


Newborn

Observe & Respond Strategies



Invite • Engage • Teach

GUIDE TO RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING STRATEGIES

During the first six months of a baby's life, caregivers learn all about how the baby likes to interact with people and objects; what times of day they like to play, eat, and sleep; and what calms and comforts them. Caregivers also know the daily activities and routines of their baby's life and when the best times are to introduce new people, go new places, and practice new skills.

Successful responsive communications and interactions between you and your baby help them participate in daily routines and learning. Successful communication between you and the baby includes four steps:

STEPS TO HELP BABIES LEARN

1

Watch for your baby's cues to decide what your baby wants or needs.

2

Let your baby know you understand their cues.

3

Join in the activity with your baby using what makes them happy or what the baby needs.

4

Watch how your baby lets you know what they like and respond.

Invite

Invite strategies include emotional cues caregivers can use as you go about your day with your baby. Cues are behaviors babies or caregivers use to communicate with each other. When you know what the baby is telling you with their cues, you can help them wake, sleep, play, eat, or calm down. Caregivers use the **Invite** strategies below to read and respond to their baby's cues. Which of these cues does the baby use to let you know when they are ready?

How do you know when the baby is ready to play?

What Your Baby May Do (Cues)

- Facial Movements:
- Eyes open or widen and/or eyebrows raised looking towards people and objects
 - Maintaining eye contact, mouth opening and closing, smiling and/or grinning
- Physical Movements:
- Arms waving, hands opening and closing, legs kicking, lifting and/or turning head towards people or objects
 - Relaxed posture and steady breathing
- Vocalizations:
- Pleasant coos, laughter, and/or grunting not indicating distress
 - Humming or pleasant sighing

What You Can Do

- Talk in a calm or playful voice.
- Give your finger or a toy to hold.
- Gently touch.
- Give something to suck on
- Help to sit up.
- Gently bounce up and down.

How do you know when the baby wants to eat, rest or sleep?

What Your Baby May Do (Cues)

- Facial Movements:
- Eyes shut and eyebrows together
 - Frowns, grimaces, and/or mouth closed tightly
- Physical Movements:
- Agitated or restless movement of hands, legs, and turning head or body away from people or objects
 - Startles, sneezes, yawns, or breathes rapidly
- Vocalizations:
- Crying or whining
 - Unpleasant cooing, sighing, or grunting indicating distress

What You Can Do

- Talk in a calm or quiet voice.
- Hold or cuddle on your chest.
- Swaddle in a favorite blanket.
- Give your hand or pacifier to suck on.
- Quietly hum.
- Rock back and forth or up and down.

Responding right after the baby does something lets them know you are available to help them. Caregivers who use responsive strategies that **Invite**, **Engage**, and **Teach** help the baby learn how to interact and play with others during activities and routines.

Engage

Engage strategies are the positive ways caregivers respond quickly to the baby and join them in an activity. **Engage** strategies let the baby know that you are close by, paying attention, and there to help or play. Engage strategies also include using the baby's interests to play with and help them learn during daily activities. Which of these strategies do you use or want to use to engage the baby?

- Play with the baby by doing the same thing they are doing.
- Look right at the baby's face when they look at you.
- Talk back to the baby when they make noises.
- Look at and name what the baby is looking at.
- Name the baby's emotions.
- Using a sing-song or exaggerated voice when you talk to the baby.
- Hold the baby so they can watch your face.
- Smile and talk face-to-face with the baby.
- Keep the baby close when new people are introduced.
- Respond immediately to the baby's cues that they need to eat, sleep, or have a diaper change.
- Comfort the baby when they are upset.
- Other _____

Teach

Teach strategies include all the positive ways caregivers respond that support the baby to learn new skills. **Teach** strategies are used after **Invite** strategies have helped the baby be calm and awake, and after **Engage** strategies have been used to help the baby join you in an activity. Which of these strategies do you use or want to use to teach the baby?

- Move objects the baby is looking at or reaching for closer.
- Take turns making noises or faces or touching a toy with the baby.
- Make new noises or faces when you talk to the baby.
- Help the baby try new things with objects.
- Use your voice to help the baby follow you and/or find you.
- Wait for the baby to smile or talk back to you after you smile or talk to them.
- Find ways to make play activities the baby likes last longer.
- Use the baby's interests to help them be a part of regular activities.
- Introduce new play objects when the baby is in an alert, calm state.
- Increase how often the baby plays and interacts with others.
- Add new activities that let the baby practice what they are learning.
- Consistently follow the baby's eating, sleeping, and care routines.
- Other _____