

## *Brain building through play with 6-month-olds*

Why is play important for babies? It helps develop sturdy brain architecture, the foundations of lifelong health and the building blocks of resilience.

Playful interactions with adults also help babies develop executive function skills, e.g., organizing and planning, paying attention, starting tasks and staying focused. Hiding, finger play and conversation games, like the ones below, teach them to focus attention, build their memory and practice basic self-control.



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When you play with a baby, follow their lead! Play games they show an interest in and whenever possible — let them determine how long to play and when to move on to something else.

### **1. Peekaboo!**

Babies love hide-and-find games. This type of play challenges babies to remember who is hiding and helps them practice basic skills of self-control. Vary the game by having baby wait for you to reveal your face or letting baby control the timing.

### **2. “Pat-a-Cake”**

Sing “Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can! Roll it and pat it and mark it with a [first letter of baby’s name], then put it in the oven for the baby and me!” Clap, roll and pat baby’s hands gently as you sing.

### **3. Hiding Games**

Hide a toy under a cloth or cup and encourage baby to look for it. Once baby finds it quickly, hide it, show baby that you moved it and encourage them to find it again. When baby finds the object, show excitement and say, “You found it!”

### **4. Conversation Games**

Six-month-old babies begin to make sounds like “ga,” “ma,” and “ba.” With baby facing you on your lap, make silly sounds, pause and wait for baby to respond. When baby babbles, squeals or makes a silly face, make the same sounds and face back to them. Story telling can be fun. Tell baby about the day baby was born or an important event in your life, such as getting married. Ask baby questions and wait for a response. Even though you won’t get “real” answers, baby will add their own colorful details.

### **5. Fingerplays**

Babies love songs and chants with simple hand motions. With practice, baby can learn to copy motions and remember sequences. Some examples of fingerplays are “Eensy Weensy Spider” and “Where is Thumbkin?”

### **6. “Trot Trot to Boston”**

Put baby facing you on your knees and gently bounce baby up and down while chanting, “Trot trot to Boston, Trot trot to Lynn. Watch out little [baby’s name] or you might fall in!” Vary the pace of the chant and watch baby react.

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**BABYREAD’S MISSION** is to raise the literacy level in Oconee County by encouraging moms/caregivers to read daily to children from birth. This prepares children for success in school and in life. Readers read with moms/caregivers in person at town libraries generally twice each month. We have a COVID option. Questions? Contact Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., president, at [babyread@charter.net](mailto:babyread@charter.net) or (864) 643-8083 or visit [babyread.org](http://babyread.org).