



The Basics PALMETTO

80% OF BRAIN GROWTH
HAPPENS DURING THE FIRST
THREE YEARS OF LIFE.



During these early years of brain growth, infants and toddlers absorb massive amounts of information from interacting with other people. This early learning becomes the foundation for all future learning.

The Basics are five **fun, simple, and powerful** ways to help all our children become the happiest and most successful they can be!

Let's seize the opportunity!





MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

Infants (ages 0-12 Months)

Infants thrive when their world seems loving, safe, and predictable. When you express love and respond to their needs, you teach them that they can count on you. This is the foundation for your relationship. Over time, showing love and responding to their needs helps them learn to manage their feelings and behavior.

Because infants are affected by your emotions, both good and bad, it is important to find strategies that help you cope with stress. Caring for yourself benefits **you and your child**.

HOLD THEM. Hold, kiss, and cuddle your infant. Do not worry about spoiling them. There is no need to hold back on sharing love.

RESPOND TO THEM. Respond in the moment to their signals, such as sounds, gestures, and facial expressions. For example, if they smile, smile back. Let them take the lead. See how long you can go back and forth. You are teaching them how relationships and communication work.

COMFORT THEM. When upset, infants have a hard time calming down on their own. They depend on you to help manage their emotions, so comfort your child when they cry or get fussy. Over time, by responding to your baby's needs in this way, you will help them develop more self-control. You also teach them that they can count on you.

PLAY WITH THEM. Your baby loves to look at your face. Hold them close, make silly faces, smile, and talk in a playful voice as you go about your day together.

HAVE A ROUTINE. Develop a routine for daily activities like feeding, naps, bathing, reading, and bedtime. Each baby is unique, so it may take time to figure out a rhythm that works for your family. Once a routine is established, try to stay with it. Avoid unnecessary disruptions in routines whenever possible. Keep in mind that routines change as your baby gets older. For example, your child will eventually take fewer naps during the day and you'll adjust nighttime routines as daytime sleep schedules change.

MANAGE HOUSEHOLD STRESS. Stress is normal, but too much stress is bad for a baby's brain development. When your life gets stressful, it is important to have coping strategies. The parents in the video describe several strategies: having a daily routine, sharing childcare and other tasks with a family member or friend, going outside, holding their baby close. Talk to your friends, family, or doctor about healthy ways to deal with stress.



MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

Toddlers (ages 12-36 Months)

Do everything you can to make your toddler's world feel **loving, safe, and *predictable***. Feeling secure in their relationships and surroundings gives them the confidence they need to explore, learn, and take on life's challenges.

CUDDLE THEM. Hug, kiss, and cuddle your toddler. Do not worry about spoiling them. There is no need to hold back on sharing love.

RESPOND TO THEM. Watch and respond to your toddler's words, feelings, and behaviors when they are happy and also when they are upset.

ENCOURAGE THEM. Toddlers get a lot of satisfaction and confidence as they master new tasks. Help your child try new things. Follow their lead when they seem interested in something. Be supportive and encouraging as they take chances.

TALK ABOUT FEELINGS. Help your toddler name their feelings. You can say what you think they are feeling and let them know that their feelings are okay. Help them problem-solve when they are frustrated or upset.

INVOLVE THEM. Find simple ways to involve your toddler in chores and other activities around the home. This makes them feel helpful and provides opportunities for learning.

HAVE A ROUTINE. Routines make life predictable. Children feel secure when they know what to expect. Develop a schedule for daily activities like feeding, naps, bathing, and bedtime. Create routines that signal when your child will transition from one activity to another. Once a routine is established, try to stay with it.

MANAGE HOUSEHOLD STRESS. Stress is a normal part of life. In fact, it is important for children to experience some stress so they learn ways to cope. But too much stress can be harmful. It is important for adults to have healthy strategies for coping with their own stress so it doesn't get passed on to their children. The parents in the video describe a few strategies: having a daily routine, sharing childcare and other tasks with a family member or friend, going outside, holding their child close.





TALK, SING, AND POINT

Infants (0-12 months)

Babies are learning language from the moment they are born. At first, to a newborn baby, speech is just sound. Then, day by day, they learn that the sounds have meaning. Every time you talk, sing, or point to what you are talking about, you provide clues to the meaning of what you are saying. You are providing important information to their brains about how language works and the thoughts and feelings that language communicates.

TALK A LOT. Talk to your baby from the time they are born during activities like changing, feeding, bathing, and errands. Describe what you are doing. Label the objects around you by naming and pointing to them.

