Other books by Jackie Silberg

Games to Play With Babies
Games to Play With Toddlers
Games to Play With Two Year Olds
More Games to Play With Toddlers
300 Three Minute Games
500 Five Minute Games
The I Can't Sing Book

Jackie Silberg is an acclaimed speaker, teacher, and trainer on both early childhood development and music. You can arrange to have her speak, present, train, or entertain by contacting her through Gryphon House, PO Box 207, Beltsville MD 20704-0207
or
at jsilberg@interserv.com.
125 Brain Games for Babies

simple games to promote early brain development

Illustrations by Becky Malone

Jackie Silberg

Gryphon house
Beltsville, Maryland
Dedication
This book is dedicated to all of the lucky people who spend time with babies. The joy, the challenge, and the great satisfaction that you can help “grow” a baby’s brain will make your life more meaningful each day.
And by the way, give your baby a big kiss from me.

Acknowledgments
To my editor, Kathy Charner—this is our eighth book together, and the wonderful friendship that we have developed is very meaningful to me.
To Leah and Larry Rood, the owners and publishers of Gryphon House, thank you for your constant support and great kindness.
To all of the staff at Gryphon House for your consistent help and inventive ideas that make my books so successful.

Copyright © 1999 Jackie Silberg
Published by Gryphon House, Inc.
10726 Tucker Street, Beltsville MD 20705
Visit us on the web at www.gryphonhouse.com

Text illustration by: Becky Malone

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Silberg, Jackie, DATE
125 Brain Games for Babies, Simple Games to Promote Early Brain Development / Jackie Silberg.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-87659-199-4
1. Ability in infants. 2. Ability in children. 3. Intellect Problems, exercises, etc. 4. Learning, Psychology of—Problems, exercises, etc. 5. Infant psychology. 6. Child psychology.
I. Title. II. Title: One hundred twenty-five brain games for babies.

# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .................. 7

**BIRTH TO 3 MONTHS**

Newborn Games .............. 10
Snuggle Buggle, I Love You . 11
Baby Talk .................. 12
Soothing Music .............. 13
The Blowing Game ........... 14
Nonverbal Games ............ 15
Hugs and Kisses ............. 16
Here’s My Finger ............. 17
Hello ........................ 18
Where Did It Go? ............. 19
Follow the Action ........... 20
The Rattle Game ............. 21
The Hat Game ............... 22
Sensory Experiences ........ 23
Shadows .................... 24
Be a Baby ................... 25
The Turning Game ........... 26
Bicycle ..................... 27
Bend Those Knees ........... 28
Tongue Tales ............... 29
Staring ..................... 30
Switching Pitches ........... 31
Diaper Songs ............... 32
Talking to Baby ............. 33
A Diaper Game ............. 34
Roll Over ................... 35
Roll, Roll ................... 36

**3 TO 6 MONTHS**

Look What I See .................. 38
Who Is That Baby? ............. 39
Tap, Tap, Tap .................. 40
Let’s Watch ................... 41
Nuggle Nose ................... 42
Where’s My Baby? ............. 43
Uppity Uppity Up ............. 44
Leg Game .................... 45
Going Up the Escalator ........ 46
Talking Together ............. 47
Taping Sounds ............... 48
Connect With Conversation .... 49
Read My Lips ............... 50
Ba Ba Baby-O ............... 51
Let’s Kick .................... 52
Roll Olympics ............... 53
Dance a Baby ............... 54
Pop Goes the Weasel ........ 55
Hup, Two, Three, Four ....... 56
Let’s Bounce ............... 57
Choo Choo Train ............ 58
Swaying ...................... 59
Wiggles and Scoots ........... 60
Push the Baby ............... 61
Changing Hands ............. 62
Pretty Light ............... 63
Where’s the Toy? ............ 64

**6 TO 9 MONTHS**

Mirror Games ............... 66
Sounds Everywhere ........... 67
Where Is the Sound? ........ 68
Playing With Pots ........... 69
Rum Tum Tum ............... 70
Baby Shakers ............... 71
One, Two .................... 72
Tommy Thumb ............... 73
Playing Ball ................ 74
This Is the Way ............. 75
Little Cheek ............... 76
Puppet Peekaboo ............ 77
Whoops ..................... 78

