

# Strategies For Parents as First Teacher



## Bringing Up Happy Babies

**F** THE JOSEPH AND LAURETTA  
FREEMAN FOUNDATION  
HEALTH LITERACY  
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# Parents as First Teacher



## What do you do Before and After my Arrival? I Will Tell You, Listen!

You are expecting a new arrival to your family—**ME!**

What do you do, and how do you prepare for me?

One way to prepare for me, whether I am a boy or girl, is by keeping yourself healthy:

- See your doctor and keep all appointments
- Eat healthy foods
- Exercise whenever possible. For example, take a daily walk around a school track, on a walking trail or indoors at a mall, if possible.

You must think about preparing for me in multiple ways. What do I mean by preparing for me in multiple ways? Well, remember, not all babies are alike—our needs and wants vary.

### **PRE-ARRIVAL -- WHAT DO YOU DO?**

Babies tend to, by their nature, react to situations differently. Some babies meet new situations with ease, while other babies may be somewhat more challenging when confronting new situations.

But, all babies, no matter their nature, need:

*Love*

*Understanding*

*Encouraging*

*Comforting*

*Special Care*

*Your Attention*

*Time to Adjust*

*Safety*

Think about what your needs might be when you are visiting a foreign environment, learning a new language, confronting a new experience like skiing, cooking, bowling, sewing, going to a new school or meeting strangers. You need to have individuals around you who are patient, comforting, considerate, kind, and who keep you from harm as you learn and adjust to your new environment or new challenge. Just like you in those situations, I need you to be patient, comforting, considerate, kind, and to keep me from harm as I grow and adjust to my new environment.

You must be very patient with me until I learn to use words like you. So, to assist you in your new role, I ask that you gather and read all the information you can about how I grow and develop. Your pediatrician is the expert on developmental stages, (has lots of information about how I grow and develop at different stages), and there are books and magazines in your public library about your role, the things you can do to help me grow in healthy ways before I enter school. By enjoying the websites and suggested books and songs in this booklet you will be ready *to be my best teacher*. Remember, you will need a lot of help to keep me healthy, happy, and developing in the best way. Do not be shy about seeking help and answers from family members, friends, organized parenting groups, doulas and your new best friend, your pediatrician.

### **First Teacher Guide strategies**

How to:

- Help prepare you for my new arrival—me!
- Heighten your readiness skills when interacting with me, your child
- Help me cope during stressful times
- Provide activities that promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive development
- Provide ways to stimulate my brain
- Help me to continue to learn

### **GETTING READY FOR MY ARRIVAL**

I hope that you are remembering to eat the right foods, get enough exercise, get enough rest, and keep your scheduled doctor visits. I know if you do these things, you care about me. In addition to keeping your doctor visits, read magazines and books about my growth and development, and talk with people who are knowledgeable about ways to help me grow. Searching this website ([www.whattoexpect.com](http://www.whattoexpect.com) ) will get you started to be my amazing parent.

Please remember that, as I grow inside you, I can hear, so sing, talk, play soothing music and read to me. Also, as I grow and expand (in utero) you should think about my arrival and how life may change for you and other family members. You should also think about my clothing, my hospital stay and my home environment. There are a lot of “my’s (☺)” Oh, yes, it will be *all about me*, for awhile.

The good news is that I am a baby and I do not care about cost! I do care about how you hold me, love me, keep me safe and provide activities to stimulate my brain. Prepare my environment to highlight using my five senses (hearing—soft music and singing, mobile, baby rattles); feeling (gently touch or rub my hands and body, holding my hands and fingers), smelling (lavender, dill, mother, tea tree, orange, rose, for example); tasting (milk, water, juice); and seeing (face of my family members, black and white colors, colors in nursery and throughout our house) --the things you do without thinking about them. So, just prepare my environment to highlight using my five senses.

