

# Parent Express

A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY



TOPIC

## 9 months old

### Dear parent,

**W**hen you feel good, your baby does too! You have plenty of reasons for feeling good about yourself. You have done a great job of raising this 9-month-old. And of course, if you feel good about yourself, your baby will feel good about herself too.

When you feel good about the type of person you are, you can tackle almost anything. That's why it's important to cheer your baby on when she tries new things. Every time there is a first in her life – crawling, walking, talking, hitting a ball – praise her and give her the self-confidence she needs. These are all big accomplishments for her.

### What it's like to be 9 months old

#### How I grow

- I crawl and turn around, holding on to something with one hand.
- I crawl up stairs.
- I sit by myself and turn my body all the way around without losing balance.
- I might be able to stand up and sit down without pulling on furniture.



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- I stand for a while when my hand is held.
- I sidestep along furniture.
- I try to build towers with blocks or toys.
- I poke my fingers into holes or into anything that looks interesting.
- I pick up small things with my first finger and my thumb, and large things with both hands.

### How I talk

- I understand some words, my name, and simple sentences.
- I repeat one or several sounds over and over.
- I like to cough, click my tongue, and make hissing noises.
- I listen to people talking and try to imitate the sounds.

### How I respond

- I like to watch people scribbling on paper.
- I like to perform for people and love it when they applaud.
- I want praise for all my accomplishments.

### How I understand

- I try to figure things out by myself.
- I know that if I partly cover my eyes or look upside down, everything will look different.
- I know which toys are mine and get upset when they are taken away.
- I can remember a game, a person, or a toy from the day before or even longer.
- I can tell what mood people are in by looking at them.

### How I feel

- I am sensitive. If I see another baby crying, I will cry too.
- I am afraid of some things that didn't bother me before, such as taking a bath.
- I am afraid of heights.
- I am very determined and sometimes stubborn – that's all part of growing up.

## Your baby is learning to feed himself

Does your baby hold most foods while eating, drink from a cup (with a little help) or from a sippy cup, or hold and lick the spoon after it is dipped in food? These are his first steps in learning to eat by



himself. You can help him practice by giving him finger foods such as small pieces of soft cheese, bits of soft toast, graham crackers, cooked vegetable strips or slices, or dry, ready-to-eat cereal squares or rounds. Choose whole grain cereals that don't have added sugar such as Cheerios. These foods will easily break up or dissolve in his mouth. Don't feed your baby french fries or other salty, fried foods.

Praise your baby while he is feeding himself, even if he is very messy. If the mess really bothers you, spread some newspapers under his chair to catch any food that drops. Never leave your baby unattended while he is eating.

## About weaning

Some mothers decide to wean their babies from the breast about now. Others wait until later on. When you decide to wean your baby, do so gradually over a period of several weeks. Your baby still needs to drink either breast milk or 24 ounces of iron-fortified formula each day. She is not ready for cow's milk. It usually works best to wean your baby from her morning and bedtime feedings last. During the weaning period, be sure to give your baby some extra hugs and kisses.

## No seasonings or small, hard foods

Although you may find unseasoned foods bland or tasteless, your baby does not. By now, your little one can eat most of the things you cook for the rest of the family. Just take out your baby's food before you add salt or other seasonings for everybody else.



Be careful not to give your baby small, hard pieces of food he could choke on, such as grapes, nuts, seeds, pieces of raw vegetables, popcorn, or round slices of hot dog. Hot dogs are not good to give babies for another reason – they are not nutritious because they contain many additives and lots of fat. However, if you decide to serve hot dogs, for safety cut them in narrow, lengthwise strips, then cut the strips crosswise into small pieces before handing them to your baby. Try hot dogs made from turkey or soy as healthier choices.

## Games babies play

### The name game: A communication game

#### Purpose

This game helps your baby learn that everything has a name. It encourages your baby to imitate the sounds you make when you are naming objects.

#### How to play

- Let your baby sit in your lap while you hold a magazine or a stiff cardboard book with colorful, simple, familiar pictures.
- Point out and name at least 10 objects pictured in the magazine or book.
- Point to the object, name it, and say, "See the car."
- While you are pointing, ask your baby, "What is that?" Wait a few seconds and then say, "That's a car!"

Note: Your baby will not understand all the words you use. However, he will hear the different tones of your voice and will remember often-repeated words. His rapidly developing brain will soon connect the word sounds to the object you point to. Connecting word sounds and objects helps him become aware of language.

## Discipline doesn't mean punishment

For babies less than a year old, discipline is pretty simple. It means teaching limits through loving care and guidance. The key to this teaching is reward.

Reward your baby when he does something you approve of; distract him when he does something you don't like. For example, when your baby makes sounds and tries to talk, reward him with a smile.

When he does something annoying or touches something you don't want him to have, distract him by offering another toy or direct his attention to something else.

Using the least amount of force necessary is always the best way to discipline your child. Hitting or slapping your baby is never the appropriate way to teach him to be good. He won't even know why he is being hit, as babies are only exploring at this age. A firm "No" and redirection is all a child at this age needs. Remember, small children need to hear messages often, which means you will have to repeat yourself many times before they understand. Be patient with your baby; he will understand, but it will take time. Sometimes your baby will not be happy with the decisions you make and will fuss. You might be tempted to give in to his demands, but keep in mind that setting limits is necessary for your child's safety and welfare.

It is possible to set limits while allowing your child the freedom to explore and grow. Stick to those limits and be firm in your guidance. Even when setting limits, your baby knows that you care for him.

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## Special time for baby and you

It's easy to get caught up in day-to-day routines and pressures and overlook the need for a special time for you and your baby. Set aside a special time each day – a time when you can give your baby undivided attention with no interruptions.

The length of time is up to you. Even a small amount of time – perhaps 15 minutes a day – can be time to enjoy and appreciate each other.

How can you spend this special time? Sing, read, play, or listen to music. Relax together. Cuddle. Enjoy just being together.

To help your baby understand how much time you'll have together, point to the clock to show when this special time will start and end. As your baby gets older, she will eagerly look forward to this pocket of time for just the two of you.

By working to form this bond, you are actually encouraging your child's brain development and her ability to learn over the long term.





## A question about interfering relatives

**My mother is always telling me how to care for my baby. I know she means well, but I get really upset when she questions everything I do. How can I talk to her about this without hurting her feelings?**

Relatives, especially grandparents, can be very special people in your baby's life. This is especially true if you are a single parent, a teenage parent, or you live at home. Grandparents can provide warmth, security, and loving care for your baby. But sometimes they think they know what's best for your baby, and they try to tell you what to do every step of the way.

If this happens often, talk openly with them about your feelings. Discuss your feelings about child rearing. Listen to their ideas, and gently remind them that you are your baby's parent and are directly responsible for your child. Let them know that they play an important role in the growth of your child, so they won't feel that you are casting them out. Come to an understanding of what the grandparent relationship means for your baby as well as for you. Let them know how you want to raise your child, with their help.

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