – this encourages babies to lift their head and will help to establish head control.
- Babies with limited vision often prefer to lie on their backs and may not like being placed on their tummy. Try to encourage your baby to be comfortable in this position by laying them on your chest for a short time each day and encouraging them to touch your face and receive kisses.
- Gentle massage helps your baby to become more aware of their body.

Position in space

- From two or three weeks of age give your baby the experience of movement in space, eg rock your baby to give them a sense of motion in your arms, dance with them in your arms or carry in a baby sling so that they experience your movement. Ensure that baby carriers/slings are comfortable and safe for both you and your baby.

Exploring the environment

- Give your baby the experience of lying on different surfaces, eg on a soft bed and on a firmer floor.
- Cover surfaces with fabrics of different, pleasant textures and that are brightly coloured. Snuggle your baby up in these occasionally and guide their hands and feet to explore them.

Extending movement/co-ordination

- Your baby will be more interested in your voice and face than anything else at this stage. Talk to them from above and from both sides while they're lying on their back. This will motivate them to turn and lift their head.
- Give your baby the opportunity to move their arms and legs freely without restrictive coverings or clothing. A bracelet on an arm or leg that makes a sound with movement provides [sensory](#) feedback and adds to the motivation to move.

**Card 2 · Movement and mobility**

Body awareness

- During care routines such as nappy changing, roll your baby onto their tummy for a few seconds before picking them up to extend their tolerance of this position.

Position in space

- Through lifting your baby in the air you can help them develop a sense of position in space. Gradually reduce support to the head and neck as control is established.

Exploring the environment

- Your baby may enjoy short periods lying on a mat or surface that makes a soft rustling sound when you move their arms and legs. Also a very brightly coloured mat may be interesting.
- Give all the rooms your baby may sleep in a distinctive smell, sound or feel so that your child knows where they are on waking.

Extending movement/co-ordination

Head control

- Lifting or turning their head is one of the first controlled movements that your baby will make. Encourage them to lift their head while lying on their tummy, by talking to them with your face close to their face, or by tickling/kissing them under the chin. Your baby may find it easier to lift their head if their arms are brought forward.
- Alternatively, tickle or gently massage the muscles on the back of your baby's neck and upper body while they're lying on their tummy or place something new, like an activity mat or textured blanket underneath their chest to motivate your baby to lift their head.
- Encourage your baby to turn their head to each side by:
 - talking to them from different positions and taking their hands to your face
 - varying the side you carry them and encouraging them to turn towards your face and voice
 - positioning sound or light mobiles on different sides of the crib to encourage head movement towards sources of sound or light
- Motivate your baby to hold their head up while being carried upright at your shoulder by having someone behind talk to them. By the end of this stage, when held upright at your shoulder, someone could shake a rattle or hold a toy that lights up to attract attention.

Trunk (body) control

- Introduce a variety of movement experiences, eg move your baby's arms and legs around in play – 'run, run, run'. This gives them the awareness and feel of movement.

Baby car seats provide vital support for the head when babies are travelling and they prevent injury in case of an accident. At other times give your baby lots of opportunities to develop their head control. Too much time sitting in a **baby seat/bouncer** that supports the head and neck reduces opportunities for developing independent head and neck control and later movement co-ordination.



Card 1 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- While holding your baby, introduce the nipple or teat across the baby's cheek – this helps the baby prepare for something coming towards the mouth. Young babies automatically turn to the side that has been stimulated. Let the teat rest gently on the baby's lips so they can smell and taste the first drop of milk. Pause until the baby opens their mouth.
- Always prepare or **forewarn** your baby with a touch cue on their chin or cheek and then lips or a visual cue before putting anything into the baby's mouth.

Dressing and nappy changing

- Laying your baby on a familiar surface such as a changing mat, soft towel or rug will help to cue them into what's about to happen and build up a sense of security. Mats can be used in or out of the home.
- Keep your baby warm and comfortable and do dressing and nappy changing in an unhurried way while gently talking to them. Make the routine pleasant and fun.

Washing/bathing

- Make gentle water splashing sounds in the baby bath before you lower your baby into the water.
- Bath time should be as calm and cosy as possible and it's a time when you can begin to awaken your baby's sense of smell as well as awareness of their body. Use pleasant smelling baby bath products, gently rub and massage your baby's skin using oils or lotions, and after bathing, let them lie on a soft towel without any clothing.

Bedtime

- A newborn baby's body clock doesn't distinguish between day and night and will initially be dependent on feeding routines. Longer periods of sleep will come more easily as a result of establishing familiar routines that stimulate your baby during the day and are more calming at night.



Card 2 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- Let your baby know that you are about to feed them using consistent actions. This may be the sound or smell of milk or the feel of the teat or nipple on the cheek or chin or the sight of you or the bottle. Pause and wait to see if your child anticipates the breast or bottle by opening their mouth before the teat or nipple touches their lips.
- Continue to prepare or **forewarn** your baby with a touch cue on their chin or cheek and then lips before putting anything into the baby's mouth, so they don't get a shock and withdraw.
- Later say something like 'milk time' and let them see and feel you undoing your blouse or shaking the bottle, as well as continuing with touch cues.
- Notice if your child puts their hand out to touch your breast or the milk bottle.

Dressing and nappy changing

- Following the same sequence every time you remove or put on clothes or change a nappy will help your baby to anticipate what's going to happen next and minimise anxiety. Try to keep these routines pleasant and unhurried, so your baby enjoys these times with you.
- Feeling the nappy on the back of their hand before undressing will also prepare them.
- Add **touch cues** when **forewarning** that you're about to dress, undress or change nappies, eg before removing an item of clothing, tug it gently, then pause before beginning to take it off so your baby has time to work out what you're going to do.

Washing/bathing

- Use touch cues as well as words to prepare your baby for washing or bath time, eg before wiping hands or face, touch hands/face with a sponge or flannel and pause before using it. It may be helpful if the sponge is colourful too. Your baby should enjoy being washed and bathed as long as it's done in a calm, unhurried and playful manner, and in a consistent routine.
- Let your baby know when you're about to take them out of the bath by using a consistent phrase, eg 'out you come – one two, three', then hold your baby, pause and lift them out.

Bedtime

- Sleep comes more easily when there's a familiar established pattern including a calm period in which to wind down, eg bath time, night wear, followed by milk, cuddles and a special bedtime song helps create an atmosphere for preparing to sleep. Then put your baby down in their cot. Stick to this routine no matter where you are or who's putting your baby to bed.
- During the daytime try to tire your baby by being active and stimulating when they're awake. By contrast use a very quiet calm approach for late night feeds so that they get the message that you expect them to return to sleeping. Put them back to sleep in their cot immediately, so that they get used to returning to sleep in their cot at night.



Card 3 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent/others

- Call your baby's name gently as you approach them and watch how they respond to your voice before you start to pick them up.
- Encourage your baby to look at your face (if sufficient vision).

Showing feelings

- Repeat actions and routines which your baby seems to especially enjoy and watch how they show pleasure and delight.
- 'Mirror' your baby's emotional feeling and expression to show them you understand they are sad or happy. If they seem sad, make a sad voice and intonation and face and hold them soothingly; if they show excitement, make a happy excited voice and face and respond with excited movements.

Beginning to show attachment to parent and familiar others

- Encourage different family members to interact with your baby so that they come to recognise different voices, handling and faces.
- If your baby smiles to your voice or touch or smile, give them a special kiss and cuddle.

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction

- Play rough and tumble games lifting your baby up and down and making fun phrases and sounds ('Up you come', 'Weee, down!') as you lift them. You can do this more vigorously and make the game exciting for your baby.
- Play fun games during caretaking activities like nappy changing, eg making play noises or actions (blowing a 'raspberry' on their tummy during nappy changing). Keep the game consistent and do it every day so that your baby recognises the game.



Card 4 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent/others

- Call your baby's name gently as you approach them and say, 'Up you come'. Wait to see if they can show you that they want to be picked up.
- Before you lift your baby up, encourage them to reach for you, by taking your baby's arms to your neck and then lifting them up. Babies with limited vision may not reach out spontaneously at this stage and need help to find you.
- Recognising facial expressions is difficult for children with limited vision. Try and find out at what distance a smile can be seen and responded to. Make a broad smile (wearing lipstick can be useful!) and if your child looks at your face, then always try to talk and smile from within this distance.

Showing feelings

- Give your baby hugs and kisses and help them to return them.
- 'Mirror' your baby's feelings (sad, happy, tired) through your voice intonation, body movements and **facial expression**. This shows your baby that you are 'tuning into' their moods.

Becoming attached to parent or carer

- Help your baby to feel secure with a small number of familiar adults handling them at home. Tell relatives and friends about their vision needs and to say 'Hello, it's ...' before lifting the baby up, and to talk to them when handling them.
- When separation begins, make sure that the adult looking after your baby is familiar to them, provides a warm care-giving environment and does caretaking routines in the same way that you do. Childminders and care givers need to know about your baby's vision needs. They will need to respond to your baby's need for physical contact and reassurance when separated from you. Also, make sure that your child has some familiar comfort objects with them when they leave you, such as a favourite blanket, mat, toy.
- Observe how your baby responds if they are lifted up by and talked to by a stranger. Do they react differently when they're handed back to you?

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction

- This is the time to introduce some simple social games and songs, eg bouncing or jiggling on your lap with a little song or rhyme to go with it. Keep the words or tune consistent, so that you always say the same words when you do the same actions, eg 'Ride on a horsey, jig jig jig, ride on a horsey, jig jig jig, then down you go' (do the bouncing and dropping actions with the words). Many nursery songs like 'Ride a cock horse', 'Jingle bells' and 'Horsey horsey' are good for bouncing and swaying movements.
- See if your baby lets you know that they want the game repeated (eg bouncing again when you stop the singing and action) – then immediately repeat the game.
- Take turns making vocal sounds. Copy your baby's sounds, which may be a cough, a shriek or a [raspberry](#). See if you can 'tune into' and 'mirror' their sounds and moods –excitement, surprise, being cross. Then you lead and make a particular sound and see if your baby can 'mirror' that sound or mood.
- Bring your face close to your baby's and give a broad smile; pause and look to see if they're watching or copying you.
- Begin to introduce social games and familiar rhymes with repeated words and actions. This could include nursery rhymes with simple actions, rhyme games like 'Round and round the garden', 'Pat a cake', and action songs like 'Row row the boat'. If you don't know any, ask your professional advisor who will know lots of songs and rhymes for babies. You may have favourite songs from your own culture or religion. Have fun repeating the same games over and over again with your baby.



Card 3 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

- While talking to your baby, guide your baby's hand to your face and your lips or rest your baby's cheek against you so that they can feel you making sounds like 'bababa'.
- Remember to use your baby's name and to touch them (and/or sit very close by) to make it clear when you're talking to them and encourage other family members to do the same.
- Continue to use **child directed speech**, with short simple utterances, singsong **intonation**, lots of repetition and some 'baby' words for lively expression. This will get your baby to listen to your speech.
- While listening to music, dance or sway holding your baby, in rhythm to the music.

Understanding meaning

Linking sounds/actions/words to familiar situations

- Keep routines, like feeding, bathing, dressing, consistent each day so that your baby is able to make connections between the sounds, objects and actions of routines. Use the same words and phrases as you do routines each day.

Your child will start to link objects and actions to everyday routines. At first these will be the simple everyday things they experience like being wrapped in a towel before being taken to the bath or having their bib put on before a meal.

Communication

Attracting attention

- Observe your baby and watch the different ways that they try to attract your attention. Respond to let your baby know they have succeeded. If your baby vocalises or smiles or waves their arms or looks at you, respond as if they were trying to attract your attention. Lift them up and cuddle and interact briefly, and then put them down again on the floor mat and see if they repeat the action to get your attention again.

Sharing experiences with toys/objects

- This is the time to lay the foundation for [joint attention](#) by using [guiding hands](#) and [shared discovery](#).
- Play together with a rattle or sound-making toy. Help your baby to reach out to touch, pat and hold the toy using [guiding hands](#). Move their arm by the elbow or forearm until the tips of their fingers find the toy. Gentle pressure pushing behind the elbow is all that is needed. This leaves your baby's hands free to discover what they're reaching for themselves, while also telling your child that you're sharing their experiences.
- Watch and think about how your baby shows you what they're interested in.

Communicating needs

- Respond to your baby's behaviour as if they're communicating with you. You need to interpret and put into actions and words what you think they're trying to tell you. If they push away ('I don't want to play') during a joint game, then stop the game. If they open and close their hands ('I want it') when they hear or see an interesting toy, give them the toy.

Expressive language

Making vocal sounds

- Copy your baby's sounds, pause to give them time to make a vocal sound back to you. If they're not looking at you, take their hand to your face while you play this game.



Card 4 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

- Continue to use **child directed speech**, with short simple utterances, singsong intonation, lots of repetition and some 'baby' words for lively expression. This will get your baby to listen to your speech.
- Observe how your baby responds differently to different sounds including familiar and unfamiliar sounds. Notice how they're beginning to show excitement about an activity that's coming when they hear a sound, eg the bath running.
- Chat to your baby and notice how they're now able to listen to you for a longer time.
- Notice how your baby's interest is immediately drawn to any new sound-making toy you offer and how they immediately forget the toy they were playing with before.

Understanding meaning

Linking sounds/actions/words to familiar situations

- Continue the everyday familiar routines for feeding, bathing, dressing etc. Your baby may start to show that they're anticipating the next step in a routine, eg they show excitement when you say 'dinner time' and put on their bib.
- Help your baby to explore everyday objects before they use them, eg a spoon during feeding, a towel or sponge at bath time. Use a guiding hands approach for helping to explore objects, see the back of this card. Name the object at the same time.

Remember your baby will learn to link words with objects and actions through regular routines and activities if you use the same words and phrases.

Use the same phrases to help your baby anticipate what's going to happen, eg always say 'up you come' before lifting them or 'bath time' as you take them for a bath.

Communication

Attracting attention

- Respond when appropriate to your baby's vocal sounds as if they are asking for your attention. Talk to them so that they know you've heard them. Go to them and give a cuddle or play.

Sharing experiences with toys/objects

- Play a regular game with a familiar toy together, eg squeaking a favourite squeaker. You could keep this toy just for joint play. Use the guiding hands approach – move your child's arm by the elbow or forearm until the tips of the fingers find the toy. While they're holding and playing with the toy, keep a gentle touch on their elbow or forearm. This is to let your baby know that you're focusing on them and what they're doing. Notice too how your baby shows that they're focusing on the toy.
- Observe if your baby starts to show interest in a toy you are playing with – if they move their hand towards it, give them the toy and then play with it together.

Communicating needs

- Make consistent responses to your baby's hand or arm movements when they try to express wishes, eg arms raised means 'pick me up' or hand opening and closing means 'I want'. Lift them up or give them the thing they want.

Expressive language

Making vocal sounds

- Copy your baby's first attempts at consonant sounds, eg 'ba' 'ma'. Pause and give them time to repeat their sound. This can become a vocal turn-taking game.
- Try a different sound after copying your baby a number of times and see if they'll copy you making a new sound.
- Make sure that your baby has quiet times, when in their cot or during playtime, when they can experiment on their own with making vocal sounds. Don't have music or background noise on all the time, or it will stop your child listening to their own sounds.

Talk time. Play time.

Have some quiet times in the day when you talk to or play with your baby and there are no other distracting sounds like TV, radio, other people talking, so that they can hear your voice clearly.



Card 3 · Play and learning

Making connections

Learning about sound

- Offer your baby a sound-making toy on their tummy or chest and help them to find it and explore it with both hands. Your baby needs both hands free to do this so they need to be lying on their back in their cot or on the floor. This is a helpful first step in finding an object that's making a sound.
- Show your baby where sound is coming from by shaking a sound-making toy (a rattle or bells) in front of them and guiding their hand using a guiding hands approach to find it. It's important that you guide your baby's hand right to the object and don't bring the object down to them. Once they've been guided to it, let them hold it and play with it briefly. Then repeat it all over again.

Find out about the [guiding hands](#) approach in Stage 1b Communication, language and meaning, Cards 3 and 4 Sharing experiences with objects. It's better not to pull your baby's hands as they'll find this uncomfortable and may resist.

Understanding that objects are there

- Help your baby to reach out and grasp a sound-making toy which is making a sound on the table in front of them using the [guiding hands](#) approach (see above).
- Keep some favourite toys in the same place, eg tied to cot, a favourite object on a 'baby gym' or bath toys in the bath so your baby learns to find them in a familiar place.

Understanding about actions on objects

- Give your baby opportunities to find out about different toys by shaking a rattle, squeezing a squeaker or ringing a bell. Use toys that are small and light enough for your baby to hold and explore and that are as visually suitable as possible.
- Help your baby explore a flat surface and pat hands on it, making a sound, then introduce a first simple 'cause effect' toy such as a soft toy piano.

Using hands

Learning with touch: responding to different textures

- Your baby will begin to experience more sensations and textures as they start to grasp familiar objects and toys like their milk bottle, a fabric rattle and a plastic squeaker.

Continue to give your child **forewarning** before putting a texture or object in their hand. Introduce the texture or object on the back or side of the fingers and then wait for your baby to open their fingers. Then slowly slip the texture over the finger tips into their palm.

Exploring

- Give opportunities to feel toys with smaller parts like a teething ring with small rings or other moving parts that can be explored to help develop your baby's finger movements.
- Offer your baby larger toys on their tummy or chest and help them to feel and explore it with both hands. Your baby needs both hands free to do this so they need to be lying on their back in their cot or on the floor.
- Offer your baby their milk bottle (shaking it first) or a larger sound-making toy or a larger silent toy to encourage them to reach and grasp with both hands.

Co-ordinating hands and fingers – grasping object

- Help your baby to grasp a rattle for longer – gently shake their forearm so that the rattle makes a sound and keeps their interest.
- A ring rattle may help your baby to hold with both hands and then transfer the toy from one hand to the other.



Card 4 · Play and learning

Making connections

Learning about sound

- Shake or squeak sound-making toys (like rattles or bells) in front of your baby at arm's reach. If they need help, guide their hand to the toy to find it or let them find it visually. Continue to use a **guiding hands** approach. It is important that you take the baby's hand right to the toy and don't bring it down to their hand. Once they've grasped it, let them play with it.
- Talk to or call your baby starting from arm's length away or nearer and wait for them to turn towards you and reward them with a kiss on that side to show them where you are.

Understanding that objects are there

- Keep the same everyday objects in the same expected places during everyday routines – for example, a flannel or sponge in the bath, a bowl on a high chair, a nappy to hold on the changing mat.

Understanding about actions on objects

- Help your baby to bang toys that make a sound, like a toy piano, a drum, a squeaky toy, or a brick on a table. Use a **guiding hands** approach.
- Your baby will enjoy toys that produce a musical sound when a large key or button is pushed – initially they might bang it to produce the sound. Show them what happens when they press the button. First place your baby's hand on yours so that they feel your movement pressing the button. Then, when your baby is comfortable with this, use **guiding hands** to take them to the button and press gently on their hand to show what will happen. This is called **shared discovery** since you're discovering the toy together.

