

How Babies Learn

Babies have to be physically comfortable before they can learn.

If babies are hungry, sleepy, in pain, sick, they cannot pay attention to any learning activity. Watch for babies who seem content. Then take a safe activity to them that matches their level of ability. Offer the activity, using a duplicate toy in a way similar to what you want the baby to learn to do—eventually. Wait to see what happens.

Babies learn through repetition.

Rather than changing the lesson every time the babies come to church, repeat lesson ideas and activities. These little ones need the repetition to give them time to respond to the activity. For this reason, consider making lesson activities, complete with instructions, that can be stored in and taught in the baby room during every service for a month, several months, or permanently.

Babies are dependent on adults.

Generally, nursery helpers will need to be sensitive to babies' needs to move to new positions, to have toys within reach,

to have interesting pictures or objects to see.

Babies learn through their senses.

Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling—all add to what babies are learning. Babies like to handle and mouth everything. So every nursery toy



needs to be safe and cleanable. After one baby finishes with a toy that has been in his mouth, teachers should remove it until it can be washed and disinfected.

Babies learn from imitation.

If a teacher shakes a bell or moves a toy in a way related to

a Bible story, eventually babies will probably imitate that part of the lesson.

Babies learn to talk when they hear talk.

The more often a baby enjoys eye-to-eye “talks” with adults, the more quickly she learns to understand and communicate. At first babies will begin moving their mouths, then making coos, then jabbering, and finally repeating a word or two.

Babies need to be protected from one another.

Crawling babies may climb over other babies in their path. Babies need help to learn to go around, not over, other babies. Teachers can help babies learn to use gentle touches. Teachers can also distract babies from exploring one another to exploring interesting books or toys.

Babies are learning to trust and love.

When babies receive tender, loving care during the first year of their lives, they learn to love others and to trust that their needs will be met. Learning to love and trust adults, who they can see, can be the first step in learning to love and trust God, who they can't see.

Questions for Further Study—

1. Within your church nursery, how are the babies' physical needs met?
2. Are your nursery workers using repetition within the teaching curriculum?
3. What are three ways that your nursery protects babies from one another? What improvements can be made in this area?



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