GO BACK AND FORTH. When your baby makes a sound, show excitement in your face and voice! Respond to their sounds with words. See how long you can keep the “conversation” going. It is very powerful when the two of you can stay focused on each other for a while.

USE A PLAYFUL VOICE. Talk with a gentle, playful voice. Exaggerate the sounds of the words. This may feel silly at first, but it is actually very important. Babies pay extra attention and learn more when you talk this way.

USE REAL WORDS. Don’t just use “baby talk;” also use real words. The more words your baby hears, the larger their vocabulary will grow. Think of words as nourishment for your baby’s brain!

SING. Sing songs to your baby. This is a fun way for them to learn language. You might have certain songs for special times of the day, like bath time or before bedtime.

USE ANY LANGUAGE. It doesn’t matter what language you speak with your infant. All languages are equally beneficial.



TALK, SING, AND POINT

Toddlers (ages 12-36 months)

Toddlers learn language from interacting with the people around them. How much and how quickly they learn depends on the amount that people speak to them. Toddlers are very curious! Answering their questions is a way to teach them about the world. By involving them in conversations and listening to them, you will come to know the fascinating person they are becoming.

INVOLVE THEM. Involve your toddler in what you are doing (like the father in the video who involves his son in picking out bananas at the grocery store). Describe the things you do together. Encourage them when they try something new. Your toddler is figuring out how the world works, so even everyday tasks are full of learning opportunities.

EXPRESS INTEREST. Get down on your toddler's level and express interest in what they're doing. When you show that you value what they do and what they have to say, you are building their confidence.

LISTEN. Listen to your toddler's questions and answer them. Have a conversation. Powerful learning takes place when you go back and forth in a conversation. It builds their concentration and thinking skills.

ADD WORDS AND IDEAS. Help grow your child's vocabulary by expanding on what he says. For example, if he says, "doggie," you can respond with, "Yes, that is a doggie. The doggie is brown and soft."

USE YOUR HANDS. When you talk about something, point to it. This helps your child connect new words to the objects they represent. You can also encourage your child to point to things.

SING. Singing is a fun way to expose your toddler to language. Children love the melody and rhythm of music. They will remember the words and sing along with you. Songs can be incorporated into daily routines like dressing and cleaning up.

USE ANY LANGUAGE. It doesn't matter what language you speak with your toddler. All languages are equally beneficial.





COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

Infants (ages 0-12 months)

Everyone is born to be a “math person!” Infants are pre-wired to learn simple math ideas, including small numbers, patterns, and making comparisons. You don’t need to be a math teacher to start preparing your child to be a problem solver. There are fun and simple activities that you can do now to build math and thinking skills.

MOVE IN RHYTHM. Clap, tap, rock or kiss your baby in a steady rhythm. Count while you do it. Like the father in the video, you can count while you push your child on a swing. Have fun! This is a way to teach your child about patterns and counting.

COUNT OBJECTS. Count groups of things, starting with small numbers. For example, count your child's toes or pieces of fruit. Infants learn through all of their senses, so hold objects up for your child to see and touch. "Look, there's one...two socks. Two socks."

COMPARE. Provide opportunities for your child to touch and explore things that are the same and different. For example, let your baby shake things that make different sounds, or touch fabrics with different textures. Talk about how they are similar or different.

USE MATH WORDS. When you talk to your infant, use words related to math ideas like quantities or comparisons. Examples of "math words" are *more, less, big, small, tall, short, round, square*. You don't need to set aside special time to do this. You can use math words whenever you are with your child.



COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

Toddlers (ages 12-36 months)

Becoming good at math begins long before a child enters school. In fact, toddlers can learn simple math ideas, including numbers, patterns, sizes, shapes, distances, and making comparisons. In the words of one father from the video, young children are like “sponges...so every moment is a teaching moment.”

COUNT. Count with your toddler. In the video, families counted all kinds of things including books, strands in a braid, and sides of a triangle.

MAKE GROUPS. Children learn to say strings of numbers before they truly understand the *meaning* of numbers. After they can count numbers out loud, the next step is understanding how many things each number stands for. “Five” isn’t just a word that comes after “four;” the word five represents five *of something*. Count objects, like blocks or Cheerios, and put them in a group so your child can see the whole set.

MAKE IT A GAME. Make counting into a game, like the father and daughter in the video who clap after every 10 lines in the sidewalk.

NAME SHAPES. Look for shapes around you. “The clock is a circle. Do you see any other circles?”

MATCH AND SORT. Make a game of matching and sorting objects. Like the mother and daughter matching socks while doing laundry, your child can match and sort items by their shape, color, size, or other features.