Using hands

Learning with touch – responding to different textures

- Help your child explore the feel of objects and textures during their everyday routines – for example, a wet sponge, a dry towel, the water and bubbles in the bath, talcum powder on their body, their bottle or spoon during feeding, etc. As they start to recognise objects and sensations in their daily life, they'll become more interested and confident about exploring and feeling them.
- Early finger feeding experiences can be a useful introduction to feeling food textures, including dry and sticky food, see [Towards independent self-care](#).

Discovering hands

- Introduce finger games or rhymes like 'This little piggy' and 'Tom Thumb'.
- Play clapping games and show your child how to do this. Direct their hands by gentle pressure on the elbow or place your child's hands on yours as you clap.

Exploring

- Introduce your baby to everyday objects with many parts that can be explored like a bunch of keys, a secure string of beads, a toothbrush or hairbrush.

Co-ordinating hands and fingers – grasping object

- Remember to use a [forewarning](#) technique when introducing any new object. Take it over the back of the fingers and then leave it on the side of the fingers and wait as your child orientates their wrist and turns their hand until their fingers wrap round the object.
- Give your baby opportunities to play with and hold smaller objects (ones that fit into their hand and are too big to be swallowed) eg a 2.5 cm cube brick on a surface or a small squeaky toy.
- Place a cube on a table or tray surface. Guide your baby's hand along the surface until their first (index) or second finger touches the cube. Then let them pick it up. At first they may scoop it into the palm but gradually they'll start to use the thumb when grasping.
- Encourage two-handed reach and play with large squeeze balls which need to be held in two hands and which make a noise when squashed or a toy that has different parts to feel and explore.



Card 3 · Movement and mobility

Body awareness

- To encourage body awareness, put a bottle of warm milk or water on your baby's tummy or chest and guide their hands towards it using a **guiding hands** approach.

Position in space

- Babies love rough and tumble play, and movement through space helps them to establish balance and trunk control. Encourage bouncing, rocking and swinging play.

Exploring the environment

- Continue to provide a number of interesting textured surfaces for your baby to lie on and encourage touching and feeling with hands and feet.
- Some commercially produced play mats/activity quilts make different sounds or light up to movement. Brightly multi-coloured quilts can be helpful. Some even produce a rocking motion as your baby moves.

Extending movement/co-ordination

Head and trunk control

- While your baby is lying on their tummy, encourage them to lift their head and support their **trunk** on their elbows by talking to them or interesting them in a sound-making toy. Using a firmer surface gives a better base to push against and supports movement more effectively.
- Once head control is established and your baby can sit on your lap with minimal support, sit your baby on one knee holding them with both hands around the hips and then lower down (close to room verticals if they can see them). Rock them gently from side to side to help them practise keeping their body straight.
- Do the same thing with your baby sitting along your thigh facing your other leg and rock gently forward and backwards.
- Gradually increase the size of the rock as their **trunk** control improves.

Rolling

- Give your baby an experience of the pattern of movements involved in rolling by rolling them onto their tummy – for example when being picked up after a nappy change or bath.
- To make this more fun, use a blanket over a soft safe base (like a bed) and with a partner, gently raise one side to roll your baby for a few centimetres or from one side to the other.

Strengthening the legs

- Encourage your baby to kick their legs by placing a sound-making toy at the base of the cot or under their legs. Toys like 'kick pianos' and 'sound balls' which can help are available commercially. This is also useful for cause-effect play and understanding object permanence.

The sequence in which babies learn to roll depends on many factors such as how they are usually laid, but is often side to back, stomach to back, back to side, back to stomach. Children vary enormously in their order of learning.



Card 4 · Movement and mobility

Body awareness

- Place a bottle or favourite toy next to your baby's body, eg touching their arm or leg, and help them to find it using a **guiding hands** approach. Turn this into a regular 'Where is it?' – 'Here it is!' game.

Position in space

- Many babies from about six months onwards enjoy motion in an appropriate swing, and like being gently swung and lifted in the air.

Saving reaction

- Introduce 'parachuting'. Hold your baby around the lower chest and bounce them gently up and down on the bed 'one, two, three' and then from the top of the bounce tip them forward towards the bed saying 'weee'. (A bright bed cover may be helpful.) You need a second person at the early stages of this to guide your child's arms so that their hands make contact with the bed. Once your baby starts putting their hands out themselves, you no longer need a second adult. (The first three bounces give your baby information about the surface they're 'standing' on – that is, the base, so when they tip forward, they learn to judge where it will be and put out their hands to save themselves). To begin with, the 'dive' needs to be head first but not sudden or rapid. Also the height of the bounce should only be about 30–40 cm off the bed surface.

Exploring the environment

- Put your baby on a mat with a few toys like a sound ball that makes a sound when knocked. This encourages them to wriggle and move to pat the toys.

Extending movement/co-ordination

Head and trunk control

- Hold under your baby's chest when lying on their tummy so that they're supported. Gradually reduce the support while encouraging your baby to bear weight on their arms and to raise their head and chest when lying on their tummy. Lean round and talk to them to encourage your baby to raise their head.

Rolling

- To encourage rolling, place your baby on their side on a comfortable surface and encourage them to follow your voice or a sound-making toy as it moves in the direction you want them to roll. You can show them what you want them to do by gently rolling them so they learn the pattern of movements required. Make sure that they're helped to reach you and rewarded with a cuddle, or the toy to play with. Repeat this when your baby is lying on their back.

Sitting and saving

- Encourage pulling to a sitting position by holding your baby's shoulders and gently raising them from the floor, saying 'up you come!'. Gradually lessen the amount of support, by moving from shoulders to elbows, to hands as you pull to a sitting position. Reduce the amount of pulling provided by encouraging your baby to pull more and more. This can be done regularly after nappy changing or dressing.
- Place your baby in a sitting position on a firm surface, propped up with pillows to show them how to support themselves using their hands and arms as props on the floor in front of them.
- Sit on the floor with your baby between your legs. Rock them from side to side (singing a 'seesaw' game) taking their hands to the floor to the side and showing them how to save themselves.



Card 3 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- If introducing a bottle for the first time, shake the bottle, then introduce the teat on the chin below your child's lips as a **forewarning**. Gradually bring onto the lips and let your baby taste drops and then open up their mouth. Take it slowly, so that your baby has time to get used to the new feel and taste of the teat and milk.
- When preparing to breast or bottle-feed, guide your baby's hands to the breast or bottle before offering it to the mouth. It's better to guide arms by gently pushing the elbows forward rather than pulling on hands. You can then place your hands over theirs to hold the bottle in place. Some babies don't like to touch or hold objects, but it's important to keep trying. Sometimes putting a strip of comforting or interesting fabric around a bottle can make it more appealing to hold – for example, you could put the bottle inside a sock (if possible one that your child can see).
- Begin spoon feeding when recommended by your health visitor. Use a plastic spoon with an easy grip to start off. As your baby's grasp of objects develops let them hold a spoon and play with it even if not feeding.
- When starting to spoon feed, make sure you and your baby are comfortable and you have everything you'll need to hand if things get messy – for example, bibs, cloths, kitchen paper etc. It's easier to swallow in a sitting position, so sit with your baby on your knee, if they have stable head control, or in a baby chair with sufficient support.
- If they have sufficient vision, try to find a spoon that your baby can see and bring the spoon in front of their eyes within their **visual field** so that it doesn't appear unexpectedly.

Feeding (continued)

- Use **forewarning** before you put the spoon to your baby's mouth. Put small quantities on the spoon and gently touch your baby's chin with the spoon and then move it to their lips. Let your baby taste a bit on their lips. Then say 'Open your mouth'. Wait for them to open their mouth, before slowly tipping the spoon into the front part of the mouth. Let your baby have time to take the food off the spoon with their lips and palate so that they are in control of the speed of feeding until they become confident about feeding from a spoon.
- At first, babies push the food out of their mouth with their tongue, but with experience, they learn to swallow in a more co-ordinated manner. When trying new foods, babies may splutter, spit or gag on the food but these are typical reactions observed in many infants. Keep offering the food in a calm and encouraging way and try to leave a drop on their lips so that they have a taste of the food.
- When introducing first foods, change only one element at a time and begin with just one spoonful before a bottle. Try adding a few drops of milk to the food to produce a mild flavour and slowly increase the proportion of solids as your baby gets used to the flavour.
- Do the same **forewarning** each time and gradually your baby will become more confident about opening their mouth as the spoon touches their chin and lips and gradually the spoon can be tipped further into the mouth as eating and swallowing become more co-ordinated.
- Make sure that all care-givers feed using the same approach.
- Follow guidance from your health visitor when introducing foods with different textures and flavours. Take time to introduce any new taste or texture and let your baby get used to and enjoy each one. It may take many attempts before new flavours/textures are eventually enjoyed, so persevere.



Card 3 · Towards independent self-care

Dressing and nappy changing

- Continue to **forewarn** your baby of what you're about to do using consistent sound and touch and visual cues and words and actions. Keep to the familiar routine every time.
- While dressing and undressing or changing nappies, talk to your baby describing what you're doing.

Washing and bathing

- Make bath time fun. Encourage splashing by moving arms and legs and saying 'Splash splash!'.
- Encourage tolerance of hair washing by gently trickling water over the head and face while playing, laughing and singing, to turn it into a game.
- Give your baby the experience of some different textures against their skin as you bath them, eg a soft face cloth, a natural or synthetic sponge, a soft brush. Use lotions or soaps with different consistencies over the hands and body.
- Continue to **forewarn** your baby that you're about to put them in the bath, although by now your baby is probably anticipating it as part of the evening routine, which begins when they hear you start to run the bath water.

Bedtime

- Changing into night clothes at bedtime helps to separate night from day, so try to use night clothes that have a different feel to those worn during the day.
- Continue to use a calm bedtime routine so your baby knows what's expected of them at this time in the day, eg bath time, pyjamas, milk, cuddles and calming songs.
- Use a slightly different but equally calm approach to settling your baby down for naps during the day, perhaps using a different song to the one used at bedtime, a particular music box or a mobile for an afternoon nap.



Card 4 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- If already using a bottle, continue to guide both your baby's hands to hold it when drinking and gradually reduce the amount of support you give until they can support it independently. This will also encourage their hands to work together. The bottle will be easier to handle if it is not too full.
- As the baby gets a bit older, say something like 'milk time', shake the bottle and then do the same as above.
- Remember to tell your baby when you're about to offer food ('dinner') and give additional sound or visual clues by shaking the bottle or tapping the side of the bowl with the spoon.
- As your baby gets used to spoon feeding, put their hand on your hand or forearm so that they feel you lifting your arm with each spoonful. When you get near to their mouth, say 'open wide'. This will help them to anticipate the spoon coming to their mouth.
- Introduce small amounts of a new taste or texture, and only increase the amount of food as the child becomes familiar with it and is showing pleasure and enjoyment in eating it.
- Once your baby is using a high chair, include them in family mealtimes. You may need to feed them first but you can give them some finger foods on their tray so they're involved in eating with everyone else. Let them hold a spare spoon while you're feeding.
- Place the bottle on the highchair tray/table, or hold it in front of your child and encourage them to reach out to find and grasp it with two hands.
- Finger feeding can be introduced by putting favoured foods such as cream cheese, honey, jam, ice cream etc onto your baby's fingers. At this stage everything is taken to the mouth for exploration so if it tastes good, they'll soon get the message and try other things. Once solids are established, finger foods, which dissolve without much chewing, can be introduced by placing them in the hand – for example, a rusk or cracker.
- Ask your health visitor about introducing new foods and textures.

Dressing and nappy changing

- Continue to **forewarn** that you're about to dress or undress using familiar words and actions and objects for the routine.
- Sit your baby on your knees and use words like 'push' as you put their arm through a sleeve or leg into trousers. Say 'pull' when you pull on a hat. They will feel the movement that your body is making and this will be a model of how they'll have to move when they begin to take a more active role in dressing.
- When changing nappies, give your baby something in their hands to play with, or hang a mobile over the changing surface to discourage rolling.

Washing and bathing

- Continue to **forewarn** when putting in and taking out of bath.
- If your baby is alarmed using the family bath, put their baby bath inside to give them time to get used to it. Put your arm round your baby and hold them while in the bath, until your baby has developed enough balance to sit for a short time in the bath. Continue to put a reassuring arm around them until they're confident in the bath.
- Give them some fun things to play with in the bath, like a toy bucket, a floating ball, a squeeze toy or a sponge toy.
- If using the family bath, ensure that a non-slip mat is in place as unexpected falls into the water can cause alarm and spoil your enjoyment of bath time.

Bedtime

- Your baby may be sleeping for longer periods through the night by now. If they do wake, keep activity to a minimum and after a brief cuddle and night drink, return them to their bed. It's best if the room is kept quiet and dark. Don't play music or give toys, except a very quiet soothing music tape if at all.
- Maintain your bedtime routine before settling your baby at night. When the routine is finished, always put your baby into their cot so that they learn to go to sleep in their own cot. They'll learn to connect the routine and cot with going to sleep and this will help develop the sleeping pattern of night and day.
- Make it very clear when it's morning time – especially if your child can't see light. Use a morning greeting like 'Good morning! Up you get!') and hugs or a morning music toy.



Card 5 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent and others

- If your child seems to try to attract attention to themselves, eg by rolling or **bottom shuffling** towards, you, call out to them and encourage them to approach you and find you in the room. Say 'I'm here. Come and find me') and then attend to them. This helps babies become more confident about getting your attention and also encourages more independent movement towards you.
- As you come into a room, call your child's name and give them time to respond – stopping and listening, turning towards or approaching you, vocalising. Reward them with your attention when they respond.
- Talk about your child to another person in the room and see if they stop still or turn towards the speaker when they hear their name.
- Help your child learn the names of family members and associate them with their voices and body appearance. Encourage family members to say their name as they approach – for example, 'It's Grandpa'.

Showing and understanding feelings

- (If your child has sufficient vision) continue to check at what distance facial expressions can be seen and responded to. Then try to talk and smile from within this distance frequently. Smile broadly (bright lipstick helps the lips to be seen) and laugh, so that your child links the smile to the happy vocal expression and having fun. Encourage them if they try to copy this.
- Notice your child's different feelings in different situations. Talk about your child's feelings. You might say 'Are you sad?' 'You're cross', 'You don't like it'.), using voice tone and **facial expression** to reflect emotion, and to respond to what you think are your child's needs.

Showing attachment to parent and familiar others

- This is the stage when children tend to start becoming wary of strangers and anxious if separated from their parents and familiar carers. This is called [separation anxiety](#) and it's a positive sign that your child is developing a secure relationship to you and with familiar carers. Help your child to feel secure with a number of adults by giving your child the opportunity to be held, cared for and played with by a number of familiar adults.
- If you're going to leave your child, tell them that you're going out and will be back later. Hand them over to a familiar adult before you leave.
- If your child is being left with a familiar grandparent, nanny or childcare worker, make sure that the adult looking after your child knows about your child's visual needs and provides care using routines similar to yours. (Read the advice in Card 4.)
- Give your child a warm greeting and hug on your return.
- This is the stage to ensure that your child has a secure sleep routine and can accept sleeping in their cot.
- See the section in the [Getting Stuck?](#) booklet for further ideas about developing settled sleep behaviour.

Behaviour and self-regulation

- Your child will be starting to try and do simple actions by themselves. Encourage them to try and give physical support and verbal encouragement where needed to ensure that they are successful.
- Stick to consistent everyday routines and activities so that your child continues to learn about your expectations for appropriate behaviour.



Card 5 · Social and emotional development

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction (games and rhymes)

- Play to and fro rocking games on the floor like 'Row row the boat'. Help your child to join in the actions, eg pulling, rocking. Pause during the game, wait and see if your child can repeat the rocking movement or make a vocal sound to show that they want the action/game to be repeated. Then immediately repeat the game.
- Play action games with a tickle, like 'Round and round the garden' or 'This little piggy'. Do the game slowly and say the words clearly, then pause just before you get to the tickle – wait and see if your child starts chuckling or showing excitement in anticipation!
- Introduce 'Peek a boo' games. Put a scarf over or magazine in front of your face, then pull it off and say 'boo!'.
- Show your child the simple actions from a familiar rhyme game or nursery rhyme, eg clapping hands together for 'Pat a cake', stamping feet for 'You're happy and you know it', 'Twinkle twinkle' with fingers in 'Twinkle Twinkle little star'. Clapping hands can be encouraged by taking the child's wrists and patting their hands together or letting the child put their hands over yours as you clap.

These early social rhyme games and action games are very helpful for early communication, understanding and expressing language (see the [Stage 2](#) cards on [Communication, language and meaning](#) that follow).

Joining in social interaction

- Begin to encourage copying or imitation of your actions, eg 'Daddy clap hands', 'Now you clap hands' (with physical support if needed). 'Mummy bang table' '(Child's name) bang table'. Help your child hear and/or see the actions or put their hands over yours to feel you doing the action first, then you can do a [guiding hands](#) approach to support them.

Developing early social skills

- Wave your child's hand (taking the forearm) for 'Bye bye' every time someone is leaving the house and says 'bye bye'. Ask the other person to wave from a distance so they are visible for your baby.



Card 6 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent and others

- Respond to your child's vocalisations or behaviours if they're trying to attract your attention. Tell them where you are ('I'm sitting on the sofa') and let them come and find you. If you're busy in another room, say 'I can hear you, I'm coming'.
- Encourage appropriate ways of attracting attention such as calling for 'Mama' or 'Dada'. Reduce your response to physical attempts to get attention and wait for vocalisation – it might just be a single sound at first, eg 'aah'.
- Let your child lie or sit next to another baby or young child who's playing so that they start to listen to and learn about other children.

Showing and understanding feelings

- Continue to talk about your child's feelings using simple language, eg 'You're sad. Granny's gone out to the shops', 'You're cross – you don't want to stop playing'.
- Your child may not be able to see the facial expressions of others, so explain the feelings other people have – for example, 'Mummy's happy' when you play and laugh together or 'Mummy's cross – you won't keep your shoe on'. Match your intonation to show your mood or the moods of other people.

Showing attachment to parent and familiar others

- Go through the same preparations as on Cards 4 and 5 if you're leaving your child with a familiar grandparent, nanny, friend or childcare worker.
- If your child shows anxiety when left alone in a room, tell them that you can hear them, what you're doing and that you'll be coming back into the room soon. Reassure them verbally until you return.
- Develop games to encourage your child to 'Find mummy and daddy'. Do this when quite close by at first and help them to find you. This encourages them to move and explore and lets them know that you're still available, even though out of physical contact or sight.