---

Sample provided by iActiveLearning.com, all rights reserved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 TO 12 MONTHS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outside Exploring</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek and Ye Shall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In and Out</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Is…?</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where’s the Baby?</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Touch</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father, Mother,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Uncle John</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Is Bill</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash the Toy</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathtub Hickory</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling Ice</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row, Row, Your Boat</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One, Two, Three, Kick</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La-Di-Da</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silly Antics</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Can You Do With a Stacking Toy?</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piggyback</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humpty Dumpty</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin to Chin</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Me</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s Pull</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast and Slow Rhythms</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouth Songs</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itsy Bitsy</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Twinkle Game</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings With Music</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Sounds</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin, Cheek, Chair</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say It Again</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Teeth Rhyme</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack in the Box</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Stroller Game</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovering Books</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Shopping</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Face</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

My two-month-old grandson is a joy to play with. His coos and smiles melt my heart. He dearly loves to be held and rocked and nuzzled and cuddled. In the past my reaction to all this was “Isn’t he sweet?” or “Isn’t he precious?” Now I think about him differently. He is still very sweet and precious, but now I know that cuddling and rocking and singing and nuzzling will help his brain grow.

By the time a child is three, the brain has formed 1000 trillion connections—about twice as many as adults have. Some brain cells, called neurons, have already been hard-wired to other cells before birth. They control the baby’s heartbeat, breathing, and reflexes and regulate other functions essential to survival. The rest of the brain connections are waiting to be “hooked up.”

The connections neurons make with each other are called synapses. While various parts of the brain develop at different rates, study after study has shown that the peak production period for synapses is from birth to about age 10. During that time, the receptive branches of the nerve cells, called dendrites, are growing and reaching out to form trillions upon trillions of synapses. One cell can be connected to 10,000 other cells. The brain’s weight triples to nearly adult size. Periods of rapid synapse production in specific parts of the brain seem to correspond to the development of behaviors linked to those parts of the brain. Scientists believe the stimulation that babies and young children receive determines which synapses form in the brain—that is, which pathways become hard-wired.

How does the brain know which connections to keep? This is where early experience comes into play. When a connection is used repeatedly in the early years, it becomes permanent. Conversely, a connection that is not used at all or often enough, is unlikely to survive. For example, a child who is rarely spoken to or read to in the early years may have difficulty mastering language skills later on. A child who is rarely played with may have difficulty with social adjustment as she grows. An infant’s brain thrives on feedback from its environment. It wires itself into a thinking and emotional organ from the things it experiences. The circuits that form in the brain influ-
ence the development of a child. Chances are a child submerged in language from birth will learn to speak very well. A baby whose coos are met with smiles, rather than apathy, will likely become emotionally responsive.

Scientists have learned more in the past ten years about how the human brain works than in all of previous history. Their discovery that early childhood experiences profoundly shape the infant brain is changing the way we think about the needs of children.

Recent brain research has produced three key findings. First, an individual’s capacity to learn and thrive in a variety of settings depends on the interplay between nature (their genetic endowment) and nurture (the kind of care, stimulation, and teaching they receive). Second, the human brain is uniquely constructed to benefit from experience and from good teaching during the first years of life. And third, while the opportunities and risks are greatest during the first years of life, learning takes place throughout the human life cycle.

The very best way to develop a baby’s brain connections is to do what babies need, starting with caring, attentive parents and caregivers. Babies need an environment that is interesting to explore, that is safe, and that is filled with people who will respond to their emotional and intellectual needs. People who will sing to them, hug them, talk to them, rock them, read to them—not flash cards in front of their faces. All these brain connections are not meant to push early learning but rather to develop the potential for future learning. When brain development happens as it should, future learning is likely to be successful. All the games in this book develop the brain capacity of babies. They are the building blocks of future learning—a good, solid beginning for babies. And they are fun, too!

