

# Brain Building **TIPS** that Support Early Learning Domains



INFANTS 0-12 MONTHS

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**vrom**



Creative Expression

Language & Literacy

Math & Science

Motor Skills &  
Physical Development

Social & Emotional  
Development



Infants are developing rapidly during the first year of life, and their brains are too! Babies learn best through back-and-forth interactions and joyful play during everyday routines with you. **Try these fun Vroom Tips™ to support these areas of development:** physical, cognitive, social and emotional, language and literacy, and creative expression.



# Brain Building TIPS

## that Support Early Learning Domains

 CREATIVE EXPRESSION



**Tip**

0-12  
MONTHS

### Tummy Drum

When your child is on their back, gently pat their tummy. Sing a favorite song and tap along to the beat on your baby's tummy. Try patting fast and slow. Do they smile or kick? Keep going as long as they seem to be having fun.

#### Brainy Background™

When you share different sounds and sensations with your child, you're introducing them to concepts of math, rhythm, and music. Connecting with them by touching and talking helps them feel safe and taken care of, laying a strong foundation for learning and growth.

**Tip**

0-18  
MONTHS

### Dance Speeds

Dance with your child and ask, "Should we dance slow?" Pick them up and gently move as you hum a slow tune. "Should we dance fast?" Change your tune and dance faster. Watch how they use their arms or move to tell you which they like and respond to what they're telling you.

#### Brainy Background™

"Dance Speeds" gives you a chance to do something fun together in a loving way. It also allows you to respond to their movements to begin to help them connect words to their feelings and thoughts. It's the way your child will learn to talk and communicate later.

**Tip**

0-2  
YEARS

### Musical Conversations

As you sing with your child, sing with lots of expression – smiling or looking excited or surprised or sad. Move around or wave your hands. Do they copy your movements or sounds? Repeat their actions and see if you can go back and forth like a game of catch.

#### Brainy Background™

At this age, your child learns through repetition and back and forth interaction. You help them build communication skills in a fun way when you turn singing into a musical conversation. Your child will use these skills in learning to talk, read, and write.

**Tip**

6-18  
MONTHS

### Babbling Baby

Does your child babble or make lots of sounds? This is a first step in learning to speak. Set these sounds to music. If they're saying, "Ba, ba, ba," sing this sound to a favorite tune. Watch their eyes light up. Guess what? Your baby's brain lit up too!

#### Brainy Background™

Your child will love the fact that you're singing along with them. By doing so, you and your child are having a conversation with sounds, which helps them listen carefully and copy you. This gets them ready for conversations with words, which will lead to better reading skills.

# Brain Building TIPS

## that Support Early Learning Domains

 LANGUAGE & LITERACY



Tip

0-6  
MONTHS

### I See What You See

Get on your baby's level and look at the world through their eyes. What might they see while lying on their back or tummy? Notice what they're looking at. Point at it and use words to describe what they're seeing. You could say, "You see the couch." Or, "There's the table." Listen to their reaction and respond by talking about what you see too.

#### Brainy Background™

Did you know that pointing at what your baby sees is a critical part of helping them learn language? Describing what interests them helps them learn new words and begin to practice paying attention. Way to go, brain-builder!

Tip

0-12  
MONTHS

### Bouncing Baby

Does your baby love to bounce when you hold them on your lap? Bounce them up and down. Try going fast and slow as well as stopping and starting. How do they respond? Follow their lead and respond to their sounds and movements. Continue doing what they like best.

#### Brainy Background™

Giving your baby experiences with different ways of moving helps them learn how their body works and will help develop self-control in the future. By following their lead—watching if they smile or turn away—you're helping them learn to communicate with you.

Tip

0-18  
MONTHS

### I See You

As you feed your child, tell them what you see. "I see your fingers picking up a piece of food." "I see your mouth chewing a banana." "I see you drinking with your mouth." If they make a sound or say a word, repeat it to create a back and forth conversation. Babbling and talking are learning!

#### Brainy Background™

When you have a back and forth conversation with your child, even before they can talk, they're listening to you and learning new words. They're also learning to communicate with another person and how much fun it can be.

Tip

0-2  
YEARS

### Body Language

Practice using gestures with your child as another way to communicate. You can wave your hand and say "hi!" or shake your head and say "no." Or you can clap your hands and say "yay!" See if they will mimic your actions and sounds. Try going back and forth like a conversation.

#### Brainy Background™

Many children use gestures before they speak. When you show your child how bodies and words work together, you teach them how to communicate. You also help them make connections between words and actions, an important part of talking, reading, and writing.

# Brain Building TIPS

## that Support Early Learning Domains

 MATH & SCIENCE



Tip

0-6  
MONTHS

### Shaking Sounds

Put your baby on their back or tummy and shake something that makes noise, like keys. Do they follow the sound with their eyes or head? What do they do when you shake fast or slow? If they do something, copy that action or sound and have a conversation without words.

#### Brainy Background™

You're helping your baby learn to pay attention and to focus on what is happening. They're also learning about cause-and-effect: When you shake something, it makes a sound. Your positive words and actions encourage them to pay attention.

