



Making Your Baby's Brain

When a baby is born, their brain is only about 33% of what it will be when they are adults. In the first 90 days, baby's brains can grow to be up to 55% the size of an adult brain. By three years, it is around 80–85%. Nurturing intentional care is critical for a baby's optimal brain growth.

Here are some everyday interactions you can praise yourself for doing as you practice and get skilled at being your child's first and most favorite teacher:

- *Gaze and Hold* – When you hold your baby and lovingly gaze into their eyes, you are supporting their brain development. Both loving touch and loving eye contact stimulate healthy brain growth.
- *Listen and Respond* – Learning to read your baby's unique cues and signals is one of the best ways to support your baby's brain. For example, when you understand how to read your baby's cue for hunger, and you feed them right away, your baby doesn't have to feel stressed or scared. Fear induced stress can hinder a baby's healthy brain development.
- *Play and Stop* – Play is important for brain growth. Overstimulation, however, can be stressful for a baby's brain. When you are interacting with your baby, and they avert their gaze or turn away, it may mean that they need a short break from whatever it is you are doing together.
- *Talk and Narrate* – The best kind of talk to support a baby's brain development is going to be full of description, like telling a story. Tell your baby the story of changing their diaper: "When Tyler gets wet, they don't like it, and they let daddy know. Daddy helps get Tyler happy again by helping them get clean and dry." This kind of talking may take some practice. Pat yourself on the back when you do it. And do it often. Your baby is getting a big healthy brain because of you. Good Job!



References: Ghoulipor, Bahar. (2014, August 11). *Babies Amazing Brain Growth Revealed in New Map*. <https://www.livescience.com/47298-babies-amazing-brain-growth.html>; Lally, Ronald J, Peter Mangione. *Caring Relationships; The Heart of Early Brain Development*. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2017/caring-relationships-heart-early-brain-development>.