Writing this book has been an exciting experience for me. I think that everyone who has been around babies senses the amazing capacities that they have. Now science has supported so many of the things that we already know intuitively. Every time I play with a baby and I see her shake a set of keys, pound on a table, or reach out to grasp something from my hand, I think, “Wow, she’s making connections in her brain.” I hope this book will help you create a lot of “Wow” times with your baby.
Birth to 3 Months
Infants as young as one day old recognize the voices of their parents. If you patted your tummy and talked to your baby while she was in the womb, she will know the sound of your voice.

While your infant is lying on her back, walk to one side of the crib and call out her name.

Keep saying her name until she moves her eyes or her head toward the sound.

Walk to the other side of the crib and say her name again.

Gently massage her body as you smile into her eyes and say her name.
Snuggle Buggle, I Love You

- Hold your baby in your arms and rock her back and forth.
- As you rock, say the words, “Snuggle, buggle, I love you.”
- On the word “you” kiss a part of her body—head, nose, toes.
- As your child grows older, she may ask to play this game.
- This game develops bonding.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

Research shows that the more an infant is cuddled, snuggled, and held, the more secure and independent she will be when she is older.
Baby Talk

When you speak “parentese” to infants, you are communicating with them and encouraging vocal responses. This in turn develops language skills.

Say things like, “You’re such a sweet baby” or “Look at those ten little toes.”

As you speak in parentese, hold the baby near to your face and look directly into her eyes.
Place a small cassette player near your baby’s crib.

Choose soft instrumental music or lullabies to play.

Music that has a repeated melody is very soothing to an infant because it is the kind of sound she heard in the womb.

Tape the sounds of your dishwasher and play it for your baby. This sound is also similar to the sounds of the womb.
The Blowing Game

This game helps an infant become aware of the different parts of her body.

Blow gently on your baby’s palms. As you blow, say the following words in a singsong chant:

Here are the baby’s palms.

Then kiss your baby’s palms.

Blow on other parts of the body. Most babies like gentle blowing on their elbows, fingers, neck, cheek, and toes.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

Research shows that positive sensory experiences and social interactions with adults advance babies’ cognitive abilities.
Nonverbal Games

Communicate with infants by looking into their eyes, holding them close to your body, and responding to their sounds.

Holding your baby close to you develops the secure attachment that she needs for her growth.

Hold your baby close and walk around the room.

Stop walking and look into her eyes, smile, and rub noses.

Start walking again, then stop. Repeat this several times.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

Touching, holding, and cuddling a baby not only comforts her, but helps her brain grow.
How we touch, treat, and nurture infants can have a deep effect on the kind of adults they become. This game will make your baby feel safe and secure.

- Chant the following song as you rock and kiss your baby:

  Hugs and kisses, I love you
  I love you, I love you

  Hugs and kisses, I love you
  You’re my baby.

- When you are diapering your baby, you can sing this song and kiss her nose, her toes, her fingers.
Here’s My Finger

This game strengthens a baby’s hands and fingers.

Hold your infant in your lap.

Put your index finger in your baby’s hand.

She probably will grasp your finger, as this is a natural reflex with newborns.

Each time she grasps your finger, say positive words like, “That’s my wonderful girl!” or “You’re so strong!”

This game also develops tracking skills.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

Just reaching for an object helps the brain develop hand-eye coordination.
When your baby sees your face, she will be content.

Say the following poem with your face close to your baby’s face:

*Hello, hello, I love you very much.*

*Hello, hello, my fingers they can touch.*

*Hello, hello, I’ll touch your little nose.*
  *(touch baby’s nose)*

*Hello, hello, I’ll kiss your little nose.*
  *(kiss baby’s nose)*

Repeat this poem and change the last two lines to different parts of baby’s face—ears, eyes, cheek, lips.
Where Did It Go?

Hold a brightly colored scarf in front of your baby.

Slowly move it around and talk about how bright it is.

When you are sure that your baby is looking at the scarf, slowly move it to one side.

Keep moving it back and forth to encourage her to follow it with her eyes.

Play this game often. You are helping your baby’s brain capacity grow!

Note: As with any game, watch for signs that your baby may be tired of the game and ready to rest or play something different.
Follow the Action

Babies love to look at faces, especially faces of people they love.

Try different facial expressions and sounds to develop your baby’s vision and hearing.