MAKE MATH PART OF LIFE. Involve your child in your daily activities and talk about things that are related to numbers such as shapes, size, and distance.

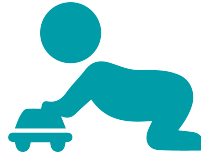




EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

Infants (age 0-12 months)

Movement and play are good for children's bodies – their coordination, strength, and overall health. They are also ways that children explore and learn about the world. Each stage of development comes with new opportunities for learning.



EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

GET ON THEIR LEVEL. Get down on your child's level and play with them. See the world from their point of view.

FOLLOW THEIR INTERESTS. From the very beginning, your baby is intensely interested in the world around them—people, objects, colors, sounds, and how things work. Pay attention to what engages your child. Talk to them about those things (even if they don't talk back) and support their exploration.

GIVE THEM THINGS TO HANDLE. Provide objects of different colors, shapes, and textures to play with. Handling objects helps with hand-eye coordination and motor skills. Use everyday objects. You don't need fancy toys to keep your baby's attention!

LET THEM MOVE AROUND. Let your baby explore their surrounding by reaching, rolling, scooting, and crawling. This is good for developing coordination. It also strengthens their "mind's eye" as they see things from new angles and sense where they are in a space. Just make sure they are safe!

DO TUMMY TIME. Babies are still learning to control their bodies. If you have a baby, make sure they spend some time on their stomach each day. This is called "tummy time." When put on their tummies, babies raise their heads and make crawling motions. Gradually, their upper body gets stronger and they will learn to crawl. Tummy time also gives them a new view of the world.



EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

Toddlers (ages 12-36 months)

Movement and play are good for children's bodies – their coordination, strength, and overall health. They are also ways that children explore and learn about the world. Each stage of development comes with new opportunities for learning. See where your child's curiosity takes them. The more you pay attention, the more you will learn about the person they are becoming.

GET ON THEIR LEVEL. Get down on your child's level and play with them. See the world from their point of view.

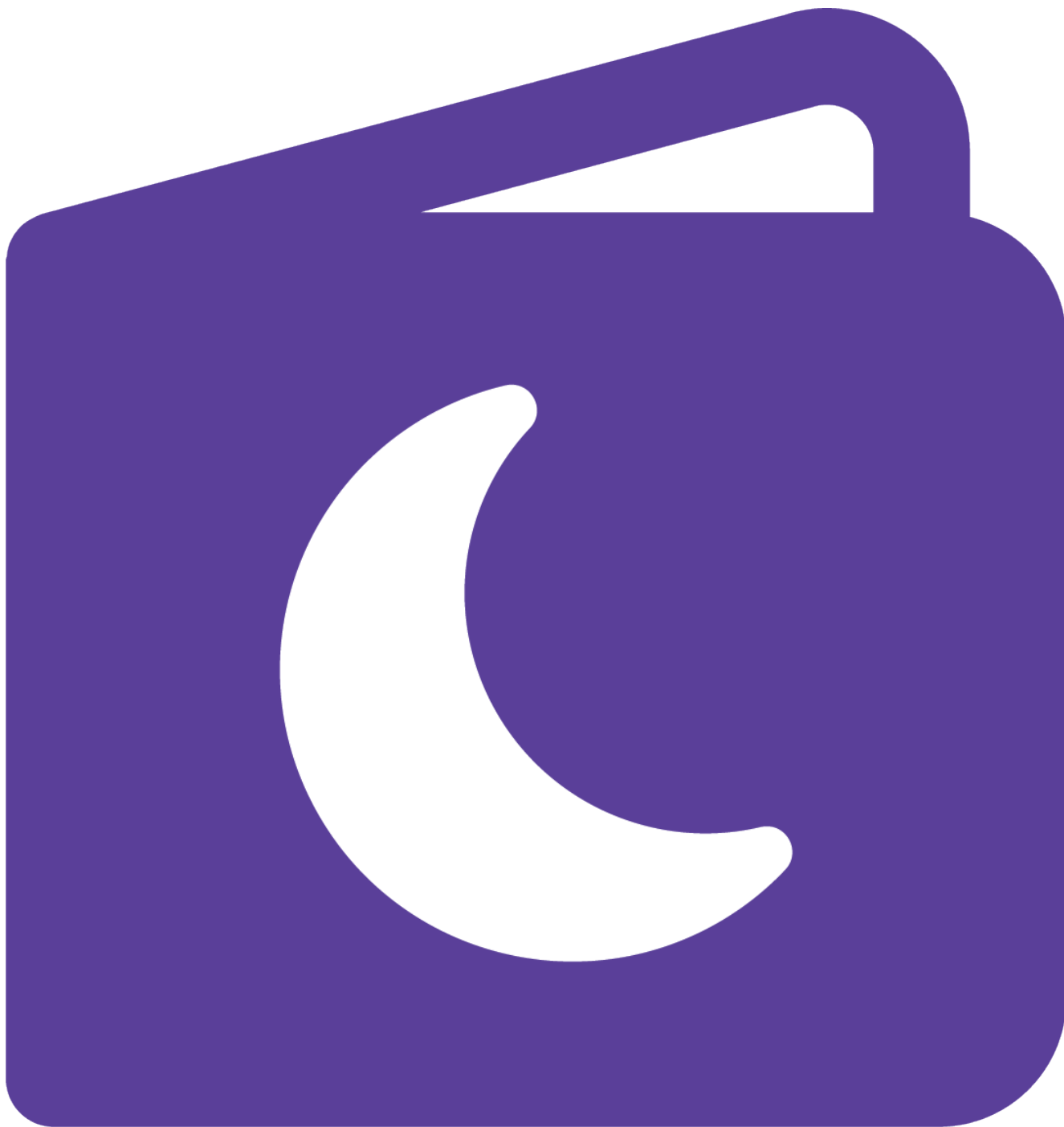
FOLLOW THEIR INTERESTS. Your toddler is intensely interested in the world around them—people, objects, colors, sounds, and how things works. Pay attention to what engages your child. Talk to them about those things (even if they don't talk back) and support their exploration.