Behaviour and self-regulation

- This is the stage when your child may begin to try and do things more independently. Help your child to achieve their goals, like feeding themselves with a spoon or manipulating a toy.
- Use [scaffolding](#) when your child is trying to achieve a particular goal so they don't get too frustrated, eg riding a push-along car round the sitting room. See the [General overview of development](#) booklet for strategies for supporting learning.
- A balance has to be struck between supporting this growth in independence, while ensuring that your child is responsive to parental guidance and limits.
- Make sure that the home is child-safe at this stage of mobility and exploration.

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction (games and rhymes)

- Begin to involve your child in 'Peek a boo'. Put a small cloth on the top of their head or leave a vest on top of their head when undressing. Pull it off and say 'Boo!'.
- Say the initial words of a familiar action song, eg 'Pat a cake', or 'Round and round the garden' or 'Row row the boat', and see if your child will start the actions themselves. For example clapping hands or rocking.
- When you're singing and doing action games together, give an opportunity for your child to try and start one of the games. This might be putting out their hand for 'Round and round the garden' or pulling a cloth over their head for 'Peek a boo'.
- Begin simple [turn-taking](#) games with objects like rolling a ball (with bell inside or a brightly coloured ball, depending on vision) between adult and child. You need two adults at the beginning (one supporting your child on the floor). Let them know when you've received the ball ('Daddy got it!') and when you're sending it back to them ('Here it comes!')
- Play a game of 'give and take' – giving and taking an object to and from your child. If your child doesn't release the toy deliberately, then take it gently and say 'Ta' or 'Thank you' and then immediately give it back and repeat. When asking your child to 'give me' you may first need to help them to learn how to [release](#) (see [Play and learning, Using hands Stage 2](#)).
- Do an action on or with an object – for example, banging a stick on a xylophone and then encourage your child to copy the same action.



Card 5 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

- Observe your child's reaction to different sounds – new or familiar. Direct their attention to different sounds and provide links to language by naming the sound and where it comes from. For example, 'Tick tock' – it's the clock' or 'Brm brm – it's a car'.
- Help your child to understand the noises around them by taking them to the object, naming it and showing them where the noise comes from.
- Play tapes of singing/rhymes and sing along as well.
- Young children love music and rhythmic motion. Move with your child, bounce and sway them on your knee to the rhythm of the music.
- Help your child to listen to you by getting them to attend to a familiar rhyme game (see [Social and emotional development, Stage 2](#)).

Understanding meaning

- Name the parts of your child's body during nappy changing or bathing (see [Towards independent self-care, Stage 2](#)).

Introduce a consistent object with some familiar activities, eg give your child the flannel or bath duck when you say 'bath time' before you go to the bath or give your child the car keys as you say 'Let's go to the car'. This is called an **object of reference**, since the object refers to the activity (this is a helpful step for later learning of the word that refers to the activity).

Recognising what objects are for

- Show your child how everyday objects are used, eg help them to hold and to feel or look at the brush and experience brushing their hair, to hold their toothbrush and brush their teeth (remember to use **forewarning** before putting anything in their mouth), to hold a spoon or cup to feed or drink. Name the object while showing them how it's used. Start by doing this during the everyday routine itself.
- During the routine, help your child to get to know the shape, contour and texture of these everyday objects through touching and/or looking at them.

Understanding words

- Use the same simple words and phrases when talking to your child. Continue to use the same phrases during everyday routines.
- Only use 'No' when your child is really doing something risky, like touching a hot oven. Say it firmly with a cross voice and cross facial expression with your face close. Physically stop your child from doing the prohibited activity and redirect their attention to something else. Make your house 'child-safe' to minimise the 'Nos'.
- Use **symbolic vocalisations** with some objects or events, eg 'Brmm brmm' for car, 'Meow meow' when the cat comes in.



Card 5 · Communication, language and meaning

Communication

Joint attention to toys/objects

- When you're introducing a toy to your child, sit very close to them so that they feel or see you're in contact with them. This helps them feel your involvement in their play. From this position you can guide their hand to the toy using a **guiding hands** approach. Talk about what your child is doing or show them what to do.
- Respond to your child's interests and join them when they seem excited or pleased with a toy and comment on what they're doing and about the toy they're playing with – either join in the activity or talk to and touch your child gently on the arm to let them know you're there and sharing their enjoyment.
- Don't interfere in your child's wish to explore a toy independently, but gently show that you're also interested and involved, eg gently touching their arm and commenting on play.
- Notice how your child shows their interest in toys and tries to draw your attention to their interests. This might be by sitting very close to you, touching you briefly with their hand, holding out the toy, vocalising while playing with the toy. Your child may look at your face from time to time when playing with the toy if you're very close by.
- Play with an interesting toy next to your child and notice how your child shows you that they're interested in what you're doing.
- Do something noisy and interesting a little further away and see if your child tries to approach you to find out what you are doing. Show them what you're doing.

Communicating needs

- Help your child to show you what they want, eg Say 'Dinner?' if they're grizzly and it's near dinner time. Take their hand to their mouth to show them a gesture to indicate food. Give them a spoon to hold and bring the dinner.
- Comment on and extend your child's gestures/vocalisations – for example, as your child pushes something away say 'You don't like that, do you?'.
- Watch your child's gestures during a game, indicating that they wish to do something again, eg when they put their hand out to regain a toy that you're shaking. Respond to the request.

Expressive language

Vocalisation: making first words

- When your child makes a first attempt at sounds or words in a familiar situation, repeat the word said correctly and enthusiastically and encourage its use in the appropriate context. When your child says 'da', say 'Yes, here's dada!', or when your child says 'din', say 'Dinner!' Help your child to touch and/or see what they're referring to.
- Ideas for playing with sounds – play with your mouth on a balloon and let your child have a go, make noises putting a hand on and off mouth, blow down a tube.

Making 'conversation'

- Take turns with vocal sounds and phrases to 'hold' a conversation. Pause after your turn so that your child has time to make their response. Copy your child's sounds or phrases and then extend them or elaborate them – 'Mama – yes, mama's cooking dinner'.



Card 6 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

- At bedtime, tell a little story. Sit your child on your lap or in their cot. You can make up a story about what your child did that day. Use simple language that your child is beginning to recognise, and expressive sounds for certain actions, eg 'Splash splash' in the bath, 'We went in the car – brmm brmm' and also repetition for certain lines that you say each day. For example – 'Today Lili got up and washed her face – wash wash! Then she brushed her teeth – brush brush! After dinner, we went to the park, and Wheeee! Lili went down the slide!'
- While you're sitting together, introduce simple books that have textures that illustrate the story, flaps, or sound buttons, so your child can be actively involved in the story. They may not understand the story at this stage but they will learn to enjoy the shared experience of story-telling, the repetitive lines and expressive sounds. It's a good introduction to the pleasure of books.
- When you're telling a story, make your voice very expressive and playful.
- If your child is busy playing with and exploring a toy or object, keep language brief and only relevant to what they're doing. Talking to your child when they're busy will often be ignored at this stage. Wait until you have their full attention before you try and talk to them.
- Changing task and shifting attention – when your child is busy playing with a toy and you want to shift their attention to something new (another object or activity), attract their attention to the new toy or object (through sound or touch or vision) before removing the toy they've been playing with. They'll lose interest in what they were playing with. This is called **fading** (and it's helpful in avoiding distress).

Understanding meaning

- Your child will first start to respond to simple instructions in context (that is, when there are other clues about what you're saying). This is called **situational understanding**. For example, 'Wave bye bye' when Gran's leaving, 'Sit down' when they're standing, 'Up you get' when you hold their hands ready to help them up, 'Give Mummy a kiss' with your face close. Give instructions clearly, in simple language and show your child how to respond.
- Talk about what your child's doing or what they're interested in. They'll find it harder to attend to unrelated comments. Make sure your child knows what you're talking about by helping them to feel it, or by pointing or showing if it's visible to them, and say the name of the object clearly and simply.
- Name your child's most familiar or favourite objects when they're given them, eg their bottle or favourite toy. Some families use shortened names for favourite objects, like 'bot bot' for bottle. This is often in response to the child's first attempts at the word.



Card 6 · Communication, language and meaning

Communication

Joint attention to toys/objects

- Watch and think about your child's behaviour and follow their lead and focus of attention. Sit close to them so they feel that you're involved in their play. Continue to use a gentle touch on their shoulder, elbow or forearm (whichever is most comfortable to your child) to show that you're attending while you also talk about the play.

Communicating needs

- Help your child to show you what they want. They may be ready to learn to shake their head for 'No'. Show them how to shake their head – gently move the head sideways by moving the chin, and say 'No, you don't want it, do you?' Avoid holding the upper part of the head because young children don't like having this part of their body constrained.
- Respond to your child's hand gesture if they seem to be reaching out for something, as if it's a request.
- As your child learns to understand that holding onto a particular object links to a familiar routine or activity, you can help them to indicate what they want or need by holding out the object. You can say 'You've got your cup. Do you want a drink?'

Expresses preferences

- Help your child to choose between two foods or two toys to play with. Name what you're offering them and ask your child to choose one. (If your child is at level V1 or V2, give them the chance to feel the objects, as you say the name).

Expressive language

First words

- During a familiar social game pause and wait for your child to ask for 'more' – if they make a sound, even if just 'mm' or 'aga' say 'More?' or 'Again?' and repeat the game.
- Continue with social rhyme games and nursery rhymes (see [Social and emotional development, Stage 2](#)) and encourage your child to join in the singing or vocalisations.
- Encourage [symbolic vocalisations](#) – for example, 'aahh' when cuddling a stuffed toy, animal noises (eg woof, meow, cheep cheep) and vehicle noises (eg brmm). You can say them when you hear the real noise or bring them into a story.
- Respond to your child's sounds that are almost words – for example, 'dogon' say 'Yes the dog's gone home'.
- When your child uses a word or sound, expand it by repeating the word in your response, pronounced in the correct way. For example, if your child says 'bibi' – reply 'Biscuit – you want a biscuit ? Here's your biscuit' ([recasting](#)).
- Use the ideas on [joint attention](#) on other cards to help link first words to meaning – these are the first attempts at talking about what they're doing.

Making conversation

- Sit face to face with your child when you're playing and talking.
- Encourage your child to turn their face towards you when you're talking.



Card 5 · Play and learning

Making connections

Learning about sound

- Offer a sound-making toy within arm's reach to the left or right side at ear level and help your child reach it. For children with vision, shake the toy slightly behind where they can't see it and give them time to find it visually. Remember to guide your child's hand to the toy if they don't reach in the right direction. Once they've found it, let them hold it and play with it.

Learning about objects

Object permanence – understanding that objects are still there when not touched, heard or seen.

- Begin to help your child to find a toy they're playing with when the toy slips out of their hand on a surface. Use a **guiding hands** approach and/or encourage looking.
- Continue to guide your child's hand to find an object or toy when it rolls out of their grasp. Encourage them to slide their hand along the floor or table top until they feel or find the object again. If within range of vision, encourage your child to look around on the floor or table until they find the object.
- Partly cover a toy with a cloth and help your child to pull off the cloth to find the toy underneath.
- Keep belongings and toys in a consistent place in your child's room or in their play area so they learn where to find them.

Cause and effect – understanding the effects of actions

- Play with cause and effect toys – ie toys that need a deliberate press to have an effect like movement, sound or light. For example, a toy that lights up or makes sounds if a large button is pressed.
- Show your child how to knock two toys or objects together to make a banging sound, eg two bricks.

Understanding how objects relate to each other

- Have a box or tin (eg biscuit tin) with noise-making objects like rattles in a metal container. Shake the tin to motivate your child to explore inside and remove the objects.
- Try a box of objects of different textures and shapes – this could be a toy box with a number of favourite toys or a 'bucket' of bath toys and help your child to reach inside and pull something out to play with.



Card 5 · Play and learning

Using hands

Learning through touch: responding to different textures

- Continue to give your child opportunity and encouragement to feel the shape, contour and textures of everyday objects and materials during their everyday routines. This will help them build up recognition of the objects and materials in their everyday life, which is important for language and concept learning. It also helps them begin to discriminate between different textures and different tactile sensations.
- When introducing an everyday object or material for feeling and exploring, remember to give **forewarning** (telling your child what it is and introducing it at appropriate visual distance or on the back of the hand). Tell them what it is and what you're going to do with it – 'Here's your brush' (let her/him feel it) and 'Now let's brush your hair'.
- Introduce toys with a wider range of textures to feel as a natural part of playtime.

Exploring

- Offer a range of simple toys with dials, knobs and switches to develop your child's different hand movements. Continue to use a **shared discovery** approach – this can start with you demonstrating the action, taking your child's hand on your hand while you do the action again, and then putting your hand gently over your child's hands if they need further help to do the action.

Co-ordinating hands and fingers

- Offer a second object when your child is already holding one to encourage them to pass it to the other hand or to hold an object in each hand.
- Using an index (second) finger – introduce toys or activities with a push button such as a door bell, sound toy or simple key board to encourage use of one finger at a time and pushing or poking with the index finger.
- **Pincer grasp** (finger thumb apposition)

Give small pieces of finger food such as small cubes of cheese, fruit or bread (if your child has sufficient vision, ensure objects are on a well-contrasting background) and guide their finger and thumb to grasp it. Slide the hand and index (second) finger along the table top until the tip of the index finger touches the small cube of food.

Release of object

- When your child starts to practise **releasing** objects by throwing (**casting**) them, take your child to where the object has fallen or attract their visual attention to it so they learn where it has dropped. This is useful for learning about **object permanence** too (see **Play and learning, Stage 2**). Help your child to pick up the object again if they want it.
- Let your child play in an enclosed play space, so that the object can be easily found again, eg in play pen, a large box or carry cot.
- Offer your child another toy to hold, when holding something to encourage them to put the first object down.



Card 6 · Play and learning

Making connections

Learning about sound (see also [Communication, language and meaning](#))

- Continue to help your child find the location of toys making sounds. Offer a sound-making toy within arm's reach to the left or right side above or below ear level and help them to reach for it using a [guiding hands](#) approach. For children with vision, shake the toy slightly behind them so that it's out of sight and give them time to find it visually. Remember to take the child's hand to the noise-making object. Once they've found it, let them hold it and play with it.
- Call your child to find you in different positions in the room – start at about one metre away and then increase to about two metres from the child. When they reach you, reward them with a cuddle. This is also a good game for increasing mobility (see [Movement and mobility](#)).

Object permanence

- Help your child to find a toy when it's partly covered or hidden in a box with a hinged lid (show them you're hiding it and then help them to find it again).
- Help your child to find a toy when they've dropped it and it has rolled a little way off on a surface and they have to stretch out to find it. Help them to slide their hand across the surface to find the toy and/or to look for it.

Cause and effect

- Help your child explore a toy that makes a sound when a smaller button is pressed with a finger.
- Show your child how other cause and effect toys work. For example – pull rod to make music, turn a roller to turn on a (visual) light or make music, press a switch, press notes of keyboard. Continue to use a [shared discovery](#) approach – this can start with you demonstrating the action, taking their hand on your hand while you do the action again, and then putting your hand gently over their hand if they need further help to do the action.

Understanding how objects relate to each other

- Help your child to take an object out of a smaller container with just one toy inside, eg a small rattle from a small toy saucepan or small pieces of food from a small deep bowl.
- With your toy box of favourite toys, help your child to take some toys out of them and show him/her how they go back in.
- Show your child how to use one object on another object – eg bang a beater on a drum or xylophone.
- Help your child to use something to reach an object – for example, a pull string or rod to get a clackety toy. Make sure it's a toy that your child wants to have and show them how to get it first by pulling the string or rod until the toy comes to them. Then let them play with it.
- Your child will enjoy toys with two parts that they can explore and pull apart, eg simple one or two piece inset puzzle with knobs, pulling connected pieces apart, eg duplo, pulling lid with knob off container, a cloth bag or handbag with a few toys or objects inside.



Card 6 · Play and learning

Using hands

Learning through touch: responding to different textures

- Encourage your child to enjoy finger feeding with a variety of different foods and textures. This can include toast or crackers with different toppings, pieces of soft fruit, biscuits.
- Before your child is spoon fed a more sticky or sloppy food, let them feel it with their fingers and take their fingers to their mouth to taste. This tells them a bit more about what they're about to eat and also helps them feel more comfortable about touching sloppy or sticky consistencies. Talk about the food too – 'Mmm potato!' so that they know what they're touching and tasting.

Exploring

- Help your child to play with toys/objects with more complex buttons, knobs and switches to encourage pushing, pulling, turning and pressing. Continue with a [shared discovery](#) approach (see [Stage 2 Play and learning, Cause and effect](#)).
- Help your child play and explore a box with an attached lid which produces music on opening or in which a toy or treat has been hidden.
- Choose flexible cloth or plastic books with textures and flaps to feel and encourage your child to turn pages after each page is explored.

Co-ordinating hands and fingers

- Encourage your child to grasp a string or cord to pull a toy towards them.
- Using two hands – offer toys which have two parts to separate – a small container with a lid or a toy which pulls apart, a music box to open the lid.
- Offer your child a two-handled cup to drink from (see also [Towards independent self-care](#)).

Release of object

- If your child is deliberately throwing objects away, try to catch them and quickly give them back. This can then develop into a 'give and take' game.
- Hold out your hand, so that your child can feel or see your outstretched palm. Say 'Give it to me'. Gently take the toy from your child saying 'Ta' or 'Thank you' and then quickly offer it back. This can then become a 'give and take' game. Taking turns with shaking a rattle or squeaker may help your child's motivation to give the object up.
- Rolling a ball back and forth with your child will also help them learn that releasing and taking turns can be fun (the ball will need a bell inside or a flashing light). (See also [Social and emotional development](#).)
- Use toys/games where [releasing](#) gives an auditory or visual reward – for example, dropping a noisy toy into a shiny tin, ball dropping down a slope to ring a bell, a 'woodpecker' sliding down the tree tapping the trunk as it goes, a toy car that goes whizz as it slides down the slope. This can become a 'Where's it gone?' game.



Card 5 · Movement and mobility

Body awareness/position in space

- Begin to use action words to relate to body parts and actions. Say 'Bend your legs', 'Push your arms'. Say these words as you help your child use a particular part of the body – for example, when they're trying to crawl. With regular repetition, your child will begin to understand.
- Lay your child on their stomach with a large squeaky inflatable toy under their chest. Play a rocking game so the toy makes a noise and allows your child to touch the floor in front with their hands and behind with their feet. Encourage pushing with their hands or feet when they come in contact with floor. A large beach ball can also be used.
- Continue the rocking games on your knee and tilting activity (see also [Stage 1b Card 3 Movement and mobility](#)). Wait to see if they can tilt themselves upright (positioned close to see room verticals, if they have sufficient vision). If not, show them how to regain upright position ('Up you come') until they can do it.

Saving reaction – floor as a solid base

- Continue with 'parachuting' – see [Stage 1b Card 4 Movement and mobility](#).
- See too the games for sitting and saving on the other side of this card.