Here are some ideas:

✓ Sing a song and use big movements with your mouth.
✓ Blink your eyes.
✓ Stick out your tongue.
✓ Make contortions with your mouth.
✓ Make lip sounds.
✓ Cough or yawn.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

By two months babies can distinguish features on a face.
The Rattle Game

- Hold a rattle in front of your baby and shake it gently.
- As you shake the rattle, sing any song or the following to the tune of “Old MacDonald”:
  
  Rattle, rattle, shake, shake, shake, E-I-E-I-O
  Rattle, rattle, shake, shake, shake, E-I-E-I-O

- When you are sure that your baby is watching the rattle, slowly move it to one side and sing the song again.
- Continue moving the rattle to different places in the room and watch as your baby moves her head in the direction of the sound.
- Put the rattle in your baby’s hand and sing the song again.
- Babies love singing and later, when they are ready to talk, they will try to imitate sounds they’ve heard.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

An infant’s brain thrives on feedback from its environment and “wires” itself into a thinking and emotional organ based on early experiences.
The Hat Game

Your face is one of the first things your baby recognizes.

Try playing the hat game with your infant. She will recognize your face and you will be stimulating her vision.

Select different hats to put on your head. As you put on the different hats, say the following:

Hats, hats, hats, hats (slowly shake your head back and forth)
(Mommy, Daddy, name of person) has a hat
(same person) loves (name of baby)
When she (he) wears her (his) hat.

If you don’t have many hats, put a scarf or ribbon on your head.
Exposing your baby to many different sensations will broaden her awareness of herself and the world.

Try rubbing your baby’s arms with different fabrics. Satin, wool, and terrycloth are good fabrics to start with.

Give your baby an opportunity to experience different smells. Go outside and smell a flower. Smell a freshly cut orange.

Note: Be careful not to overstimulate your baby. Watch for signs that your baby is tired of the game.
Infants wake up many times during the night.

Shadows cast on the wall by a nightlight make interesting shapes and forms for your baby to look at.

If you can arrange a mobile so that it reflect shadows, you will be helping to develop your baby’s visual growth.

When your child gets a little older, make shadow designs with your hands.
Be a Baby

If you want to have a better insight into your baby’s perspective, try being a baby yourself.

Investigate the world as your baby does.

Lie on your back and look at the world as your baby does.

What do you see, hear, and smell?

Move to a different place and look, listen, and smell.

Doing this kind of activity will give you many ideas of games to play with your baby that will encourage her development.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

Positive emotional, physical, and intellectual experiences are critical for the growth of a healthy brain.

BIRTH TO 3 MONTHS

Sample provided by iActiveLearning.com, all rights reserved.
The Turning Game

Turning your infant in different directions will help her develop an awareness of space and a sense of balance.

Try turning your infant in the following ways:

- Hold her in your arms and support her head as you turn in circles.
- Hold her with her back against your body.
- Carry her with her face looking at yours.

As you turn with her in different directions, sing nursery rhymes.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

Exposing babies to different visual fields will develop hand-eye coordination and balance, both of which are prerequisites for crawling and walking.
Bicycle

- Put your baby on her back and move her legs like she is riding a bicycle.

Note: Never force your baby’s legs. If she resists, try something else.

- Sing bicycle songs like “A Bicycle Built for Two” as you move her legs.

- Try making up a simple song. Here’s an idea that can be sung to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”:

  Ride, ride, ride your bike
  Up and down the street.
  Happily, happily, happily, happily
  This is such a treat.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS
An infant’s brain thrives on feedback from its environment and “wires” itself into a thinking and emotional organ based on early experiences.
Bend Those Knees

Place your baby on her back and carefully pull both legs until they are straight.

When her legs are straight, lightly tap the bottoms of her feet.

She will point her toes downward and bend her knees.

As you do this game, sing the following to the tune of “Ring Around the Rosy”:

Bending, bending, bending
Little knees are bending
Bending, bending
Hip hooray!

End a rhyme with some kind of a cheer. Your baby will learn to anticipate it, and it makes the game more exciting.

WHAT BRAIN RESEARCH SAYS

Strengthening your baby’s thigh muscles is important for future crawling and walking.