HANG BACK. Young children are like scientists. They learn a lot in the process of trying to figure something out on their own. If they are working through something or really focused in their play, stand back and see what they can accomplish on their own. If they are stuck, give them just enough help to keep them going so they don't give up. When a child makes a discovery or masters a new skill, they develop a sense of satisfaction and confidence.

STAY SIMPLE. There is no need for fancy toys. Simple objects and materials help children use their imaginations. For example, early in the video, a toddler boy becomes interested in a bucket full of rainwater.

MAKE AN OBSTACLE COURSE. Make a simple obstacle course. You can use blankets, pillows, or boxes. See if your child can go over, under, around, and through these objects. You can also visit your local playground if the weather is nice!

ROLL A BALL. Roll a ball back and forth to develop coordination and teach about cause and effect.





READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

Infants (age 0-12 months)

The more we read with young children, the more prepared they become to enjoy reading and to do well in school. It is never too early to begin reading! When you read to your infant, they will learn how books work and develop language skills. Reading is also a special way for the two of you to bond.

READ REGULARLY. Make book time part of your baby's daily routine. They won't understand for a while, but that's okay. It's important that they hear your voice, see the pictures, and start to develop positive feelings about books.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. Choose books that are sturdy, short, and have simple, colorful pictures.

SNUGGLE UP. Hold your baby in your lap as you read so they can see the pictures and feel cozy.

DESCRIBE THE PICTURES. You don't need to read the words on the pages. Instead, describe what is happening in the pictures. Talk about the colors, shapes, and what the characters are doing. Point to the page as you talk.

ACTIVELY INVOLVE THEM. As your baby develops coordination, involve them more in the reading experience. For example, let them hold the book or turn the pages.

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD. Let your baby guide the reading experience. When they start to lose interest, try another book or stop reading. Not being forced to keep going will keep them excited about reading.



READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

Toddlers (ages 12-36 months)

The more we read with young children, the more prepared they become to enjoy reading and to do well in school. Stories expose children to new and exciting ideas and teach them to use their imaginations. Learning about people, places, and things are important building blocks for school success. For both parents and children, times together with books form wonderful and lasting memories.

READ REGULARLY. Try to set aside some time to read together every day. Get books from your local library.

WARM UP. Before you open the book, check out the cover. Read the title. Look at the picture. Ask your child what she thinks the book might be about.

READ AND DISCUSS. Your toddler will learn the most if you have discussions while you read. Respond to their comments and questions about the story. Ask questions that get them to think.

HELP THEM FOLLOW ALONG. Point to the words and pictures. This helps your toddler understand how reading works. Pause to explain the meanings of words that are new to them.

USE EXPRESSION. Use your best reader's voice! Trying different voices for different characters is fun.

ENJOY THE PICTURES. Talk about what is happening in the pictures. You can talk about the colors and shapes you see or what the characters are doing.

BUILD ON THEIR INTERESTS. Build on your child's developing interests. If they are interested in animals, for example, consider going to the library and getting books on different kinds of animals or stories with animals as the characters.

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