Exploring the environment/orientation

- Let your child lie or sit near furniture which they can explore – for example, the legs of a chair and table, cupboard and doors, soft furnishing of a sofa, curtain folds reaching the floor.
- Once your child has started to move you can ‘show’ them around the rooms they spend time in. They need to gradually learn what’s there and where it is. When you put them down to play, place them in the same position each time (eg with his/her back to the sofa) so that they can start to build up a mental map of the room and plan their movements. This needs to be done in all the rooms in your home, gradually over time.

Extending movement/co-ordination

Sitting and saving

- Encourage your child to reach out (for a sound-making toy or biscuit) with one hand while sitting propped.
- Place a toy on the floor, attract your child’s attention to it. Once they have reached it and played with it, put another toy in a different position and repeat. This will encourage them to reach out in different directions while sitting.
- Once your child is sitting securely with minimum adult support, continue to gently tilt them to one side from the waist and see if they put out their hand to the floor to ‘save’ themselves from tipping over. Continue to take their hand to the floor until the saving reaction is secure.

Mobility – rolling, bottom shuffling, creeping (commando crawling) or any means

- Spend some time motivating your child to move about the room. This can be done by placing an interesting sound-making or other toy beyond arm’s reach and encouraging your child to move towards it. A bright toy can also be used to motivate moving. You can also call your child from a short distance away (see also [Play and learning Stage 2](#), for [sound localisation](#) activity). When they reach you, give them a big cuddle.



Card 5 · Movement and mobility

Crawling

- To move from sitting to tummy your child needs to learn to rotate their upper **trunk**. To encourage this, place toys to either side at arm's length, and encourage reaching towards them using sound or light-up toys to get their interest. You could also play 'Boo' from behind, encouraging them to turn to left and right in response to you moving from side to side. In time and with practice, your child will extend this to a single move from a sitting to crawling position.
- While sitting on your lap, or when you're lying down, encourage your child to move around, twisting and turning and developing different movements with the confidence of your support.
- Lay your child in a crawling position so that their arms are straight, and legs bent in crawling position. Hold them round the middle and encourage rocking. Gently rock from side to side and front to back to give the experience of movement and to develop balance.
- Once your child can support their weight on arms and knees in a crawling position, encourage them to reach out with one hand and then the other (keeping one hand and both knees in contact with the floor). It often takes several weeks from weight bearing to mobility – and some children skip the crawling stage completely!
- Try placing your child's legs up into a crawling position and put your hands against the bottom of their feet. Your child's reaction will be to push against your hands and this will result in movement.

Strengthening the legs

- Hold your child upright with a little weight on the legs and gently bounce them on your knee. You will know when they're ready for this when they start to push down on your legs.
- Continue to give your child the experience of standing, while you support them. Gradually allow them to take more weight onto their legs. At this stage children often enjoy bouncing while you hold them by the hands.
- Give practice standing, as children with limited vision can take longer to establish balance without visual feedback. Once your child can take weight on their legs without their knees bending, stand them briefly, facing you, between your legs while you're sitting in a chair. Extend to using the cot/safety-gate/playpen rails for support or holding both hands.

The use of baby walkers is not recommended as this can delay the development of co-ordination of movement for walking and may also be dangerous as the baby is mobile without control. Bouncy harnesses should only be used for short periods, as babies do not develop appropriate muscle control.



Card 6 · Movement and mobility

Body awareness/position in space

- The 'toddler' sections of 'soft-play' environments can provide lots of opportunities for safe rough and tumble play and make movement fun. Find a quiet time of the day to visit and give your child time and plenty of support to get used to this new environment.
- Water in a swimming pool supports body weight and children can often propel themselves in water (wearing a suitable buoyancy aid) before learning to move on dry land. Water-play sessions in swimming pools are available once children have had the required immunisations. Go to a children's pool at a quiet time of the day so that the pool is not too noisy.
- When your child is sitting on the floor, encourage them to lean round or lean over to reach a motivating toy that is held out to them to increase **trunk** control and balance.

Exploring the environment/orientation

- As your child begins to stand supported, help them to find places in the room where they can hold onto furniture – such as the sofa, the armchair, the playpen. Move them around the room so they get to know more about the layout of the furniture, as it will seem different from a standing position.
- Push and ride toys suitable for one-year-olds can be introduced for short periods of play. Sit-in varieties provide some support while balance is still developing, but they don't train **trunk** or hip stability and so should not be used for long periods.

All young children fall over and hurt themselves. Give support by reacting calmly and giving reassurance. It's natural that you'll feel anxious – try not to convey this to your child.

Extending movement/co-ordination

Standing

- Give practice at independent standing by holding your child around the waist from behind and gradually reducing the amount of support given. Let your child know you're still there by encouraging them verbally and with a gentle touch.

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- While your child is seated, gently pull them up to a standing position holding at the elbow. Say 'Pull. Up you come'. As time goes by, hold further down the arm until they can be gently pulled to standing by holding hands. Once standing, gradually release the support from one hand, as balance improves.
 - Encourage your child to take over pulling on your hands to rise to a standing position – for example, say 'Ali – pull'.
 - Children who are reluctant to stand can sit on your knee while you're kneeling on the floor so they're in a semi-standing position. Place a toy or snack on a low table in front to motivate movement and with your hands on their hips shift your child's weight forward over their feet to move them towards a standing position.
 - Demonstrate how to safely return to a sitting position, by bending knees to kneel, or lower backwards while holding some form of support to avoid unexpected tumbles.
 - Give experiences of playing with toys on a low table to develop leg muscles for standing, or scattered along a sofa so your child has to reach out to get them once they're standing.
 - Sit your child on a low chair next to a firm low table and put something interesting on the floor (eg a noisy toy or a brightly coloured toy) and encourage them to get down from the chair to the floor (holding onto the table while doing this) to find the toy.

Cruising

- Encourage **cruising** (side-steps) around furniture by offering a favourite toy or food from a step or two away (eg on the sofa or table). With your hands on their hips shift your child's weight off the leg nearest the toy or food allowing them time to take a step. Get another family member to call the child and encourage them to **cruise** along the sofa to reach them for a cuddle and song.
- To help strengthen the **trunk** and hip muscles, stand your child on your knees while seated. Hold both hands and gently move your legs up and down alternating the side so that they have to shift weight from side to side. If more support is needed, hold their hips.
- Make sure that the home is child-safe for this stage of mobility and exploration.



Card 5 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- Have your child in the kitchen with you while you're preparing food so that they begin to associate smells and sounds and sights with the food you give them. Let them play with safe kitchen equipment like pans and spoons.
- **Forewarning** before offering food is still important. Continue to use sound clues (eg tapping the bowl) and/or visual clues as well as language – 'Yum, carrot and potato – here it comes, open wide'. Let your child play with bowls and spoons in preparation for skills to be learnt later.
- When bottle-feeding, allow your child to hold the bottle themselves. You may need to check the angle at which it's held to reduce taking in too much air, but encourage as much independence as possible.
- When introducing a cup or spouted beaker allow your child to play with it (empty) at meal times for some days before using it. Let your child experience you drinking from it (ie let them feel or see you doing it). Initially, use very small quantities of a drink your child likes and sit them on your knee during the meal. Don't do this right at the beginning, because they'll get very frustrated if they're hungry and thirsty, but introduce it after a little time while they're still a bit thirsty.

Remember to **forewarn** if your child is at level V1 or V2 – tell your child about the drink and let the spout or rim of the beaker first touch below the lip on the chin and then raise gently to the lip. Let a few drops fall on the child's lips until they start trying to put their upper lip over the rim. Try this during each meal and show your child how to tilt the cup to deliver the liquid by placing their hands on yours.

- Introduce new foods and textures as advised by your health visitor. This is an important time to introduce different textures and increasingly lumpy foods.
- When introducing texture to food, start with foods you know your child already likes. Leave some soft lumps in the food when you mash/puree it or add a few crumbs of a food that will absorb the familiar flavour such as soft grains of rice.
- Encourage your child to feel or see your cheeks and jaws while you chew (and make chewing noises – 'Mmm mmm') to demonstrate what you want them to do, and then make the same sounds and movements and briefly touch their jaw to encourage chewing.
- When teething, biting is a natural reaction, so slightly harder finger foods can be introduced.

Dressing and nappy changing

- Continue to [forewarn](#) that you're about to dress, undress or change using consistent words, actions, objects and routines.
- Children can usually undress themselves long before they can put clothes on. Encourage your child to take part in undressing by partially removing items such as socks, so they're just dangling off the toes and supporting them to give the final tug. (This is sometimes known as [backward chaining](#). See [General overview of development](#) booklet: Strategies for supporting learning, to find out more) Give lots of praise and extend this to other simple items such as hats.
- Encourage some participation in dressing and changing nappies by asking your child to 'lift your legs' then lifting their legs to indicate what you want them to do. After a while they'll start to react to your instructions.

Washing and bathing

- Name the parts of your child's body during nappy changing or bathing, kiss their hands or feet and name them, or take your child's hand to them so they can feel the different parts of their body.
- Bathing with another member of the family, such as a brother or sister, can be fun and encourage confidence in the water. Allow your child to splash others and accept being gently splashed in return.
- This is also an opportunity for your child to start learning that other people's bodies have the same features as their own – for example, toes.
- As with dressing, encourage some active participation in bathing. Ask your child to lift their leg for washing, pause and then lift the leg to show what you're asking. Keep repeating this and they'll begin to understand.
- Encourage co-operation in washing hands and face at various points in the day, eg washing hands before meals, and their face afterwards. Give your child a cloth to hold and encourage them to use it to 'Wash your face'.

Bedtime

- As your child becomes more able to move around the cot, provide a number of different, quiet objects and activities which may interest them when they wake up after a nap. This encourages some independent exploration and play. This introduces toys and objects with interesting textures and cause-effect parts, in an environment where they feel very secure. It's a good idea to remove these toys at night.
- If your child wakes at night, give only minimal care and interaction so you don't encourage them to stay awake.



Card 6 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- When drinking from a cup with a spout, encourage your child to hold it by both handles and reduce the amount of support you provide. They may still need your help to regulate the flow, but can only learn this through regular practice.
- Once your child is able to use a spouted cup independently, encourage them to use it sitting in the highchair or at a low table. Put the cup on the tray and show them where it is, rather than placing it in their hands. When they've finished drinking, say 'Put it down - on the tray/ table', and gently guide their arms down towards the surface. Encourage this by saying 'Good boy/girl' or 'Well done'.
- Gradually introducing smaller pieces of finger foods also helps develop finger skills (and vision). Guide both hands to the sides of a bowl or tray and encourage exploration of the contents. You may wish to use a bowl that can be firmly stuck to the tray of the high chair. Think about the colour and contrast of spoon, bowl, contents and tray surface.

Once your baby is using a high chair, include them in family mealtimes. You may need to feed them first, but you can give some finger foods on their tray so they're involved in eating with everyone else. Let them hold a spare spoon while you're feeding.

- Start with helping your child put their hand on yours as you take the spoon up to their mouth. They'll open their mouth as they anticipate the spoon getting closer. Say 'Open your mouth' as it gets close.
- Once they're doing this happily, sit behind your child and encourage them to hold the right end of a spoon and dip it into a bowl of sticky food. Guide the spoon up to their mouth and then let them take the final step and try and put it into their mouth. This is **backward chaining**. See the [General overview of development](#) booklet: [Strategies for supporting learning](#) to find out more. Give gentle guidance if your child has difficulty getting it into their mouth. Foods like baby rice or mashed potato work well, as some will stick to the spoon even if it's the wrong way up.
- Allow your child to explore food with their fingers if they want to and name/describe the foods.
- Name the different meals - breakfast, lunch, tea - just before you start having them at different times of the day
- Ask your health visitor about introducing new foods and textures.

Dressing

- Extend participation in dressing by putting your arm down the sleeve and gently drawing your child's arm down towards you, to indicate what you want them to do. Say 'Push your arm in'. Repeat this, but pause to give your child time to react.
- Name body parts ('Here's your leg') and extend this to actions by saying 'Bend your leg' as you gently bend a leg to go it into trousers, or 'Push your arm' as you put an arm into a sleeve.
- Turn dressing activities into a game, by calling 'boo' up the sleeve to encourage the child to place their arms in clothing. Say 'Where's the wiggly worm?' as a foot is pushed down into trousers.
- Use the [backward chaining](#) technique to continue work on skills to take clothes off. This means that you do all but the last step to begin with, and expect your child to complete the task. Gradually increase the number of steps they have to do, eg 1) pull sock off toes, 2) pull sock off length of foot to heel, 3) pull sock from over heel. Expect your child to do a little more each time. Start with activities that can be done when sitting on a stable base, such as the floor.

Nappy changing

- When changing nappies, tell your child if they've passed urine or had a bowel motion so that by the time you're toilet training they'll know what you're asking him to do. Use simple words which you and family members or carers are all comfortable with – for example, wee and poo.

Bathing

- Bath time can be used to develop a range of hand skills, so be inventive and give your child a variety of safe cups, bowls, bottles, watering cans etc to play with. There are lots of commercially produced toys for bath play that involve pouring, floating etc. Give your child one or two at each bath time, so that they can work out what they're doing.
- Coloured bubble bath can also be used for children with sufficient vision.

Bedtime

- As your child begins to get more active and mobile and starts to cut out morning naps, there are more opportunities to physically tire them out, so that a longer period of unbroken sleep is required at night. Longer walks and fresh air are particularly helpful.
- Maintain consistent bedtime routines involving bath, night clothes, drink, cuddles and songs and then put children into their own cot for sleep.



Card 7 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent and others

- Give plenty of attention to positive appropriate behaviours.

Showing and understanding feelings (Social emotional expression)

- Your child may start to resist your direction and appear defiant. This is part of the natural growth of independence at this stage. (See [Behaviour and self-regulation](#), overleaf for ideas on how to handle this.)
- Notice what gives your child particular delight and pleasure and use this action or thing to motivate and act as [reinforcement](#) for something else that needs to be done first. For example, 'Get dressed, then you can play on your swing'. Make sure that the [reinforcement](#) follows immediately after the activity that needs to be done.
- Clap, praise and show your pleasure when your child does something pleasing.

Showing attachment to parent and familiar others

- Encourage short (eg half-hour) periods of independent play within a 'safe' play area a number of times a day, eg in a play pen with familiar and stimulating toys. Inform your child where you are, what you are doing, and then leave them to play independently.
- If your child is now mobile, let them follow you around or if left briefly in a room, tell them where you are, what you are doing, and reassure them verbally until you return.
- In a strange place or with strangers, keep reassuring your child that you're near by so that they can play securely. They may want to be in physical proximity so they can reach out and feel or see you regularly. As they get more confident, they'll probably start moving a bit further away or start approaching the strangers.
- Continue to give your child positive experiences of separation at home or in another home with familiar carers. Keep the care-taking routines consistent and make sure that your child has their favourite toys with them and that the carer knows about your child's vision needs.

Behaviour and self-regulation

- This is the stage when children want to do things independently and can get very frustrated and angry if thwarted. It's an important stage in developing independence, drive and motivation. But it can also make your child very **self-directing** and difficult to guide and show new things and behaviours.
- Decide on what are the essential boundaries and limits – eg dinner routine, dressing and bedtime routine, going out behaviours, and ensure that your child has to fit in with these routines and expectations even if they protest.
- Try and keep conflict down to the minimum. Give positive instructions of what needs to be done and give encouragement and praise, rather than saying 'No' and trying to stop behaviours.
- If you have to say 'No', say it firmly and then move on to distracting your child with a new activity.

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction (games and rhymes)

- Play 'Peek a boo', by putting a cloth over your child's head and helping them to remove it in a joint game.
- Continue with simple **turn-taking** games, eg rolling a ball (with a bell inside or brightly coloured) between adult and child. You can now extend this to a three-way turn, eg pushing the ball to a sister, then to you and then back to your child. Choose the distance according to your child's visual level.
- In your action games and songs with your child watch for them to start the game by doing the actions and waiting to give them the chance to ask for the game again at the end of the game. They may also participate more actively doing some of the actions when they hear the appropriate phrases.

Developing early social skill

- Encourage family members and visitors to always greet your child in the same way. Show your child how to wave 'Bye'.
- When you ask your child to give you something say 'Ta' or 'Thank you' to model this for them and encourage your child to say 'Ta' or 'Thank you' when they take something from you.
- Gently turn your child's face towards you when you're talking to them.



Card 8 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent and others

- Your child may enjoy being the centre of attention and do actions or say things that get attention and laughter from adults. Try not to encourage 'inappropriate' behaviours or rote learning 'party pieces' (eg counting 1, 2, 3, or singing same nursery rhyme) too much, as they may become a habit.
- If your child hits or pushes another child or adult, say firmly 'No, that hurts (name)' and move them on to a different activity. It's advisable not to prohibit or make too much of this, or your child might start doing this to get attention.

Showing and understanding feelings (Social emotional expression)

- Make clear which toys 'belong' to your child and respect their feeling of possession. Don't expect them to be able to share them at this stage, unless they wish to. Help other children, including brothers and sisters, to understand this.

Showing attachment to parent and familiar others

- Think of new games to encourage your child to 'find Mum and Dad'. This encourages them to move and explore and lets them know that you're still available even though out of physical contact or sight.

Behaviour and self-regulation

- If your child has a temper tantrum, hold them calmly or keep them in a safe place (eg in a cot) while you stay close by and calmly reassure them until they recover. Don't give any extra input except calming behaviour. If tantrums are very intense and frequent and it's difficult to calm your child, see the [Getting Stuck?](#) booklet for further ideas.

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction (games and rhymes)

- Join in with the games your child initiates.
- Games that involve anticipation and waiting to begin, eg 'ready, steady, go' are fun and further develop understanding of playing together.
- Show your child how to do the same thing as you do in a game that you regularly play together – this will first be in regular action rhymes or simply making a tune on the xylophone with the beater ('Mum do it first – like this. Now (child) do it, like this'.)

Developing early social skills

- Say clearly and consistently 'Hello/Hi' when you come in from outside or 'Bye' when you're going. Encourage other social greeting or departure phrases like 'Good morning', 'Good night'.



Card 7 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

- Playing 'ready, steady, go' games and anticipation games is fun and will help your child develop their listening and waiting skills.
- During rhyme or simple song games, leave gaps, eg at the end of each line, giving your child a chance to fill in the missing word.
- Continue telling your child a simple story each night before bedtime. Make it personal, by telling a story about what your child did that day – 'In the morning, you went to the shops with daddy. You bought some bananas'. You can add a few objects in the story too – 'We went to a shop to buy some shoes' (and then let them hold the new shoes).
- Start to read simple story books with rhyme and repetition to your child. Children start to have their favourites and want to hear the same one over and over. Use books that have texture or flaps and bright colours and shiny bits so your child can be actively involved in the story. If they show visual interest, talk about the features that attract them.
- When reading a story, add in sounds like the splash of water, or the sound of animals or vehicles like a plane, into the story.
- Continue to wait until you have your child's full attention before you try and talk to them, especially if they're busy doing or playing with something.
- Continue to use **fading** (that is, shifting attention to a new toy or activity before removing an existing toy/activity that is being done).