*Let's start with my room arrangement-the way my space is arranged in my future home environment.*

If we don't have a large house, it is okay. I just need an area, a space to call my own. You could decorate a small area by arranging a black and white space just for me. The folding Screen below could be a divider between your space and my space (black and white are colors that I prefer early in life), but you could use any color(s) such as pink, blue, green, and purple, etc. keep in mind that some colors may be too stimulating for me to tolerate.



You could also use curtains in order to separate your space from my space. I will also need storage for my personal items and a bassinet or a baby bed to sleep in. Don't forget to wrap me similarly to the way they wrapped me while I was in the hospital. Wrapping me in this way lets me think that I am still in the cramped space I just emerged from. My behavior, my body movement, will let you know how long to wrap me in this manner (discuss with the nurse or your doctor prior to leaving the hospital)



This bassinet is a Simmons Kids Elite Gliding Bassinet, but any Bassinet will do. You could add containers against the wall for needed storage.



Stackable storage cubes or decorated cardboard boxes are an inexpensive way to store items I may need in the first three months like, diapers, clothes, books, stuff toys, etc. You can even place a garbage bag in the cubes for my dirty diapers. Arrange as many cubes as needed against the wall--horizontally or vertically (any color and any type of cube will do). Remember to label the cubes so you will not have to guess what is stored inside each one☺. *I can't wait to come home to my organized, special place!*

## **Heighten your readiness skills: I am here, and ready to go Home**

You will have to adjust to me and I will have to adjust to you in my new environment. It will take some time for me to get use to all this NEWNESS. I will probably be a little restless, a little fussy, maybe all night and all day, but this too “shall pass.”

### **Helping me cope during stressful times**

#### **All Night and All Day**

Crying is my only way, at this time, to communicate with you. My crying may irritate you, especially, if I am a bit of a challenging baby. But please do not give up on me. It may be a great time to keep a journal on my behavior. Keeping a journal may help you understand why I am somewhat irritable and need your attention. If you do not have a journal, use the attached journal template or use an App to monitor and take notes about my behavior all day and all night. Use the Journal and jot down notes about my behavior anytime of day or night. What time I:



- sleep
- am awake
- Nurse/drink
- Need a diaper change

#### **As I grow, watch for my first, and document the dates when I:**

- Move my body during awake time or the number of times you move my body during my awake times
- Respond to you gently by pulling or rubbing my legs and arms or clapping them together
  - o By myself – am awake and cooing in my baby crib or bed or just quietly looking around moving my legs and hands and body
  - o Take your journal with you when you visit your pediatrician.  
(Can document using an App or the attached journal)

#### **Provide activities that promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive development**

- You will probably notice that my sleep/wake times may vary. No need to compare me with others, I am me (☺). But pay close attention to the milestones that you receive from your pediatrician or visit websites for expected growth patterns, behaviors and appropriate practices for me. Websites like:
  - Zero to Three ([www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)),
  - Mommy Garten ([www.mommygarten.com](http://www.mommygarten.com)),
  - Bay Center ([www.babycenter.com](http://www.babycenter.com)),
  - Too small to fail (<https://www.clintonfoundation.org/our-work/too-small-fail>)
  - Kids Health ([www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)),
  - American Optometric Association ([www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org))