Tip

0-12  
MONTHS

### Space Explorer

Show your child the world from different points of view. When they're in your arms, crouch down low or gently lift them up in the air. Describe what you're doing and respond to their reactions. "You're as high as the light! Look what you can see up here!"

#### Brainy Background™

Moving your child around and talking about what you're doing helps them learn about important things like shape and space. Children learn these ideas through back and forth conversations, where you follow their lead and respond to their reactions.

Tip

3-12  
MONTHS

### Up-Down, Side-to-Side

Sit on the floor holding your child on your knees. Gently move them up and down, side to side, and explain what's going on. "Now you're going up, up in the sky!" "Now you're moving over to the door," or "down, down to the ground." Make up new ones as you go!

#### Brainy Background™

As you bond and play with your child, you're sharing the joy of moving with them and introducing words that describe moving and where things are. These are important math concepts.

Tip

6-18  
MONTHS

### Discovery Box

Save a leftover diaper or shipping box. Put some safe things inside and invite your child to pull them out. Then close half the top and see what things come out easily and what things are too big and now don't fit through the opening. Use words to describe what they're doing.

#### Brainy Background™

Your child is using focus and self-control to concentrate and move their body to problem solve and pull things out of the box. Commenting on your child's efforts teach them new words, and encourages them to keep trying, even when things are hard.



# Brain Building **TIPS** that Support Early Learning Domains

## MOTOR SKILLS & PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



**Tip**

6-12  
MONTHS

### Drop the Ball

A fun outside game is “Drop the Ball.” Give your child a safe object to hold onto and drop, like a ball or a crumbled piece of paper. If you pick it up, they will drop it again. “Down it falls. Up it comes.” Keep up the game with new objects!

#### Brainy Background™

Building your child’s ability to use their hands is important. They will use this ability at home, at play, and at school. In addition, they’re learning to pay attention and to have self-control—also key skills for life.

**Tip**

9-18  
MONTHS

### Homemade Phys-Ed

What is your child trying to learn to do physically? Crawl over things? Set up a way for them to practice, like putting pillows down for them to crawl over and around. Or if they’re trying to stand up, hold up your hand to grab. Make it a game together!

#### Brainy Background™

Your child learns best when you watch them to see what they’re trying to learn and then provide opportunities for them to practice what they’re working on. This kind of meaningful learning keeps the fire for learning that they’re born with burning inside them.

**Tip**

9-18  
MONTHS

### Pillow Practice

Is your child trying to stand up and climb on everything? You can help them practice by putting some pillows on the floor and letting them climb or jump on them. Say “low” and “tall” as you make different sized stacks of pillows. Talk to them about what they’re doing.

#### Brainy Background™

Providing opportunities for your child to practice the skills they’re working on, like crawling, walking, jumping, keeps them engaged in learning. Talking about words like low and tall builds their vocabulary. How else can you help them practice what they’re learning?

**Tip**

12-18  
MONTHS

### Be A Cheerleader

Put one of your child’s favorite objects or toys just out of their reach and encourage them to walk or crawl to get it. Talk about what they’re doing by saying things like, “You’re working so hard to get your toy!”

#### Brainy Background™

Your child is more likely to try something hard when they know you’re there to help. Encouraging them with your face, voice, and body language helps them learn to take on challenges.

# Brain Building **TIPS** that Support Early Learning Domains

♥ SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT



Tip

0-12  
MONTHS

## Calming Song

As you're putting your child to bed, rock them gently and sing softly to them. Pay attention to how they tell you they want more singing. Do they turn their head toward you? Smile? Move? What do they do to say "enough?" Cry? Turn away? Take note of how to respond to their cues now and in the future!

### Brainy Background™

Singing to your child before bedtime is like a calming conversation using music. You sing, they respond, you respond etc. They're learning how it feels to calm themselves, which is an important life lesson.

Tip

0-2  
YEARS

## Mirror Me

Children feel many different emotions every day, just like you. Make faces that mirror how your child seems to be feeling. Talk to them about why you're making those faces. "You're smiling and seem happy, and I am smiling and happy too."

### Brainy Background™

When you imitate the face your child makes, you help them express what they think and feel even though they can't speak yet. These conversations without words begin to help them learn about others' feelings and emotions!

Tip

3-12  
MONTHS

## Share a Stare

As you hold your child and look into each other's eyes, make a silly face or sound. How do they respond? With twinkly eyes? A smile? A laugh? Try it again but do something different. This is the beginning of a lifetime of laughs to share together.

### Brainy Background™

This back and forth game of sharing a laugh is anything but silly. It is an important building block in your child's ability to enjoy and communicate with other people. It also deepens your relationship with one another—and it's fun!

Tip

6-18  
MONTHS

## Expressive Eater

Watch your child during mealtime. Are they reacting to how the food tastes and feels? Copy the faces they make and respond. Do they make a happy face when eating something sweet like fruit? You could ask, "Do you like that juicy apple?" Stretch the chat and ask another question or comment on their response.

### Brainy Background™

A few important things are happening here. You're describing your child's experiences and responding to them with words. This helps them connect objects and language, and feelings and actions. Plus, talks like these build the bond between you and your child, and they engage your child in learning at the same time!



Visit **GrowYoungBrains.org** for more information on brain-building resources for child care programs.