Understanding meaning

Recognising what objects are for

- Show your child how to use everyday objects on family members, eg 'Brush mummy's hair', 'Give Gran a drink'.
- Show them how to use everyday objects combined together, eg mix a spoon around in a cup or pretend to pour juice from a jug into a cup. Do this during the real life activity and also during pretend play (see [Stage 3 Play and learning](#)).

Understanding words

- Continue to name and show your child parts of their body and encourage them to find them on you, eg 'Where's Mum's nose?'
- Name familiar objects that your child uses often, eg favourite toy, bib, cup, brush, shoe, hat, cup. Name it when they start to use it or play with it or look at it.
- Name familiar people in your child's life when they are approaching and joining them.
- Ask 'Where's Mummy?', 'Where's (brother's name)?' and see if they can find them in the room. This is a good game for encouraging mobility round the room, too.
- Ask your child to 'Give me (or Give Robert) ...the spoon'. First hold out an open hand gesture (palm up) close to your child so that they can feel it under their hand or see it close by. Help them to release the object and then say 'Ta' or 'Thank you'. Do this regularly, until your child learns to 'give' when prompted verbally. Wait for the right moment or they may not want to give you the object!
- Talk to your child about what they're doing, what they're interested in or what you're doing to them in simple, clear language – for example, 'Brush your hair', 'Where's your foot?' Push your arm in', 'Go in the car'. The language you use about what your child is experiencing will be the most relevant.
- Keep your sentences short, with emphasis on the key words eg, 'Ready, *sit down*', 'There's the *cat*', 'Tick tock, that's the *clock*'.
- Sit close by (in front or towards the side) when you're talking to your child.



Card 7 · Communication, language and meaning

Communication

Joint attention to toys/objects/events

- Watch and think about your child's behaviour and follow their lead and focus of attention in play (they may reach or touch or be listening intently to a particular sound. Children with sufficient vision may look or point).
- Notice the different ways your child shows what they're interested in and how they try to draw your attention to what they're playing with, eg making vocal sounds or lifting up the toy. Talk about what your child is showing interest in. Say 'That goes bang, bang.'
- Encourage your child to show you the toy they're playing with – 'Oh, what have you got – can mummy hold it?' Guide your child's hand so that they hold up the toy to you. Talk about it, manipulate it, look at it briefly and then pass it back. Only do this when your child is not too engrossed, otherwise they'll get frustrated by your interruption.
- If your child's vision is at the V3, V4 level, model pointing at objects that you want to show to them. Sit close to your child and make sure that the object is within your child's vision. Make a clear movement as you point and point clearly at the object and talk about the object – 'Look! There's the cup.' (Tap your finger on it too if you need to get your child's attention.) Painted fingernails help win visual attention!
- Continue with the ideas for [shared discovery](#) (Card 6) when introducing your child to a new toy or joining them when they're doing something interesting. These show your child that you're interested in and attending to the same thing.

Communicating needs

- Watch and see how your child is developing different gestures or actions to let you know what they want. You can help this, by saying what you think your child means, eg when your child does a gesture related to a favourite nursery song say 'Oh, you want to sing 'Twinkle, twinkle little star?''

Showing preferences

- When you offer your child a choice say 'Yes, you want this one'. Or, if they don't want something, say, 'No you don't want it'. Show your child how to nod or shake their head to say 'Yes' or 'No'. See also [Communication, language and meaning, Stage 2, Card 6](#). Nod and shake your head close to your child so they can see your movements (V3).

Expressive language

Vocalisation: linking words to meaning

- Keep your sentences short, with emphasis on the key words.
- Continue to use the familiar and repeated phrases consistently with particular activities, routines, objects and events.
- Sit close to your child while they play, or bring your face very close so that they can see you. Use the ideas for [Joint attention](#) on [Card 5](#) and talk about what your child is doing and about what they're experiencing – 'The bell jingles' as they shake some bells, 'The car goes 'brm'', as you watch them push a car along. This keeps language linked to direct experience and is more meaningful for young children.

First words

- If your child makes any attempt to say a word in the appropriate situation, eg 'ba' (ball), immediately show pleasure and say 'Ball – it's a ball'. If it's an action word or request – 'Up', then immediately repeat the word and do the actions or request.
- At this stage, your child may begin to imitate what you say. This may be a single word or a short phrase. Show your delight and repeat what they've said clearly for them. Then link this word or phrase to talking about and showing them what's going on in the 'here and now'.



Card 8 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

- Continue to tell your child a story at bedtime each day, making up a short story about what your child really did that day (Stage 2, Card 6). Continue to use repetition of certain lines. You can add in sounds like the sounds of animals, wind or water splashing and vehicles. This kind of story will be the most meaningful at this stage.
- Read simple stories including books with rhyme, expressive sounds and repetition to your child. It's helpful to find ones that use words and concepts that are already in or developing in their own vocabulary and understanding. Keep using an expressive and playful voice.
- When sharing simple repetitive stories, give your child plenty of time to join in. These can be toddler stories which have expressive sounds, eg 'Spot the dog went woof woof...' Take turns in rhyme games and stories – pause and give your child a chance to take a vocal or action turn.
- Offer your child choices about which book they want to read. Put a different texture label on the front of each one to help them choose.

Understanding meaning

Recognising what objects are for (pretend play)

- Help your child to develop their pretend play with everyday objects, eg stirring a spoon in a cup and giving you a cup of tea.
- Introduce a first doll that is real baby size and has clear body and facial features. Show your child the different body parts and hair – ‘baby’s hair’, ‘baby’s nose’ and let them feel and/or look at the different body parts. Demonstrate giving the doll a cuddle, ‘Ahh!’ and a kiss. Encourage your child to join in with playing with the doll, eg ‘Brush baby’s hair’ or ‘Give baby a cuddle’. If your child shows no interest, leave it a while and then try again later.
- Give your child opportunities to experience every day activities, eg sweeping the floor and washing the dishes.

Understanding words

- Talk to your child about what they’re doing or what you’re doing to them in simple, clear language. Remember the words you use about what your child is experiencing will be the most meaningful.
- Give simple instructions like ‘Put it in the *bin*’, ‘Find your *shoes*’, ‘Give it to me’.
- Ask simple questions about things in the present, like ‘Where’s Dad?’, ‘Where’s your bowl?’, ‘Do you want juice?’
- Now that your child is beginning to understand more words, talk more about what you’re doing and what’s going on around you – show your child what you’re doing as you talk about it. Keep the language simple, though.



Card 8 · Communication, language and meaning

Communication

Joint attention to toys/objects/events

- Continue to talk about what your child is doing and let them know you're paying attention to what they're doing. This can continue to be done by approaching them, giving a light touch on the arm and/or sitting close and looking.
- Encourage your child to hold up objects to show you what they're playing with and show that you're interested. Sit close and say 'Show me what you've got there!' Talk about it when they lift it up (and take a brief turn if they let you). If your child has sufficient vision, make sure that you sit close enough for them to see your face and raise the toy so that it is within your child's vision.
- Share your feelings or attitudes about something – eg 'Phew, that's a bit smelly', 'Mmm – that's nice', 'Ouch – that's cold'. Make clear facial expressions too, if your child can see them.
- If your child's vision is at the V3, V4 level, come close (less than 30 cm away) and when they look at your face while playing with a toy, look at them, then look at the toy and talk about what they're doing with it. This begins to tell your child that you're watching what they're doing.
- If your child is stuck when doing something, ask 'Mummy/Daddy help?' and then show them that you're helping ('Mum/Dad's helping'). This will help them understand they can ask for help and ask for you to join in with their play.

Communicating needs

- Continue to respond to your child's actions, gestures or sounds to encourage their communication.
- Ask your child if they want a drink or food – pause and wait for them to show what they want – they may reach but wait a little for a vocalisation and repeat the correct word after them, eg your child says 'ju' – say 'Juice, here it is'.

Showing preferences

- Continue to offer your child a choice, eg between two favourite toys to play with or two foods and pause to wait for them to show what they want, even if at first this is just a vocal sound and a reach.
- Give your child the chance to say 'Yes' or 'No' after you ask 'Do you want...?'

Expressive language

- Rephrase or **recast** your child's words or sounds that are pronounced incorrectly, by repeating the word in your response, pronounced in the correct way, eg 'gog' for dog say – 'Dog – yes, dog! Dog is furry'. Show pleasure at any attempts.
- Comment and expand on what your child says to you, so they know you're listening and taking part in the conversation. If your child says 'ball?', you notice it's rolled away and say 'Do you want your ball? Here's the ball' or your child says 'Ca' when the cat comes into the room – say 'Cat, yes – here he is, the cat's come in'.
- Children like to practise saying words that they've learned. Your child may have a favourite phrase like 'goodgirl', 'allgone' which they say frequently. When they repeat something that you say or something you said earlier, **recast** it to link it to the 'here and now', so it has clear meaning. Your child may say 'night night' in the daytime, so you could say 'Night night – when we go to bed. It's dinner time now'.



Card 7 · Play and learning

Making connections

Learning about sound

- Continue with [sound localisation](#) activities. Try doing the same activity with a sound-making toy above the child's head within arm's reach. Make the sound and see if they can find the toy. Remember to take their hand up to the toy if you need to guide them.

For children at level V1 or V2, it's important to go on doing sound localising games – finding the sound-making object on left and right side of child, at or above or below ear level, throughout the early years. Children can lose this ability to localise sound if it isn't practised.

- Call your child to find you or place a favoured music toy in different positions in the room. Start at about two metres and then increase to about three metres from the child. When they reach you or the toy, reward them with a cuddle. This is also a good game for increasing mobility (see [Movement and mobility](#)).

Object permanence

- Let your child play with a toy, then while they're reaching out for it, quickly cover it with a cloth. Let your child pull the cloth off to find the toy.
- Help your child to find a toy when it's rolled a little out of reach – rattle the toy and encourage your child to reach further to get it, sliding or patting their hand across the floor or surface until they find it. Encourage them to look for it if it is within vision distance.

Cause and effect

- Show your child how to manipulate a more complex cause-effect toy – for example, a music box that requires opening and closing a hinged lid, a jack in the box that has a button to press before jack pops out (though make sure that jack doesn't pop out and hit their face if they're peering over the lid looking for jack).

Understanding how objects relate to each other

- Children with very limited vision may need your help to get interested in toys which don't produce a sound reward and at first they may only enjoy these activities when played with you and when being actively shown how the toys work.
- Toys which help to develop the concept of separating parts include: pulling a ring off stacking rings on a rod, taking a piece with a knob out of a formboard, taking a beaker out of another stacking beaker or pulling two connected pieces apart, eg large joining bricks. Children with V1, V2, may find it more interesting to take a lid off a saucepan, take a treat out of a pot or biscuit out of a tin, cuddly toy out of a box, or crisps out of a packet.
- Use smaller containers which your child has to put their hand into to remove an object, eg a biscuit from a narrow biscuit tin.
- Help your child to find toys in a cloth bag or to explore your handbag (or an old one!) (Check the contents are safe.)
- Help your child to learn to put something inside a container – start with a shiny biscuit tin (or metal tray with sides) which will make a noise when something like keys or a rattle is dropped inside. Then gradually introduce smaller containers like a smaller tin or toy bucket or saucepan and encourage your child to put something inside the container (and then take it out again if they wish). They may need a bit of help at the beginning to organise their [release](#) of the object from their hand.
- Have a toy box with a number of favourite toys and help your child to find them, take them out and return them after play, eg take bath toys from a large container and put them back at the end of bath time.



Card 7 · Play and learning

Using hands

Learning through touch: responding to different textures

- During everyday activities, introduce your child to different materials that have a variety of textures, eg wooden and metal spoons, different brushes of different family members.
- Let your child feel different clothes on your body as you name them. 'Today Mum's wearing a tee shirt'. 'Joan's got her furry jacket on', 'Gran's got her woolly jumper on'.
- Encourage stroking, under supervision, of family or friends' pets. Talk about the cat or dog.
- Encourage your child to play with bubbles and shampoo gel in the bath and then rub the shampoo into their hair.

Remember to **forewarn** when you're introducing a new texture or object to your child. For children at level V1 or V2, tell them what it is, show it and/or introduce it on the back of the fingers. Then pause, and let them take it over the side of the fingers into the palm. If your child doesn't want to feel it, take it away and then introduce it again in a little while.

Exploring

- Children enjoy exploring all kinds of books – the local library is a good place to find different cloth and cardboard books which are easiest for your child to handle and learn to turn the pages. They'll also enjoy 'lift the flap' books. You can buy some picture books and add textures on different pages or under the flaps to go with the story, eg stick a furry piece to the page for 'doggy'.

Co-ordinating hands and fingers

- Continue to find toys for your child with more complex ways to make them work – needing more strength and co-ordination with their fingers, eg pulling a string, turning a stiffer knob or pressing individual buttons.
- Toys for putting fingers in small holes will encourage individual finger use, eg a pop up block with round slots and pegs.
- Introduce activities which encourage your child to use their fingers, eg taking small pegs from a board, getting a snack like raisins from inside a packet.
- Put a number of small objects in a bag or container and encourage them to feel inside and pull toys out.
- Encourage your child to pick up smaller objects, so that they develop their **pincer grip** (thumb and index finger).

Release object from grasp

- See activities: Understanding how objects relate to each other (item 5).



Card 8 · Play and learning

At this stage, your child may sit at a small table and chair for short periods of structured play with you or their teacher – it's helpful if the table is not too large and has a low ridge round the surface.

Making connections

Learning about sound

- Call your child from a room next to the one that they're in and see if they can find you. Keep calling them until they come to you. You can motivate them by saying you have a biscuit or juice (or a favourite game) for them.

Object permanence

- Encourage your child to search for a toy that has rolled out of reach on the floor. If they have difficulty, briefly rattle the toy and encourage them to go on searching. Take them to the toy (don't bring the toy to them) if they still can't find it. Encourage visual searching (V3, V4).
- When more mobile, help your child to find toys that they have to move towards to find – rattle the toy, or start the music and encourage your child to move towards it.
- (V1, V2) When playing on a table or in a child chair/tray – show your child how to move their hand with wider searching across the surface to find the toy they have lost.

Cause and effect

- Give your child toys where they have to persist to get a result, eg a music box where they have to press several times before the music starts or where they have to wait before starting again.

Understanding how objects relate to each other

- Give your child a wider range of boxes/containers with lids and encourage them to explore the contents – containers with lids with knobs or handles are the easiest to explore.
- Building activities may begin to interest your child – show them how to stack one object on top of another – putting toys on a small table is a good start.

Understanding how objects relate to each other (continued)

- Stack up two big bricks – help your child to put one on top of the other. Then show them how to knock it down on the table or floor, so they make a bit of a noise. Try this again. You can take turns knocking it down.
- Give your child opportunities to practise putting objects back in as part of your everyday activities, eg putting cups in the sink, toys in the play box, paper in the bin, clothes in the washing basket, bath toys in the crate after bath time.

Using hands

Learning through touch: responding to different textures

- When you're outside, you can start to find things together – a stone, a leaf, a flower, a feather. Let them smell and feel them and tell them what it is. They'll start to recognise different things that are found outdoors and also get used to feeling their different textures and experiencing their different sensations.
- Increase the range of books with different textures to feel that go with the story (eg furry, rough, shiny surfaces).
- When playing with small toys, help your child to find the small parts eg on a toy car, show them the wheels or a car door that opens.
- Give your child a 'rummage' box with paper and bubble wrap inside. Let them enjoy crumpling and tearing the paper and wrap. It's a good idea to keep this activity linked to the 'rummage' box, so they don't extend the fun of tearing to books!

Co-ordinating hands and fingers

- Exploring different containers and lids will help your child develop co-ordination of their hands and fingers.
- A 'squeezezy bottle' used in the bath or garden to squirt will help to use two hands together and develop strength in fingers.
- Show your child how to dip something into a pot, eg a cracker into cream cheese, toast into jam, a piece of fruit into a yoghurt pot.

Release object from grasp

- Start to introduce a simple posting activity, eg dropping a ball into a shoe box with a large hole.



Card 7 · Movement and mobility

Position in space/body awareness

- Strengthen understanding of positional words such as 'up' and 'down', and 'in' and 'out' in play activities. You can link this to body parts, eg action rhyme songs like 'Simon says put your hands up'.

Environmental exploration/orientation

- The room will seem different from a standing position, so show your child around again and identify any obstacles such as tables that could be hazardous (eg head height).
- Walk your child around the house, rather than carrying them, so that they begin to get an idea of its layout. Although they may have already been crawling, layout and features are different from a walking position. Name each room and show them the features in them and tell your child each time you take them to another room.
- Children often love sitting in an enclosed space at this stage, eg in a washing basket or box – they can explore the space and find toys that are near them.
- Lift your child up and let them feel or look at things above their head – the doorframe, high cupboards, the ceiling. This can be done alongside learning to find a sound source above their head (See also [Play and learning](#), [Learning about sound](#)).

Extending movement/co-ordination

Sitting

- Try sitting your child at a low table to eat snacks or for tabletop games. A chair with arms gives more support at first.

Walking

- Demonstrate walking by standing your child on your feet while walking for a few steps.
- Encourage walking forward with support, by facing your child, holding both hands (holding their arms straight in front at their shoulder level) and gently pulling them forward with gentle pressure on one side at a time alternating from side to side. Call your child to you as you do this and reward them with a cuddle when they reach you.
- A sturdy and safe push along toy could be used as an alternate form of support.
- As balance improves, support holding just one hand and as confidence grows gradually release your grip a step or two away from some form of support to encourage the first independent steps.
- Encourage independent walking one step at a time by calling your child towards you. Extend the distance as balance improves, but avoid moving backwards as your child moves towards you. This may confuse their developing sense of spatial distance and damage confidence.
- When walking outside, your child may initially hold a hand or their pushchair on a level surface. Gradually extend experiences of different surfaces and increase stamina by regular short walks.
- When your child is confident enough to walk in an open space rather than around furniture, remind them of where things are by revisiting objects or features in familiar rooms.

Managing stairs

- Support your child as they begin to explore steps and stairs. Crawling up on all fours is often the first stage. Encourage them to crawl up a few stairs with supervision to develop skills and confidence.



Card 8 · Movement and mobility

Body awareness/position in space

- Begin to help your child to develop some sense of distance from the floor by climbing games. Help your child to climb down to the floor from a bed or the sofa. This links with activities below on managing stairs.