## Some Books for Infants/Toddlers to Help Stimulate my Brain:

**BOOKS:** Read to me in the AM or PM. Some books are suggested below

1. Good Night Moon by Margaret Wise	16. Wild Animals by Deni Brown
2. I Smell by Patrick George	17. Smiles! by Roberta Grobel • Peek-A-Boo by Grobel
3. Pat the Bunny by Dorothy Kunhardt	18. Black and White by Tana Hoban
4. The Going- To Bed Book by Sandra Boynton	19. Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes by Max Fox
5. And The Night of The Hippopotamus	20. Mammies Say Shhh! By Patricia Polacco
6. Doggies by Boynton	21. Families by Rena D. Grossman
7. The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle	22. Hello, Day! by Anita Lobel
8. Please, Baby, Please by Spike Lee	23. My Farm Friend by Wendell Minor
9. Bears by Ruth Kruss	24. Nursery Rhymes
10. Moo, Baa, La La La! By Ruth Kruss	25. Brown Bear by Bill Martin
11. Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney	26. iPio Peep – Spanish Nursery Rhymes {Rimas Tradicionales en Espanol}, Selected by Alma Flor Ada & Isabel Campoy and English adaptations by Alice Schertle Additional books can be located at: <a href="https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/infant-toddler">https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/infant-toddler</a> ; <a href="http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/reading-writing/great-books-read-infants-and-toddlers">http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/reading-writing/great-books-read-infants-and-toddlers</a>
12. Global Babies From Global Fund for Children	
13. Families by Rena. D Grossman	
14. Peekaboo Bedtime by Rachel Isadora	
15. Peekaboo Blueberry? By Barney Saltzberg	

Additional books can be located at: <https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/infant-toddler>; <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/reading-writing/great-books-read-infants-and-toddlers>

## **Books for Parents to Help with Successful Child Rearing and to Stimulate Brain Development**

- *The Right Stuff for Children Birth to Eight: Selecting Play Materials to Support Development* by Martha Bronson
- Bredekamp-- *Basics of Developmentally Appropriate Practice: An Introduction for Teachers of Infants and Toddlers*

Parenting books below are listed at this website:

<http://www.parenting.com/blogs/mom-congress/melissa-taylor/10-best-books-thinking-parents>

1. *How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elain Mozlish
2. *Raising a Son: Parents and the Making of a Healthy Man* by Don Elium and Jeanne Elium
3. *Raising a Daughter: Parents and the Awakening of a Healthy Woman* by Don and Jeanne Elium
4. *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky
5. *Smart Parenting for Smart Kinds: Nurturing your Child's True Potential* by Elleen Kennedy Moore, Ph.D. Maric S. Lowenthal, PSYD.
6. *Playful Learning: Develop your Child's Sense of Joy and Wonder* by Mariah Bruehl

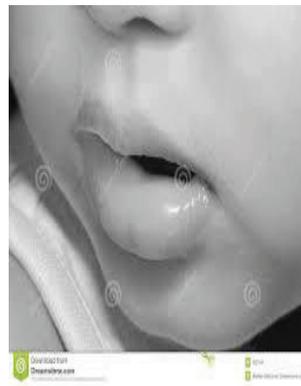
7. *Einstein Never Used Flash Cards: How Our Children Really Learn—and Why they Need to Play More and Memorize Less* by Kathy Hirsh—Pasek, Ph.D., and Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, Ph.D.
8. *Brain rules for BABY: How to Raise a Smart and Happy Child from Zero to Five* by John Medina
9. *No regrets Parenting: Turning Long Days and Sharp Years into Cherished Moments with Your Kids* by Harley Robert, M.D.
10. *Different Learners: Identifying, Preventing, and Treating Your Child's Learning Problems* by Jane M. Headly, Ph.D.
11. *Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and more Secure Kids* by Kim John and Lisa M. Ross
12. *Fun on the Run* by Cynthia L. Copeland.

### **MORNING TO NIGHT: Other Ways of Helping Your Child (Me)**

You will learn a lot from reading these books and speaking to my pediatrician, family and friends and by constantly observing me. My eating and sleeping patterns change as I grow and develop. I will, sooner than you think, start to eat more and sleep longer. The feeling of being up all night and all day will come to an end, and you can then fuss over helping me to continue my growth and learning in other ways from “MORNING TILL NIGHT.”

Now that I am staying awake longer and spending more time with you, what do we do? Well, you could do things to emphasize my five senses (hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting and seeing). I speak to you all the time. I speak to you using my eyes, mouth, hands as well as with my body.

- My mouth may tell you that I am hungry,
- If I need a diaper changed, or if
- I need you nearby or that I need your attention.



