



**Royal Society for Blind Children**

## How can I help my baby to play?

You have chosen some suitable toys and now it's time to get your baby to play. You might notice that your baby doesn't play with their toys in quite the same way as fully sighted babies. If your baby is safe and happy while they play, there is no need to be concerned by this.

Initially, your baby might be less motivated to play, they may also find it difficult to find their toys and they might not want to touch new things. But, with your help and encouragement they will soon be exploring and playing.

While each baby is unique, we have put together a list of general tips to help your baby to play with their toys:

- Always give forewarning – let them know you are going to give them something, so they are prepared.
- Gently introduce new toys and textures on the back of the hand and fingers, this will mean they are not surprised and encourage them to open their hand and grasp for the toy themselves.
- Give lots of verbal encouragement.
- Help your baby reach for toys, you can put your hand under theirs and guide their arm over to their toy (hand under hand), or place toys next to their body and encourage them to reach for them.
- Try not to give, pick up and bring everything to your baby, take them to things and help them reach for things. This will help them begin understanding the world, and how they need to interact with it.
- Try and play in a calm, well lit room, away from sources of light.
- You can show your baby how a toy works, but they will find their own way to play with it.
- Try and show your baby moving toys, they may find this easier to see than when a toy is still in front of them.

- If your baby has some vision, they may bring toys very close to their face to explore them, don't worry if they do this, it is normal.
- Name toys, name positions, name directions and name actions. If the blanket is on their left foot tell them. It is never too early to introduce these concepts.
- Try and expose your baby to sensory and messy play. Sit with your baby on your lap and put your hand into the tub. Help your baby follow your arm and hand into the tub. This is another example of hand under hand. With your hand in the tub first you are showing your baby it is safe and allowing them the choice of pulling away whenever they need. We know can be tricky, so pick a time when you are both relaxed and start with 'easy' textures (dry leaves, fabric squares, strings/ribbons, dry rice/cereal, straw) progressing to more 'challenging' textures (Jelly, water, mash potato/banana, cornflour & water, cooked spaghetti, baked beans).
- Playing is hard work, especially when there is a lot of sensory information to process! If you take your baby somewhere new, or somewhere with lots going on like a toddler group, they might not want to play for long or even at all. Make sure both you and your baby have lots of breaks and don't worry if your baby just wants to be with you to begin with.

Our Families First team of family practitioners are here to support you through your child's early years and into the future.

## RSBC can help you with:

- practical advice about your child's development
- support when you feel overwhelmed.
- understanding your child's vision impairment better
- living as a family and being supportive of each other

Call 020 3198 0225 or email [connections@rsbc.org.uk](mailto:connections@rsbc.org.uk)