Environmental exploration/orientation

- Draw your child's attention to room features, eg kitchen – listen to the washing machine, bathroom – smell the nice bubble bath, sitting room – feel the soft rug, look at the pretty plant etc.
- Encourage walking barefoot on different surfaces in the home (eg on rugs, carpets, tiles, wood, vinyl) and outside in a safe environment (eg on grass, paving and sand).

Some children with limited vision are very wary of walking on 'high sensitivity' surfaces like grass or sand. Start by sitting outside on a rug, having a fun time outside with toys or a snack. Let them get more confident in moving off the rug and exploring the grass or sand. Let them smell and feel it with hands or feet or under other parts of the body. Tell them what it is – it's 'grass in the garden', 'sand in the sand pit' or 'sand on the beach'.

Find things to play with in the garden or sandpit, with sandals on if preferred, so that your child gets to enjoy these environments.

Extending movement and co-ordination

Keep walking

- Take your child out walking every day to improve their muscle tone, co-ordination and stamina.
- Provide opportunities to walk on gently sloping and undulating ground.
- Introduce your child to playground equipment like seesaws, rocking toys, slides etc. Physical support will still be required to model how they are used and to keep your child safe.
- Appropriate toddler soft-play facilities can help to build confidence in independent movement and develop skills.
- Encourage your child to follow simple one step directions to move their body, eg games such as 'If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands/stamp your feet/shake your head etc'.

Managing stairs

- Continue to support your child in exploring steps and stairs. Encourage them to crawl up with supervision; this is very good for building stamina and co-ordination and helps develop some concept of depth.
- Show your child a safe way of getting down steps or stairs backwards, facing the stairs and feet and bottom first. Allow them to practise this regularly, with your support. Although safety gates are used to discourage unsupervised exploration it's important to show how this can be done safely, as soon as your child can move independently.



Card 7 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- Encourage your child to fit in with eating routines, eg sit at a small table when told 'snack time' or move towards high chair when told 'tea-time'. When they're hungry they'll start to indicate this verbally or through actions (rather than just crying) so you'll know what they want.
- Sit behind your child and guide their arm to use a spoon to scoop food. A bowl with deep vertical sides helps to give an edge to push the food against and scoop. Describe what you're doing – dip, push, and scoop. Food with a soft, firm texture (not too runny or solid) often works best at this stage. Usually, it's best to do the first few spoons yourself if your child is very hungry to avoid frustration, and then encourage use of the spoon while your child is still quite hungry. A favourite food also encourages the use of a spoon.
- Introduce a spouted cup with just one handle. Only part fill it, so it's not too heavy. Give some support and guidance initially but gradually withdraw. Continue to encourage your child to pick up and put down the cup onto a table or tray.
- Continue to introduce a range of textured and lumpy foods.
- Extend the range of finger foods to include small pieces to encourage use of the thumb and index finger ([pincer grip](#)).

Dressing

- Continue to use the [backward or reverse chaining](#) approach (see [Card 6](#)) to undressing and extend this to other activities, eg removing open shoes. Encourage good habits from the start and show where shoes are kept, so they can be found when they're needed later.
- Encourage active involvement in dressing and undressing by expecting your child to push their arm down the sleeve, or take a leg out of trousers when asked. Give lots of encouragement but give them time to think about it and react. If not successful, demonstrate what you want to happen and try again each time you dress.
- Dressing up in larger clothes can be fun and is easier for dressing. Hats are often the first item of clothing children can put on unaided.

Nappy changing

- Continue to tell your child what they've done (poo, wee or other words your family uses) when changing nappies to get them used to the language.
- Allow them to hold and play with clean wipes while you're cleaning and explain what they're for, to introduce the idea.

Washing and bathing

- Encourage your child's involvement in washing hands before and after meals or messy play, using a hand basin, rather than wiping with a cloth.
- Show your child how to rub hands with soap to get them clean and then how to rinse and dry them afterwards. It will be some time before children master this skill, but as they may not be able to see others doing this, they need lots of concrete experience to remind them of what's involved.
- Show your child how to use a sponge or washcloth to wash body parts themselves, eg legs, arms and tummy, in the bath.

Bedtime

- Your child may by now have a favourite cuddly toy that they like to take to bed. Awakening to the feel or smell of a favourite toy or blanket gives a sense of security, although its loss or removal can be distressing so try to have several alternatives or replicas.
- Continue with your bedtime routine to provide an atmosphere of calm and security, although some new elements can be introduced one at a time, eg a new song.



Card 8 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- Continue to give lots of practice with a spoon. You may still need to model this from behind. This will be rather a messy time, but it's important that your child is not discouraged from trying by any family anxiety over mess. (A plastic mat on the floor is a good idea!)
- Encourage your child to feed you or other carers with a spoon and give lots of praise.
- Explain what's happening at meal times, eg 'I'm cutting your potatoes', 'Daddy's pouring the juice' so your child can link the sound of what you're doing with its meaning. They can also be helped to feel or watch your actions so that they know what you're doing.
- When emptying the shopping or preparing food for dinner at home, let your child feel, smell and/or look at some food as you name it, eg apple, banana, bread, carrot. When shopping, let them feel and smell and/or look at some unwrapped food, eg fruit, bread, before you place it in the trolley and tell them what it is.
- Use a fork to feed solid or chunks of food and give your child a spare one to play with during feeding.
- Give some finger foods in open topped packets for your child to pick out.

Dressing

- Apply the **backward/reverse chaining** approach to removing a coat or shirt. Remove all but one sleeve and show how to pull it off. Give lots of opportunities to practise, as part of daily routine and extend to the second sleeve when ready. This can be done sitting or standing, if balance is good. Try this with old adult shirts, as they provide more room for manoeuvring.
- Encourage good habits by showing your child where their coat should be hung up, so it can be found again when it's next needed.
- Extend dressing up activities to putting on large shoes, but be supportive if they try walking in them.
- Continue to encourage participation in dressing. Talk about what you're going to do, demonstrate and then ask your child to try. Let them play with larger clothes.

Using the toilet

- Take your child with you when you go to the bathroom and tell them what you've done, so they realise everyone does this.
- Keep a potty (brightly coloured, if sufficient vision to see) in the bathroom and allow your child to explore it. Talk to them about what it's for.

Washing and bathing

- Extend naming of body parts during washing to include less obvious features such as toes, back, neck, chin etc.
- Demonstrate how to brush hair and encourage your child to brush yours as well.
- Take your child to the bathroom with you when you clean your teeth and give them a brush with a small amount of paste on it so you can do this together. Talk about what you are doing (and let them feel or watch you doing it to yourself) and the noise it makes. If they put the brush in their mouth, help them to give a gentle brush. Use [forewarning](#) when you put the brush in their mouth.

Bedtime

- Bedtime is an ideal opportunity for story telling – making up stories about the child's day or some event they've just experienced, or beginning to read very simple bedtime stories. See also [Communication, language and meaning – Listening and attending](#).
- Now your child may be anticipating and looking forward to bedtime, with its special routine, so involve them in finding pyjamas, choosing songs, books or bedtime toys.



Card 11 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Learning about self and parent and others

- If your child is eating from a bag of crisps or bowl of grapes etc, ask them to share a crisp or grape with you or another child. Show them how to hold out the bowl to offer food.
- Show your child 'Nanna's shoes' or 'Mummy's hat' and compare them with your child's shoes, hats etc, so that they learn about possessions. They can have fun dressing up in different family member's clothes too.
- Later your child will need to learn that they have to respect other people's possessions and that they can't play with a brother or sister's special toy without asking them.
- Your child could have a box that's only for their special toys that no one else is allowed to use. This helps them to find and feel more secure about their own possessions.
- Encourage your child to talk about themselves by name or 'I', by modelling in turn-taking game. Say 'Mummy has it. I have it.' Then giving object to child saying 'I give it to you. (Child's name) has it – you've got it.'
- Talk about the behaviour and intentions of other people in the family or a familiar child who's visiting so that your child gets more curious and interested and understanding of what others are doing, eg 'Dan wants to play with the garage'.

Showing and understanding feelings (Social emotional expression)

- Introduce simple words for 'feelings' or 'mental states' like 'happy', 'sad', 'cross', 'hurt', 'scared', into conversation to talk about your child's or someone else's feelings. This helps your child to start learning about words that express feelings and about how they feel themselves, eg 'Going to the park makes you happy', 'That loud noise was a bit scary but it's only the...'
- If another child is hurt or upset, talk about how that child is feeling and help your child to console them, by stroking their arm or cuddling them.

Showing attachment to parent and familiar others

- Follow the guidelines given earlier on [Cards 9](#) and [10](#) for [Social and emotional development](#) to help staged separation from you and from other familiar carers outside the home. Your child may begin to be more independent at home for longer periods and settle more quickly into a pre-school or unfamiliar environment.
- Help your child develop a secure relationship with a care giver outside the home, such as a nursery key worker. It's helpful to remember that young children with limited vision are often developmentally behind other children of the same age, so greater support in terms of a one-to-one secure key relationship may be needed in the pre-school setting. All carers will need to be regularly informed about your child's current vision needs.
- Let your child show affection and give cuddles (with prompting from you if needed) to their brothers or sisters or to a familiar friend.



Card 11 · Social and emotional development

Developing relationships

Behaviour and self-regulation

- Your child may be expressing their mind more clearly. Listen to and help them to express preferences and intentions and where appropriate, respect their wishes.
- Keep firm limits and boundaries and stay in control of routines – this gives your child secure and predictable routines and a good understanding of your expectations, which is important at this stage.
- Keep to everyday routines and expectations firmly if your child tries to refuse. Try starting to negotiate or following less preferred activities with a rewarding activity. Say 'After your bath, we'll have story time' or 'After shopping, we'll go to park', 'Wait while I do the washing, then I'll come and play'.
- Continue to give positive attention to and praise appropriate behaviours. Try not to 'reward' inappropriate or negative behaviours with attention.

Social interaction

Joining in social interaction

- Continue with a quiet time each day when you sit together for story-telling with books.
- Set up a longer joint **pretend play** with appropriate props and help your child carry out the pretend game, eg bathing a doll, having a tea-party.
- At home or in pre-school give your child the opportunity to play near other children, eg at a water table or with toys on the floor or at a table.
- Continue to give your child (and brothers and sisters and familiar friends) safe areas to have fun running around together and clambering over cushions etc.
- Help your child to begin to start play with another child, eg model how to ask for a toy or to join in with a simple game.
- Help your child to play with a toy with another child, taking turns, eg rolling ball back and forth, manipulating a cause and effect toy. Make sure that the other child takes turns but doesn't take over the game. Once you've done a little structuring, leave them alone together and see if some spontaneous play interaction takes off. A slightly older other child is often helpful at this stage.
- Provide **scaffold** to help attempts at **interacting** with another child – giving just enough support and assistance to help it happen, but not taking over and stepping back if the children can carry on without your help.

Showing knowledge of social scripts

- During everyday routines, ask your child to tell you what happens next in the sequence and what object(s) you need to find next, etc, so that they can show you their knowledge of everyday activities and the order of events.
- Encourage active helping with everyday routines, eg squeezing toothpaste on a toothbrush, cleaning self in bath with bubble soap, pouring cereal into breakfast bowl, tidying up toys at end of the day.

Developing early social skills

- Be consistent in using and expecting attempts at saying 'Please' and 'Thank you' (or 'Ta').



Card 11 · Communication, language and meaning

Listening and attending

- Try making a deliberate mistake when reading a familiar book and see if your child corrects you.
- Continue to introduce books with large, bright coloured pictures (V3 – only the ones with better vision, V4). See the [Record of developing vision](#) to choose appropriate pictures. Talk about the pictures and let your child look at them as you tell the story. See if they can recognise and talk about the pictures too.
- Another idea is to have a bag with a few objects that go with the story (V1, V2, V3). This is often called a 'bag book' because the objects that go with the book are kept in a bag. You can make your own bag books, though ones for older children can also be bought commercially. If it's a story about a girl who lost her hat, have a hat in the bag ready to take out at the right time in the story. Perhaps a bird came down and took the hat, so have a toy bird in the bag ready to take out.
- Make sure you have your child's attention before talking to or giving an instruction. If they're busy doing something, you may need to talk to them and give a physical prompt on their arm or a visual cue until they switch attention to you.
- Give your child some warning before changing activity. Say 'When this song finishes we're going out'.
- If you're talking to someone else, ask your child to 'Wait a minute, I'm talking' and finish talking (keep it short at this stage!) and then stop and reply to your child.

Understanding meaning

- If going to have an unfamiliar experience, talk about it before you go – for example, eg if going to a farm, talk about the kind of animals you'll see, how they'll look (V3, V4), smell and feel.
- At the start of the day talk about what your child's going to do, the places they'll visit, the people they'll see. Remind them at the end of the day what they've done and talk about the events together.
- When introducing new objects to your child, let them feel and/or look at them and as they do this, describe how they feel, look and work and demonstrate how the object can be used.

Understanding meaning (continued)

- Help your child to learn to listen to the names of objects by asking them to give you an object or toy from a small number of toys.
- Continue to describe where objects and toys are , using 'on', 'under' and 'behind', 'in front of'. Play hide and seek with objects – 'Where's the...?'
- Give your child simple instructions (with two main information carrying ideas) like 'Put the cup on the table' and 'Get your coat and shoes' when going out. Later these can become instructions with three main ideas, eg 'Let's give dolly a drink and a biscuit'.
- Collect objects from your outings, eg leaves, shells, tickets, small ornaments and keep them in a scrapbook or scrapbox that you can browse through and talk about each item together – where and when you found it, etc. This is especially fun after a holiday.

Pretend play

- Play pretend games with your child – **pretend play** will be meaningful if based around your child's experiences, eg having a tea party, going to the shop, making dinner, going on the train, having a birthday party and cultural festivals. Help your child to plan and organise what objects will be needed for the game and help them collect them.
- Have a dressing up box and include hats, shoes and bags and other clothes to dress up as people that your child knows. Talk about the person that they're dressing up as and what they usually wear and how they behave, eg 'This is the fleece Dad wears when he's gardening'.
- Your child may also want to dress up as a character in one of their stories and you can help them to imagine what they might wear and find things to put on.
- **Pretend play** can extend to taking on roles and carrying out pretend actions – for example, 'You're the train driver'. Encourage older brothers or sisters or friend to help your child participate in a role play.
- Encourage your child to improvise – to pretend that something is a real object, eg wooden cylinders are 'fish fingers' on a plate, the sofa is a 'train', the bin lid is a 'steering wheel' in the car.



Card 11 · Communication, language and meaning

Communication

Joint attention to toys/objects/events

- Talk to your child about distant sounds that they can hear, like a car horn or a cat 'Meeowing' and explain what they are. Show your child what these things are if you have the opportunity when out and about.
- Talk about what you're doing around the house and show your child what things are when you do everyday activities together.
- Watch out for the ways your child tries to draw your attention to what they're interested in.
- Encourage them to hold out and show you something that they want you to attend to and tell them that you can see it. Share your different ways of experiencing the object – 'I can see it; you can feel it (or see it)'.
- Begin to introduce words/phrases that describe [joint attention](#). 'Mummy's watching you', 'I can see what you're doing (and then tell your child what they're doing)', ' So! You're looking at/listening to/feeling what Mike has'. This is the beginning of introducing the idea that there are different ways of [attending](#).

Communicating needs

- See Expressive Language (over page)

Making conversation

- See Expressive Language (over page)

Expressive language

- Don't encourage use of words or phrases said out of context to get your attention. Only respond when your child uses the word or phrase in the right context or makes their comment meaningful by linking it to real life things.
- **Recast** and expand on your child's language so that they begin to hear a full correct pattern of language. Keep sentences clear and short so that they can hear your language structure and understand what you're saying.
- Expand your child's words adding new information and grammar so they hear how a longer sentence can be made, eg 'nana go' could be added to by saying 'Yes, nana's gone upstairs. Nana's getting your book'. Once your child is beginning to combine two words, you can use short, complete sentences.
- Continue to **recast** your child's language to show the appropriate **intonation** (voice pattern) that you think matches what they're trying to say, eg 'ball gone' using a declaring or describing **intonation**. This will help your child to start using the right **intonation** to get across their meaning.
- Learning about I and You can be difficult. Try remodelling your child's answers. For example, when you say 'D'you want an apple or a banana?' and your child says 'You want a banana', say 'I think you mean, 'I want a banana'.
- Use open-ended questions to keep conversation going, eg 'Tell me about..' or 'How did that happen?' rather than 'What's that?' or 'Is that your doll?' which only require a one or two word answer.
- Encourage your child to tell and retell stories they know well.
- Encourage your child to deliver messages, eg 'Tell Duleep to put his coat on – we're going out'.



Card 11 · Play and learning

Your child may now be able to play for more extended periods at a small table and follow your directions.

Making connections

Object permanence and more organised searching

- Help your child to find where everyday objects are kept in the house by finding bowls and cutlery for dinner, putting clothes away or finding socks in a drawer.
- Play 'Who can find' and 'Where's the...' games to help your child learn where things are placed around the home.
- Take your child to a toy which they've been playing with if it has rolled away they can't find it. Playing with a toy which can roll away, eg a ball or car that produces a continuous sound will help your child locate it across the floor. Help them to use patting or visual searching and move in different directions to find a toy. Then help them to do it in a more systematic manner – 'Let's look in this corner first'.
- You can begin to guide your child through a more organised way of searching on a table top. This is only an introduction, because more systematic searching tends to develop later than Stage 5.
- (V1, V2, V3) Place 3 to 5 objects in a line on a table top and guide your child's hand along the line until they find an object you've named. For V4, you can ask for a named object or photo ('Is this the brush?') pointing at each object in turn as you move along the line.
- When this is well established, you can start guiding your child to move their hand or visually scan along the line of objects from left to right.

Cause effect

- Play with toys that need more than one step to be completed, eg putting a token in a cash register and pulling a lever to open the drawer or putting a ring on a rod toy and then pressing a knob for the ring to fly off.

Understanding how objects relate to each other

- Show your child how biscuits go back in a tin and the lid goes on and put small toys away in a container with a lid. They'll enjoy playing with containers with lids and putting objects in and out and replacing the lid.
- Keep your empty plastic containers of different sizes and shapes – your child will have fun experimenting with how they fit together and putting things in and out of them.
- Continue practise with taking lids off screw-capped bottles and jars like a mustard jar or herb bottles. Show your child how to screw the lid back on, with their wrist using 'turning' motions.
- Introduce simple form boards with two pieces (and knobs). These can vary in size or by shape (circle, square, triangle). Some inset puzzles are available which are motivating for children with the most limited vision (V1, V2) – they produce a noise when the piece is correctly placed.
- Another interesting container to explore is a large matchbox with something hidden inside.

Early understanding of quantity

- Play with containers and water, eg buckets, cups, sieves, and talk about 'empty', 'full up'. Pour water from one container to another. When your child starts enjoying sand play, this can also be done in sand.
- Help your child measure out food quantities for dinner, eg pouring drink from a small jug into a child's cup, serving a helping from the saucepan or from a serving bowl into a child's bowl – also talk about 'more?', 'a little more', 'a lot more' and 'all gone/finished'...