## My eyes may tell you that:



- I like the way your mouth is moving, I like the way the sounds come out of your mouth when it is moving, or if
- I am in distress, or
- I am in pain, or
- I want you to name an object or tell me about something that is new to me.

### *Maybe we are Outside*

- o Maybe we are outside, for example, when I look at you and then look at a plant, a flower, a tree, an animal or the sky, please stop and tell me the name of what I am looking at. You do not have to be specific; just say “that’s a tree, a flower, a dog, a cat, the sun or sky, etc.

### *Maybe we are Inside*

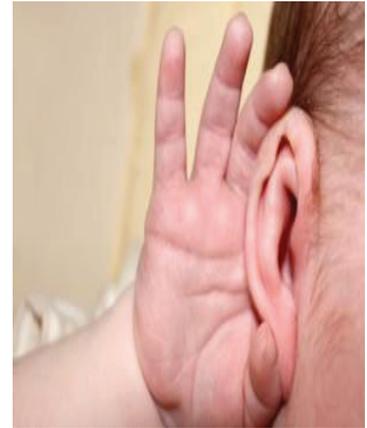
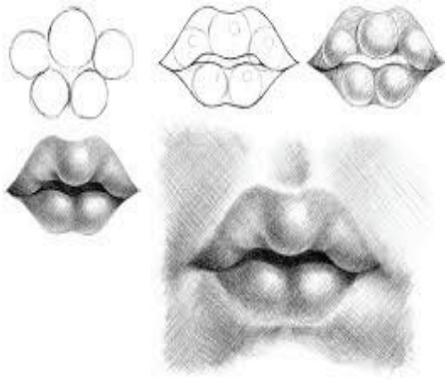
- o Inside our house, I want you to tell me the names of all the objects. (When I am older let’s label the objects).
- o Inside our house, start by naming the objects in my world and then branch out.

For example, tell me when:

- you are changing my diaper,
- wiping my face, changing my clothes,
- Getting me out of my bed,
- Putting me in my bed to play,
- Taking me to the living-room or the kitchen,
- Closing the door,
- Sitting on the chair or couch,
- Getting my bottle ready, and
- Getting ready to feed me.

Talk or sing to me as you feed me—(I love your most soothing voice).

Talking to me in this manner helps me learn about my environment. Just because I am not talking to you with words does not mean that I am not learning. I am learning about my world at a rapid speed. So, talking to me a lot not only helps me to learn words, but also helps me to learn about the things in my environment. Singing to me is also wonderful, but watching television before age two is not helpful, and could be very damaging, according to people like Jensen who wrote a book entitled “Teaching with the brain in mind.”



## I Hear You

### Day and Night

Talk to me and sing to me! Singing or saying nursery rhymes usually gets my attention, sing me a song or tell me a nursery rhyme. You don't know any songs or nursery rhymes? Any song will make me happy and get my attention, but here are some songs or nursery rhymes that I am sure I will like, songs that are made for me (you may be able to get the lyrics and tunes on "You Tube"). Songs or Nursery Rhymes like:

- Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
- Mary had a Little Lamb
- The Itsy-Bitsy Spider
- The Wheels on the Bus
- Old McDonald
- Or sing me a song you made-up or sing me a song that your parents or friends sang to you

Remember, I am listening to you all the time and learning the words you say, so please be mindful of the words you use, try not to use the word, "NO," and try not to yell, I learn best when you explain things to me – "let's buckle up for safety...", and please sit before you injure yourself-- offer an explanation.

### Night

This has been a long day and I am getting tired. Am I off my schedule? Please remember my schedule, my sleep and wake times. Keeping a journal will help you notice the changes my body is going through. This journal (either electronic-using an App or using the sample weekly Journal included in this document) will help keep track of my feelings and of my body changes.

The journal is important because it:

- Will let you know of any changes in my sleeping patterns which may alert you to some medical problems or growth pattern changes
- May let you know the best times to take me, grocery shopping or on an outing. If you take me out during my rest time, be aware that I may not be a "happy camper," and may make your life miserable☹.

