



Lilly
recommends...

Fun *Play* Ideas

Babies

- Provide materials for you baby to stack—blocks, nesting boxes, small boxes, plastic containers, etc.
- Move your face close enough for your baby to touch. Talk and babble and sing and let your baby explore your face while you do.
- Under supervision, give your baby many different real world objects to explore: wooden spoons, boxes, sponges, different textures of fabric, pieces of paper, a wallet, socks, etc. (Make certain that these objects are large enough not to present a choking hazard!) Talk about the objects and explore ways to use them together.
- Put baby on their tummy on a blanket on the floor. Billow a light scarf above them and talk to them about the breeze.
- While holding your baby, make various movements over and over reciting what they are as you do them. For example: Hop, hop, hop, dip, dip, dip, spin, spin, spin, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle etc.
- Sit in front of a mirror together and make funny faces.
- Sit with your baby facing you. Make eye contact and then blink your eyes. Pause. Blink again. Pause. If your baby blinks, celebrate it! Repeat the game by sticking out your tongue, puffing out your cheeks, opening your mouth, etc.
- Cover your face with your hands for a long moment and then uncover them quickly saying, "Peek-a-Boo!" Play again and again.

Toddlers

- Blow bubbles, encouraging your child to pop them with their hands. Count the bubbles as they pop.
- Using sheets, blankets, pillows and fabric, build a fort together. Perhaps use a dining table as the support system. Bring a flashlight in with you if it's dark. Read a book together, listen to music, talk quietly or simply lie still for a while.
- Toddlers love *Hide and Seek*. Play this in different ways, take turns hiding in the traditional way. Hide a favorite stuffed animal or toy and encourage your child to *seek* it. If you have a toy that makes music or a sound, wind it up or turn it on and hide it. Encourage your child to use their ears to find it. Or place an item under a scarf or towel and see if your child can guess what it is by its size and shape.
- Tack different color sheets of paper around your yard. Call out a color and have your child run to that paper. For older children, give them a specific way to run to the color, for example, "hop to the yellow" or "wiggle over to the red" etc.
- Toddlers generally love boxes. Put a cardboard box in their play area in which they can fill, push, sit or play.
- Count everything! Steps to the sidewalk, children in the park, cups in the cupboard, books on the shelf, fingers on your hand, etc.



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Fun *Play* Ideas

Preschoolers

- Hide an item somewhere in the room. As your child walks around, use a 'temperature gage' to direct them to the object—if they are getting close to the object, they are 'warm', if they are getting farther away from the object, they are getting 'cold' etc.
- While your child waits in another room, hide (or partially hide) several stuffed animals or photographs of wild animals around the room. Make the room as dark as possible and giving your child a flashlight, encourage them to 'go on safari' and locate all the hidden animals using only the flashlight. Take turns hiding and seeking.
- Blow up a balloon and play "up in the air". Take turns hitting the balloon into the air and calling out a word from a category before the balloon hits the ground or before the other person hits the balloon. For example, if the category is animals, you hit the balloon into the air and call out, 'hippopotamus', then your child hits the balloon into the air and calls out, 'aardvark' etc. Keep playing until you can't think of any more words for that category.
- Place a block, pillow or bean bag on your heads, play music and move about the room trying to keep your item from falling. For older children, periodically call out "Freeze!" stop for a moment or two and then call out, "go!"
- Using a pair of dice from a game, take turns with you child rolling one or both and counting the dots together. Perhaps keep a chart of the numbers come up.
- Bring home a large cardboard box from a department or appliance store. Cut a door and windows in it and turn it into a playhouse. Invite friends over to play in the box.
- Create an obstacle course in the house using furniture, pillows, fabric, blankets etc. As you move through the obstacle course, describe what you are doing, "Here, we go under the table" "Here we jump across the towel" etc.
- Once it gets dark outside, take your child on a 'night walk' in your yard or neighborhood. Use a flashlight if you like, but be sure to turn it off and look up at the night sky. Talk together about how things look different at night.
- Take two suits from a deck of cards. Shuffle them and place them face down in a few rows to play "Memory". Taking turns, turn up a card and try to turn up the matching card in the other suit. If your cards don't match, turn them both back face down. If they match, remove them from the board. For young preschoolers, use only cards A— 5.
- Collect a number of small objects from around the house: bottle caps, paper clips, buttons, bath toys, a sponge, coins, marbles, blocks, etc. Fill a pot or bowl with water and make predictions about whether an object will float or sink. Test your predictions. Perhaps make a chart to record your results.
- Assemble some dress-up items: towels, scarves, hats, capes, blankets, etc. Create characters and have a parade around your house. Invite friends over to play with the dress up items.
- Boredom is an opportunity! Rather than turning on the television, encourage your child to create their own play.