

Six to twelve months: serve-and-return activities

As your baby grows, they're able to do more. Throughout this stage, they'll learn to recognize people, play with objects, babble, sit up, crawl, stand and eventually start walking. As your baby grows and experiences new things, brain cell connections are forming. Everything your baby touches, sees, hears, tastes, and smells, helps form these connections in many different parts of their brain.

Brain cell connections become stronger when you and your baby engage in serve-and-return interactions. Here are some examples of what this might look like with your baby.

Activities

Pat-a-cake (6–9 months of age)

Your baby serves when they:

- Copy what you do, such as clapping their hands and making sounds

You return their serve when you:

- Sing nursery songs and play finger games with actions. Then wait for them to copy you.



Do this activity with your baby on their back on a safe surface. Once your baby has sitting control, try this with them seated on your lap with their back to your belly. Say or sing the following rhyme:

Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake

Baker's man

Bake me a cake

As fast as you can (*clap hands to beat*)

Roll it (*roll hands*)

Pat it (*pat lap*)

Mark it with a B (*finger write 'B' on baby's belly*)

And put it in the oven for baby and me (*tickle baby's belly*)

Peek-a-boo (6–9 months of age)

Your baby serves when they:

- Copy what you do, such as covering their face, and making sounds

You return their serve when you:

- Hide your face behind your hands or a towel and then show your face again. Smile and laugh as you play. Then wait for them to copy you.



Your baby is beginning to understand that things and people are still there even when they can't see them. Place your baby where they can see you, hide your face behind your hands or a towel and then show your face again. Smile and laugh as you play. You can also do this with a favorite toy.

Music time (9–12 months of age)

Your baby serves when they:

- Bounce to music

You return their serve when you:

- Play music and sing songs with them



New sounds like soft lullaby music for quiet times or more upbeat music for playful times can be as comforting as your voice. Dance or move around to the music as you cuddle.