- Will let you know that at this age, my time is your time. I am in command until I get a little older and learn a little more about expectations😊.

You probably notice that I am sleeping longer and this is good for you and me. It also means that because I am awake longer, I expect you to entertain or engage me in play a little longer and continue to communicate to me! Here are some ways to entertain me:

- Sing to me
- Read to me
- Take me outside on a walk
- Take me to a library to check out books
- Take me to visit a zoo
- Take me for a walk in a park
- Take me to a museum (exposure to new things is always fun)
- Make a scrapbook of people I know, and places I like to visit. This can be your first book that you could read to me or that I can learn to read myself. When I am older, you could also make a DVD or CD about you and me or my family and my community.

*I am never too young for an outing! You are my first teacher and the things you do with me will help get me off to my best start.*

*I AM SO HAPPY TO BE A PART OF YOUR FAMILY. PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF ME!*

For additional information and or workshop for parents or teachers contact:  
Clancie Wilson at: [cwilson@jlfreemanfoundation.org](mailto:cwilson@jlfreemanfoundation.org)

Customized workshops are available to expand on topics for interested individuals or groups.  
Call or email for a one-to-one information session (401-641-1203); ([cwilson@jlfreemanfoundation.org](mailto:cwilson@jlfreemanfoundation.org))

## A Journal for Parents

Keep a daily journal: These activities are suggested for infants. There is a template specifically developed for toddlers and preschoolers upon request.

NOTE: *You will need a weekly printout of template or keep an electronic version.*

1. Establish a routine and write down awake, sleep, active and eating times, etc.
2. No Television or Limited Television (see what research says). Tape a song (an appropriate children's song) you hear or that you are singing to your child. Also, you can tape a story that you are reading to your child.

## Language and Mental Thinking

Talk to your child all the time although your child cannot respond or may not know what you are talking about—your child is still learning and the brain is absorbing and processing words and sounds.

### 3. Inside:

- Talk to and introduce your child to all objects inside your house (an example: stove; table; couch; and talk about the functions of any and all things you introduce.)
- Read, read and read to your child—especially at night before sleep time.

### 4. Outside:

- Take your child on morning and evening walks, talking with your child about things that you see will help build your child's vocabulary, language (example: see the bird or birds, look they are flying; see the tree.) Look at the green leaves; look how they move (if moving), see how tall the tree is. Look at the sky, it is blue with lots of clouds, the sun is shining and it is very hot. Look at the grass, the grass is green and or brown.) Discuss the time of day (for example, it's night time now, the sun is gone and the moon is out (shining--if the moon is shining).
5. Gently rub your child's legs and feet, and or raise your child's arms and legs while you sing.
  6. Sing your child's name as you play with him or her as well as sing or say the body part that you are rubbing or stretching (such as your child's legs or arms).
  7. Allow time for you and your child to interact together.
  8. Not too young to introduce a foreign language.

Remember to keep a Journal listing (dates and months) everything you did with and to your child, and write any behavioral changes in your child after introducing the activities.

## JOURNAL TEMPLATE

List your child's sleep routine

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

## JOURNAL TEMPLATE

Books read or language used with your child (Talk all the time to your child, and read daily to your child).  
Write about what you did with your child.

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

## JOURNAL TEMPLATE

Physical Development Activities (for example, rubbing your child's legs, walking child in stroller and noticing child's movement—write your observations.

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

## JOURNAL TEMPLATE

Developing Social Skills (for example, talk and read to your child (make this a special time of day, afternoon or evening-try to scheduled the same time of day). Talk to me as you take me on field trips-tell me where we are going and what we are going to do. Write about what we did.

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	



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The intent of this brochure is to help prepare parents for the arrival of their baby by heightening their readiness skills, as well as provide strategies that promote parent-child interaction, and ultimately improving baby's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.