**Card 11 · Play and learning**

Understanding size – large and small

- Play with large and small everyday objects, eg big shoe/little shoe, big spoon and little spoon.
- Play with inset formboards with different sizes (eg two circles of different size).
- Play with two small pots with lids of different sizes. Show your child where the pots are and take off each lid and help them to put both lids on ('big pot', 'little pot') and then let them play with putting lids on each pot.
- Stacking toys of different sizes will help your child to stack. Start with the 'big' beaker or brick on the bottom. Then put the 'small' one on top. This can also be done with a stacking ring – start with the 'big' one on the bottom, and put the small one on the top. Take turns with putting on stacking beakers or rings and show your child how they fit according to size.

Early sorting and categorizing

- Go on encouraging object to object matching using touch (or looking, V3, V4) and recognising the identity of each object – keep the two objects the same.
- Once your child can match two objects that are the same, introduce them to matching an object to its picture (V4). If you have a camera, take a clear photo of one of your child's everyday objects (against a contrasting plain background). Have the photo developed at a large size. Then you can start playing at matching the object to the picture – 'Here's your cup. Look at the picture of your cup'.
- Play with objects that can be sorted into two groups, eg socks from the washing basket (adult socks and small socks for children), or cutlery from the cutlery tray (forks and spoons) and separating a pile into two groups (eg shoes and brushes). Start with only two or three objects in each group.
- Later play a game sorting objects according to shape, size or colour (V3, V4). Start with real items, eg large spoons and large forks, or large and small spoons, or red and yellow plastic spoons. Put each type into a different pile or container. Start with only two or three objects in each group. Afterwards, help your child to feel inside each container to find out and identify what's inside.



Card 11 · Play and learning

Using hands

Learning through touch: responding to different textures

- Continue to help your child explore a bag or box (treasure chest) of different familiar objects, eg keys, spoon, toothbrush etc and ask them to find a named object by feeling inside to identify what's there.
- Play matching games with textures – smooth, furry, prickly, rough. Name the textures with your child, eg finding one that's the same ('furry') from one or two others on the table (or in the box).
- You could make some cloth books with different fabrics, shells, feathers, strings and ribbons sewn in.
- V1, V2, V3 Show your child how to identify and match different shapes (feeling the 'round' surface of the ball or circle, and the line sides and 'points' of the square).
- Your child may be ready to enjoy play with more 'high sensitivity' materials – 'messy play', like play with sand, finger painting and sticking activities. However, many children with limited vision are initially wary of these materials and it's wise to introduce them slowly, as part of a game or meaningful activity and at the child's own pace. Make a 'pudding' out of sticky dough to feed the dolly. If they don't like the sensation of sticky material on their fingers directly, give other tools (eg a brush, marker, stick, spoon) to help your child play with the material. This may make them more confident about touching directly. Give them a cloth so they can wipe off their fingers whenever they want.

Recognising different objects of the same type/function

- Help your child to identify more and more everyday objects through touch. Children with vision (V3) will often need to use their hand skills to increase their recognition through vision. Children may tend to rely on one or more feature to recognise an object (a blue round shape of a certain size is 'my beaker' (V3), the long plastic handle with plastic bits is 'my brush' (V1, V2)). Recognition often doesn't extend (or 'generalise') to other objects of the same type that are different in shape, colour or texture.

Recognising different objects of the same type/function continued

- Help your child to feel slowly or look carefully (and feel if needed) over the whole object – ‘There’s the round lip, and the round body and the handle – it’s a cup!’, ‘Feel the handle, the bristly bits – it’s a hairbrush!’. This also introduces language about texture and shape. When your child has understanding and recognition of their own familiar objects, introduce unfamiliar ones of the same type (‘Nanna’s hairbrush’, ‘cup’ or beaker at playgroup, a different shape of telephone, different shaped shoes).

Co-ordinating hands and fingers

- Play with smaller screw tops, eg ring off screw rod, lid off food or toiletry jars (this is also a good opportunity for identifying and matching sensory smells).
- Show your child how to unwrap wrappers around small sweets.
- Your child can sit with you and start to make biscuits – helping you roll out the pastry with the rolling pin. Let them smell and feel the dough and eat the biscuit afterwards!
- Other toys that will develop use of hands and fingers include large peg boards, threading large beads on a piece of dowel or stiffened thread. Children with some vision (V4) could try a soft lace once they can manage a stiffer one.
- Show your child how some toys fit together, eg lego bricks, Duplo or mega blocks or toys that screw together.
- Make up a collage of things you have found in the garden or make a picture with fuzzy felts.
- Your child may be ready to enjoy finger painting making bright coloured marks on paper or using a brush on paper to make bright painting marks or potato printing (V3 – only the ones with better vision, V4). Use strong colours with good contrast to the paper and thick ‘pens’ which are easily seen. Let your child enjoy scribbling. They may enjoy copying a line across or up/down the paper or a big circle. Even if your child does not see what they do very well, they can enjoy the sensation of doing it.
- V1, V2, V3 – show your child how to make marks on plasticine or playdough with fingers or with a marker. Let them feel the groove that they’ve made.
- V1, V2, V3 – make marks with shape cutters in dough or playdough and draw around with a finger or marker or draw shapes in the sand when playing outside.



Card 11 · Movement and mobility

Body awareness/position in space

- Use singing, music and movement games to re-enforce understanding of different parts of the body and body positions – ‘Simon says’ games, ‘Head, shoulders, arms and knees’, ‘If you’re happy and you know it, stamp your feet’, ‘Wheels on the bus’.
- Continue with games that use ‘on top of’, ‘under’, ‘behind’, ‘in front of’. This needs lots of practice because children with limited vision take longer to work out where their body is in space or in relationship to objects. Go on with ‘hide and seek’ games where the adult or child says and shows where they are.
- On the swings, encourage your child to move their body back and forth to get the swing moving. Later this extends to moving legs back and forth.
- Later begin to introduce left and right. Use a sticker or bangle to mark the left hand and play ‘Simon says... put up your left hand’.

Environmental exploration/orientation

- Encourage your child to do simple tasks that involve moving around the home, eg put toys in the toy box or a book on the shelf, and ask them to find them again and bring to you.
- Provide opportunities to play in tents or tunnels (check manufacturer’s recommended ages).
- Encourage and model the building of ‘houses’ or ‘dens’ with walls and ceilings using cardboard boxes or tables and cloths etc.
- Show your child around any pre-school setting that they’re likely to attend when the room/s are empty. Try to help them to recognise how to find important features like the toilets or doors. This will need to be repeated several times to help them remember where things are and become confident in the new environment. Adults new to working with your child may need training in how best to guide them.
- Walk your child around a local playground and show them the way from one piece of equipment to the next to help them build up a mental map. Talk to your child about what’s there and about keeping safe, eg away from the swings. Then ask your child to show you around your local playground, taking you to the slide.
- Continue to practise listening skills and play games guessing what different sounds are. Talk about how the sounds are different when it’s wet or windy.

Extending movement and co-ordination

- Demonstrate how to move backwards and practise by dancing, eg 'hokey-cokey'. Initially hold hands and then reduce support. This is important for getting out of small spaces when there's no room to turn.

Running, jumping, crouching and climbing

- Provide opportunities to run in safe environments (you may run alongside), which involve stopping and making rapid turns without losing balance. Have little racing games – 'Let's have a race!'
- Holding both hands, encourage your child to jump off a low step into your arms and later to the floor.
- Encourage jumping experiences in soft play environments where there are safe mats to jump onto.
- At this age, children may start to enjoy walking along low walls (or benches etc) and jumping off the end. Support will be needed to begin with but balance improves with practice. Children with limited vision will need to learn to check whether there's an obstacle below them and to judge the depth of a low wall before they jump in outside areas.
- Play games that involve reaching up high, to encourage your child to stand on tip-toes. Walking as quietly as possible on crinkly paper, leaves, pebbles etc also encourages walking on toes. You may need to hold hands initially but your child's balance will improve with practice.

Managing stairs

- Play games encouraging balancing on one foot. Hold both hands initially and gradually reduce support.
- Encourage the use of ladders on play equipment or age appropriate climbing frames and gradually reduce support as skill increases.
- Give more experience going up and down stairs. Encourage holding onto a low handrail if available or continuing holding hands. Your child is likely to be able to go up stairs independently but may take longer to feel safe when coming down.

Pedalling

- Demonstrate how to push pedals on a tricycle and encourage your child to do this independently.



Card 11 · Towards independent self-care

Feeding/eating

- Involve your child in more food preparation tasks, eg show how to use a knife for spreading and cutting sandwiches. Give lots of practice of cutting with a safe blade using dough or platercine as well as foods like bananas, medium/soft cheese, cooked carrots etc.
- Place some favourite foods in jars with simple screw tops and show how they can be opened.
- Store your child's eating equipment in an accessible place and encourage them to find their own cutlery and bowls and put them on the table.
- Set the table together with place mats, forks, knives, spoons, plates and cups.
- When eating a family meal at the table, encourage your child to drink out of a partly filled, open topped cup like everyone else. Remind them to replace it on the table after drinking from it.
- Play 'guess the food' games by describing the food you're about to eat.
- Encourage your child to carry an open topped cup with a small amount of liquid in it for a few steps. Similarly encourage them to carry something like a piece of fruit or sandwich in a bowl or plate. Extend this as skill improves.
- Practise spooning things from one container to another. Later allow your child to do this with real food stuffs, eg flour or sugar from packet onto scales for baking, yoghurt from a large pot to a small one.
- Encourage pouring liquids from a jug or bottle, eg milk on own cereals (V4). Children with less vision can be introduced to the idea by you showing them how to do it (hand over hand and letting them feel the liquid as it pours into the bowl).
- Eating with a spoon will become more reliable with practice. Add to this by showing how to use a spoon to transfer things from a container, eg spooning pasta from a bowl to a plate.

Dressing

- Practise taking off a large loose T-shirt or jumper before bath time. Use **reverse chaining** and start by removing arms so the clothing is around their neck. Place the child's hands on the neckband and assist them in pulling it over their head. Once this has been mastered leave one arm in the sleeve and show how to hold the edge of the sleeve with one hand while pulling their other arm out. Later repeat this with the other arm.
- Encourage your child to undress independently at bath time.
- Continue with the experience of undoing buttons and extend this to fastening buttons.
- Guide arms into open fronted coat when held, and encourage your child to do this independently. Do the same with pulling on socks. This is best demonstrated sitting on the floor with your child facing forwards between your legs.
- Use a child height coat rack or peg so that your child can learn how to hang up their coat, as this will be expected in playgroups and nurseries.
- Involve your child in putting away their clothes in their bedroom so they can find them on request.



Card 11 · Towards independent self-care

Using the toilet

- Allow your child to explore the toilet thoroughly and explain how it's used and sit them on the closed lid to help them get used to its height. A small step is a good idea to help getting on and to maintain good posture while sitting.
- When moving on to using the toilet or 'large potty' make sure your child feels secure by using a suitable child seat and has a stable base under their feet while sitting.
- Show how the flush works and explain what happens when using public facilities or other people's bathrooms. Warn your child that it may sound different to how it sounds at home so that they won't be alarmed by different noises.

Washing and bathing

- Continue to incorporate teeth care into the daily bathing routine and gradually reduce the amount of physical help you give. Continue to help your child to carry out rinsing. Encourage your child to run their tongue over their teeth to check they are clean.
- In addition to practising hand washing, encourage your child to dry their hands with the towel and put it back in the appropriate place so it can be found when next required.
- The bath is the best place to learn to turn taps off and on as there is less likelihood of a flood (of course being careful of the hot tap).

Bedtime

- Many children cut out their afternoon nap sometime after their third birthday. If your child is not ready to settle down to sleep until late in the evening you may need to cut out daytime napping to prevent this. This can be a difficult time for parents and children, but essential to establishing healthy routines for all the family. Prevent napping by stimulating your child if they appear drowsy, eg a trip to the park or 'soft play', activity games or nursery rhymes.
- Avoid travelling in the car at times when they may fall asleep and if you can't keep them awake allow only 10 minutes in a two-hour period.
- It often takes around two weeks of persistence to establish a new sleep pattern. If your child has difficulty sleeping overnight, discuss this with professionals who may be able to help – for example, a health visitor, specialist teacher or paediatrician.



Card 1

Preparation

Distance: within 1/3 metre

Position: Child lying on their back on a play mat or cradled in your arms or looking over your shoulder in 'winding' position.

Range of lures (in order of how difficult they are to see):

In a darkened room – an 'oogly' on a pen torch or a glowing toy.

In a light room – smiling expressive faces, spinning tinsel balls, spinning colourful balls, eg woolly pom-poms and colourful soft toys at least 12cm in diameter.

Activities

Visual awareness/visual interest

- Try to attract your baby's interest using the **lure** decided on with your teacher (from now on referred to as a '**chosen lure**'), or something very similar:
 - make lit toys flash on and off
 - move your head slightly as you smile and 'talk'
 - make dangling balls spin 'on the spot'.
- Guide your child's arm gently from the elbow so that their fingers come in contact with the **lure**, giving it reality and alerting their interest in **looking** to see it better.
- Repeat several times in the same position.

With babies who initially appear not to have any visual response

- Start with the 'oogly' on a pen torch in a darkened room and guide their hand to it.

Many children who appear at first to have no visual response do show improvement when vision is promoted.

Eye movements

Directing gaze

- Once your child alerts consistently to your 'chosen **lure**', present it again in a different position and watch for orientation or a shift of gaze.

Following

- Once your child has alerted and is looking at the **lure**, slowly move it from side to side, up and down and from directly in front of them towards their nose to encourage **convergence**.
- Gradually speed up the movement as your child's skills improve.
- Gradually increase the distance as your child's skills improve.

Introduce **lures** that are more difficult to see in sequence, once your child is alerting and following your 'chosen **lure**' well.



Card 2a

Preparation

Distance: from within $\frac{1}{3}$ metre to 3 metres

Position: As your baby's head and body control improve, gradually move from the positions on Card 1 to sitting (well-supported) on your lap.

Only start tabletop activities when your child has good body control. If they're not physically ready but are visually ready, discuss an alternative position with an occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

Range of lures (in order of how difficult they are to see):

Large:

In a darkened room, an 'oogly' on a pen torch or glowing toy.

In a light room – yourself, your smiling face, a spinning tinsel ball, a spinning colourful ball (eg woolly pom-pom), a colourful soft toy on an elastic so it moves gently up and down (12cm large), child's plastic football (12cm and 25cm).

Smaller:

On a table surface – colourful balls (12cm and 6cm in size), coloured cubes (2 to 3cm), grapes, coloured smarties or other sweets, raisins, breakfast cereals, 'hundreds and thousands' (tiny cake decorations).

There should be good contrast between the surface and objects (eg a dark surface and a light coloured [lure](#)).

Activities

Visual awareness and visual interest

- Continue activities with the **lure** that you and your teacher now feel is appropriate, in the way described on Card 1 for activities within $\frac{1}{3}$ metre.
- To increase your child's **sphere or range of visual interest** beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ metre use **yourself** as the **lure** in the first instance.
- Start near enough to get your child's visual interest in you and then back slowly away.
- Note the distance at which your child loses interest; move forward and 'dance' on the spot and wave.
- Once your child is aware and interested in you at the greater distance:
 - substitute a large toy (25cm or more) jiggling it in your hand held out to one side, at the same or slightly closer distance or
 - use yourself at a greater distance.

Tabletop activities (see note under **position** overleaf)

- First place a large toy on a table or highchair tray surface (when your child is not looking) and encourage them to look for it by saying 'Ooh look!' and tapping the surface **under** the table top or tray. If they look at it, guide their hand to it, or if already reaching, give them time to reach out.
- Once your child can easily locate the toy visually, try a slightly smaller one.
- When you get to the smallest sizes (2.5cm or less) make sure they're not **watching your hand** as you place it. Your VI teacher will show you how to do this.

Continued on Card 2b



Card 2b

Activities

Eye movements

Directing gaze

In front but slightly to one side and at greater distances

- Once your child consistently shows **visual interest** in you, present yourself slightly to one side or other of **midline**, rather than directly in front, at a distance you know that they can see you.
- If they don't see you, move on the spot.
- If your child still doesn't look at you, say 'Hello, here I am!' and watch for a shift of gaze or move nearer and more to the front and wave.
- Once your child shifts their gaze to you, repeat at a greater distance and **either** substitute a large toy, jiggling it in your hand held out to one side, at the same or at a slightly closer distance **or** use yourself at a greater distance.

From one target to another at the same distance

- You will need two people to act as **lures**. Each person stands in front about 1½ metres apart at a distance at which you know your child can see you.
- One person attracts their **visual attention** by moving or calling.
- The other then moves on the spot and waves – only speaking if absolutely necessary.
- Repeat at progressively greater distances as visual performance improves.

Following and convergence

- Continue Card 1 activities until your specialist teacher feels that your child's ability to **follow** in near and far distance and **convergence** have reached their peak.
- For distant **following**, first use a person, then a large toy (25cm or larger), then a 12cm spinning ball, moving on to smaller objects as skills improve.

Tracking

- With your baby or child sitting on someone's knees at a table, sit opposite and roll a plastic football (25cm) slowly from one side of the table to the other and back again.
- Once your child **tracks** the movement, increase the speed of the roll and decrease the size of the football, as skills improve.
- Repeat the sequence, but this time roll the ball from yourself towards your baby or child and get the other person to roll it back to you.



Card 3a

Preparation

Distance: from within $\frac{1}{3}$ metre to 6 metres

Position: As for Card 2, plus sitting on the floor, with you behind, for tracking beyond 1 metre.

Range of lures: As for Card 2 plus three everyday objects or toys, a tray and an armchair with plain upholstery.

Level of understanding: understands the names of two or three family members and two or three everyday objects or toys.

Activities

Visual awareness, visual interest and functional acuity

Sphere of visual interest

- Continue the sequences on Cards 2a and 2b for **visual awareness** and **interest** to widen the sphere of visual interest at distances decided with your VI teacher. Use yourself and large toys as **lures**.

Tabletop activities

- Continue the activities on Cards 2a and 2b with increasingly small **lures** as discussed and agreed with your specialist teacher.

Vision for people

- While you play with your child, arrange for another family member to come and sit or stand about a metre away (but not directly in front of you).
- Say 'Where's Grannie?' Grannie should not speak!
- Watch your child scan or look around the room and see whether or not they can locate Grannie.
- If not, ask Grannie to move a little on the spot. If your child still can't locate her, she should bend down and step closer.
- As soon as your child locates her, Grannie should say 'Yes, here I am!' and reward her grandchild with a kiss or a hug.
- Gradually introduce other family members and increase the distance as your child's visual performance improves.

Vision for objects

- When your child is not looking, place one of their own everyday objects or toys about a metre away (but not directly in front of them).
- Say 'Where's your beaker'? or if they have the spoken **vocabulary**, point at it and say 'What's that'?
- If your child doesn't locate or name it, place it nearer next time.
- If your child does locate and name it, place it further away and to the other side.
- Show obvious pleasure when your child finds it.
- Introduce other items that they know the name for, one at a time.
- Then introduce other items of the **same type** but **different colour**.

Continued on Card 3b



Card 3b

Activities

Eye movements

Directing gaze

In front but slightly to one side of the **midline** at greater distances

- Continue the sequences from Cards 2a and 2b using yourself and large toys as **lures**.

From one target to another at the same distance

- Continue sequences from Cards 2a and 2b, using two people and large toys as **lures**.

Peep-boo

- **Visual readiness:** A good time to start this activity is when your baby/child is **visually aware** and interested in looking at your face at about 1 metre. Substitute an armchair for the tray when your child is visually interested in large (25cm or greater) toys at a distance of 2 metres (see below).
- Hide your face behind a tray and say 'peep-boo' as you pop out to one or other side – at a distance of about $\frac{3}{4}$ metre. Once your child gets the idea, make sure you say 'peep-boo' while your face is still hidden, then pop out silently.
- Once your child finds your smiling face visually, use a plain covered armchair placed about 1 metre away to continue playing. Pop out above as well as to each side of the chair.
- Once your child is able to locate your face quickly, gradually move the chair further away.
- Once your child is able to locate your face at 3 metres, try substituting a favourite doll or soft toy as the **lure**. Start at 1 metre.

Following and convergence

Continue activities on Cards 2a and 2b until your specialist teacher feels that **following** in near and far distance and **convergence** have reached their peak.

- For **following** at distance, first use a person then a large toy (25cm or larger), then a 12cm spinning ball as your child's skills improve.

Tracking

Once your child can track quite fast at a table and can sit with support, move down to the floor and sit behind them with your legs to each side. Make sure that the ball and the floor surface contrast strongly. You need three people in all – A, B and C – sitting so that a triangle is formed with you and your child in the middle with A at the apex and B and C at the two base angles.

- Start at a distance of about 1½ metres. A helps your child roll a ball **slowly** to B who pats it on to C who pats it back to your child.
- Vary the pattern and sequence, eg A to C to B and back to A.
- Watch and note whether your child can keep **track** of where the ball is.
- Gradually increase the speed and distance and decrease the size of the ball as your child's visual performance improves.



Card 4a

Preparation

Distance: from within 1 metre to 6 metres

Positions: As for Card 3 plus free standing, sitting or kneeling with you on the floor.

Level of understanding: Understanding the names of family, friends, pets, everyday objects, toys and items in pictures is needed before you can try the activities on Card 4. Some parts require the child to indicate what they see by naming, making a meaningful noise, eg saying 'brmm – brmm' for car or making a **gesture**, eg of drinking.

Range of lures: As for Card 3 plus

People:

1. Two members of your family or friends of **dissimilar** height, body shape and colouring a) dressed differently and b) in similar colours.
2. Two members of your family or friends of **similar** height, body shape and colouring a) dressed differently and b) in similar colours.

Objects:

1. Three pairs of objects or toys of the **same** size but **different** colour and shape.
2. Three pairs of everyday objects or toys of the **same** size, colour and **similar** shape.
3. Four sets of family items of a particular type – tea shirts, shoes, Wellington boots, trainers, hats – that can be presented in a cluster in a pile or in a basket. Try to establish sets where the colours are dissimilar and other sets where the colour is similar.

Pictures:

1. A book or a set of single item, life-size pictures of everyday objects or toys in bold colours, with clear outlines, a plain background and strong contrast to the background.
2. A book or set of similar pictures of everyday objects or toys but embedded in a simple scene including another two items. Items in the scene should not overlap the target item and should also be in bold colours, have a clear outline, be on a plain background and have strong contrast to background.
3. A book or set of pictures of a simple everyday scenes or activities containing two or three visual targets 4 to 6cm in size embedded in a natural setting – like a printed photograph.
4. A book or set of pictures of more complex everyday scenes and with smaller visual targets (1 to 2cm) in a natural setting.

Continued on Card 4b



Card 4b

Preparation

Photographs:

A digital camera is useful for making photographs for a child with limited vision. If you do not have one, maybe your specialist teacher does. Take the photo against a plain background or natural surroundings as indicated and print off on matt A4 or A5 paper.

You will need:

1. Two sets of photographs of the face of individual family members or friends against a plain, well-contrasted background. One set with faces approx 8 to 10cm in size and one set with faces approx 4 to 5cm in size.
2. Two sets of photographs, each containing faces of two family members or friends against a plain contrasted background. One set with each face approx 6 to 8cm in size and one set with each face approx 3 to 6cm in size.
3. Two sets of full-length photographs of individual family members or friends against a plain, contrasted background. One set A4 size, one set A5 size.
4. Two sets of full-length photographs of two family members or friends against a plain contrasted background. One set A4 size, one set A5 size.
5. Two sets of photographs of the face of individual family members or friends in a natural indoor or outdoor setting. One set with face approx 8 to 10cm in size and one set with face approx 4 to 5cm in size.
6. Two sets of photographs, each containing faces of two family members or friends in a natural indoor or outdoor setting. One set with each face approx 6 to 8cm in size and one set with each face approx 3 to 6cm in size.
7. Two sets of full-length photographs of individual family members or friends in a natural indoor or outdoor setting. One set A4 size, one set A5 size.
8. Two sets of full-length photographs of two family members or friends in a natural indoor or outdoor setting. One set A4 size, one set A5 size.
9. Two sets of photographs of family occasions and activities, eg on the beach, in the playground or in a natural outdoor setting.

For **scanning**, you will need several pages with small pictures arranged in a row. Each picture of a different animal or everyday item or shape. Your specialist teacher can supply these.

Activities

Continue any Card 3 activities that you and your teacher feel need more development, plus the following:

Vision for people

- Start with two family members whose names you feel sure your child recognises and who are different in size and shape and wearing different colours. Ask them to stand about a metre from your child but not to speak.

Then say 'Where's Daddy?' or 'Where's Ali?'

- If your child points or smiles to the right person, they should reward them with a kiss. Repeat a little later with the family members' positions reversed.
- If your child looks puzzled or appears not to see, ask the adults to step nearer and repeat.
- Once this task is easy at one metre, repeat it a little further away.
- When your child can do this easily, introduce other family members or friends and increase the distance.
- The next step is to use two friends or family members who are of similar shape and height wearing dissimilar clothes.
- Once your child can recognise these people at two metres or more, try it with them wearing similar clothes, eg jeans and white T-shirts. Your child will then have to look for finer details, eg of their faces, to tell them apart.

Functional acuity

The aim of this whole section is to encourage your child to improve their **functional acuity** by looking for detail.

Continued on Card 4c



Card 4c

Activities

Vision for everyday objects and toys

- Start with one of the pairs of objects or toys that are of similar size but different in colour and shape. You need to feel sure that your child recognises them by name.
- Place two toys about 12cm apart, but within your child's reach on a table or the floor and ask for one of them. The toy should be 'silent' – ie not make a sound.
- If your child succeeds, then place them on the floor about one metre apart and ask 'Where's your?'
- If your child looks or points at the correct item, let them fetch it and then play with it together for a few minutes. Repeat a little later with the order reversed.
- If your child looks puzzled, say 'There it is, there's your' and pick it up and play with it with them.
- Introduce another pair of objects or toys from the set when your child can do this with the first pair.
- Gradually increase the distance away from your child that you place the objects.
- Once secure with the pairs of toys of similar size but different in colour and shape at two metres, introduce one of the pairs of objects or toys that are similar in colour, shape and size. Your child will have to look for greater detail to tell these apart.
- Again see if your child can choose or point at one of the toys or objects first when near and then increase the distance.
- Try the same ideas with smaller toys and objects when your child can do this with larger ones.
- Introduce a set of family items (different colours but same type) in a heap on the floor or in a box and ask the child to find their own shoe or Mummy's shoe.
- When good with these sets of different coloured items, introduce the sets that are of similar colour.

Vision for pictures

- Pictures, even life-size ones, are more difficult to see than their three-dimensional counterparts, because they are two-dimensional. Children with limited vision often need them to be brought much closer than objects to identify them.
- It's very important when looking at and talking about pictures in a book with your child that they can see them clearly enough to make visual sense of them. If a picture is very blurred your child may learn that a brown blob on a blue background is called a teddy and when later you show them a brown dog swimming in a blue pond they will call it a teddy and both of you will then be confused.
- The [Record of developing vision](#) gives you a way of finding out which types of pictures your child can see sufficiently well to make sense of visually, and it can therefore help you and your teacher choose books with pictures to suit your child's vision. Pictures are good for improving your child's vision but they need to be the right ones.
- Look at the list of picture materials on Card 4a. Fill in the record with your specialist teacher and together choose books that suit your child's vision for pictures.
- It's important not always to say 'Where's the dog or the ball or the boy?' but also to ask 'What's that?' which will encourage your child to look more intently.
- In the context of a story, sometimes say 'As the farmer strode through the field he saw a(pause) – then point to the animal or object and say 'Look there it is, what did he see?' rather than saying '...he saw a sheep, where's the sheep?' 'Where's the sheep?' is easier, as your child only has to scan the picture for white objects.
- Sometimes stop and talk about one or more items in a picture, eg 'Yes it's a duck, what colour is he?' (pause for reply – give the answer if your child doesn't), 'Where's his beak?, it's orange and his eye.....'
- Similarly, get your child to talk about what's happening in a scene showing an activity.

Continued on Card 4d



Card 4d

Activities

Vision for photographs

- Photographs, like pictures are two-dimensional and more difficult to see than objects.
- Even simple photographs from the first set are more difficult to see than the pictures from the first set, because a face that is photographed will be in a range of tones and colours rather than in uniform strong colours.
- The [Record of developing vision](#) gives you a way of finding out which set of photographs your child can see sufficiently well to make sense of visually, and will therefore help you and your teacher choose which set of photographs to start with. Systematically progress through the sets, in the order they are set out in the introduction to Card 4 activities.
- As with pictures, your child will look more closely at the photos if asked to:
 - tell you who's in the photo rather than always asking them to point out Dad
 - tell you what Dad's wearing rather than saying 'Daddy's wearing a blue shirt'
 - tell you what's on the picnic table rather than pointing to the cakes
 - describe an activity rather than you saying 'They're sweeping, where's the 'broom?'

Eye movements

Scanning

- Place three to five familiar objects or toys on a table top about 10cm apart and say 'Give me the ...' while you run your finger along the line slowly, starting by tapping the item at one or other end of the row.
- Watch to see if your child follows your finger. If they do, repeat in the other direction with a new set of toys. If they don't, draw your child's attention to the item at one end by putting your hand on it and saying 'Is it this one? No? How about this one?' – and then pointing to the next item and repeating along the line.
- Once your child follows your finger regularly in either direction, concentrate on moving your finger from their left-hand end to their right.
- Once your child does this well, try the same thing, but without running your finger along the line and watch to see if your child starts at the left-hand end and scans towards the right.
- If they don't, start guiding their gaze with your finger again.

Always show pleasure when your child chooses the right object, whether or not they follow your finger.

Tracking

- Alternatively, hold a coloured streamer and make circular arm movements slowly at first and watch to see if your child follows the movements of the streamer.
- Set up a winding road or train track and run a battery-powered car or train along it. If you don't have one perhaps your child's nursery or a friend does.
- Place the car or train on the track and watch to see if your child **tracks** it.



Introduction and visual levels

The visual environment and visual materials for development and learning

Vision provides a child with information they need for every aspect of early development. So you need to review how you can use your child's current vision to best advantage to support every aspect of their development regularly with your visiting teacher.

In both the [Developmental journal](#) and [Activity cards](#), you will find frequent reminders to check these [Visual environment and visual materials cards](#). Doing so will help you make sure that you are carrying out developmental activities in the best visual surroundings for your child, using toys or objects that best suit their current level of vision.

This card introduces you to four categories or levels of functional vision and to the visual characteristics of materials and surroundings – size, luminance, colour, contrasts etc – that suit each level.

Functional categories of vision or 'visual levels'

V1: No perception of light.

V2: Aware of light and large light reflecting objects (of 12cm in size or more) within 30cm, but not of V3 or V4 items.

V3: Aware of colourful objects (of 12cm or less) within 30cm, but not V4 items.

V4: Aware of objects (1.2cm in size or less) on a well-contrasted table top within 30cm.

Level V4 is not demonstrable even in fully sighted babies until five to six months of age, as before this age such small objects do not catch their interest.

How to decide which is your child's visual level

Your specialist teacher will have a set of standard materials with which to help you explore your child's current visual level. Vision, even in babies with limited vision, usually improves with age, so remember to recheck this together every four to six weeks in the first 12 months and at longer regular intervals after this (discuss the best interval with your specialist teacher).

Ideas for children at level V1

- Concentrate on providing developmental information through hearing, touch and movement feedback mechanisms.

However, remember to use [Record of developing vision Record 1](#) and [Developing vision activity card 1](#) in order to encourage your child's development of vision towards V2. (Consult your eye specialist if you think that your baby has one of the very few eye conditions which prevent development of vision.)



Ideas for children at level V2

In a darkened room, use:

- glowing light sources and make them flash on and off in one place. Look around – there's lots to choose from in the shops
- an 'oogly' on a pen torch
- glowing toys or night lights
- illuminated sparkling tubes or spheres
- wands or table lights with fronds and tips that glow in a cascade of colours
- a ball of mini Christmas tree lights
- a light that shines on your own face when bending low over your baby and if you normally wear glasses, keep them on, as they reflect light

Don't shine a light directly at your child's eyes – it may be unpleasantly bright and lack the three-dimensional qualities that are important for arousing visual interest.

In a room lit by daylight or ceiling lights

For vision activities use:

- pom-pom balls at least 12cm in size made of gold or silver tinsel dangling on a string
- Christmas tree balls or decorations at least 12cm in size and dangling

To encourage your child's postural control choose a room with:

- shiny uprights and verticals that reflect light, eg metal window/door frames, mirrors, metal picture frames

To encourage your child's saving reactions and concept of the floor as a solid base:

- choose a play mat with reflective (shiny) surfaces

Yourself

- wear large, shiny necklaces, bracelets and rings
- if you normally wear glasses, keep them on, as they reflect light

Your child's baby gym

- wrap tinsel around the arch and choose sparkly or light reflecting toys to hang from it

Your child's toys

- choose rattles and squeakers with bells and add shiny stickers
- choose a xylophone with shiny notes
- put shiny stickers on each toy or everyday item in a distinctive pattern to help your child locate and recognise them
- dress dolls or teddies in clothes made from silvery or sequined cloth
- give each soft toy a different tinsel (light reflecting) necklace

Everyday objects

- use stainless steel spoons and bowls on a dark tray surface
- use bottle covers in bright colours with shiny stickers stuck on them

Bubbles!

- bubbles reflect light. Blow a single large one in a room with the lights on.

Remember health and safety issues when you think about the materials you adapt or use – for example, beads, jingle bells, tinsel etc. If you're unsure whether something is safe, discuss it first with your specialist teacher.



Ideas for children at level V3

General points

- choose everyday objects or toys 12cm or more in size in bright colours, with good contrast between the parts of the object
- ensure good contrast between items and table or floor surfaces – items will also be clearer if the background surface is matt (not shiny)
- check the [Record of developing vision](#) and ensure you choose large enough items for developmental tasks that take place more than 30 to 40cm away

For eye movement activities

- woolly pom-pom balls 12cm in size dangling
- lightweight plastic footballs 25 and 12cm in size

To encourage your child's postural control

- windows or door frames and picture frames, eg wood against white wall for postural control activities
- wear a brightly coloured bobble hat or tie

To encourage your child's saving reactions and concept of the floor as a solid base

- floor and bedcovers in strong bright colours
- a play mat with sections in different strong colours

To encourage your child's awareness of their own hands

- use baby mittens in bright colours

Yourself

- wear tops and trousers or skirts that have good colour contrast
- wear colourful necklaces and bracelets and rings
- if you normally wear glasses, keep them on as they reflect light
- wear bright lipstick particularly for activities to help communication and social interaction
- wear nail varnish to attract your child's interest in exploring your hands and watching your hand movements

Your child's baby gym

- choose dangling toys of different bright colours

Your child's toys

- choose musical and visual cause and effect toys, tea sets, train sets, insert puzzles in bright colours with good contrast between the parts of the objects
- dress your child's doll or teddy in clothes made from different colours; choose a doll with hair and eyes that contrast to skin colour
- give each soft toy a different coloured necklace

Everyday objects

- use bottles and flasks with brightly coloured covers
- try and find a bowl, a spoon and a tray surface in contrasting colours

Remember health and safety issues when you think about the materials you adapt or use – for example, beads, jingle bells, tinsel etc. If you're unsure whether something is safe, discuss it first with your specialist teacher.



Ideas for children at level V4

General points

When your child can see a small item (1 cm sweet) close by (30cm), familiar people, objects, toys and pictures, and events (such as washing up on the other side of the kitchen) may be blurred in middle distance (up to two metres) and increasingly so further away and may be being recognised from features such as overall size, shape and colour rather than fine details. These items will seem slightly blurred at these distances even for those children who are visually aware of a 1 mm cake decoration within 30cm and many will have some difficulty sorting out smaller sizes of print and complex pictures in near distance.

As a guide for children with V4 category vision:

- Once your child has had a chance to look closely at most commercially available toys and everyday objects, they will be able to recognise them in near and middle distance (up to two metres away). However, visual details may become blurry at that distance.
- Family members and pets will be recognisable at distances between two and three metres but facial features may be blurred at that distance.
- The visual details of small commercial toys, eg cars, trains, farm animals, tea sets, toy foods (for cooking and shopping games) (3 to 5cm in size) may be recognisable within 1½ metres but the visual details may only be clear within 30cm.
- All but the 1st and 2nd sets of pictures described on [Developing vision activity card 4a](#) – may be blurry, even in near distance.

So:

- You can expect your child to recognise familiar objects/toys/pictures/events of these sizes *when familiar* at the distances suggested overleaf, but children need them at nearer distances to learn about their characteristics visually or to learn from you talking about them.
- Check your [Record of developing vision](#) with your teacher before using different sizes of toys for the developmental activities you are working on, and think together about suitable distances for their use. For example, you would ask your child to fetch a familiar shoe from further away *then* you would talk about the pattern on the strap, when it is close.

Fine finger control

- Make sure that smaller objects such as pieces of breakfast cereal or raisins used to train fine manipulation are strongly contrasted to the background surface.

Remember health and safety issues when you think about the materials you adapt or use – for example, beads, jingle bells, tinsel etc. If you're unsure whether something is safe, discuss it first with your specialist teacher.