



6-9 Months

Six-month-olds are motivated, energetic, busy, opinionated and, for the most part, fabulous! They are on the verge of huge developmental strides - intellectual, emotional and physical - and they have many, many things they want to do. The challenge - for them and for you - is that they can't yet do everything they have in mind. Their fingers aren't working well enough for them to make objects do what they want. They don't yet have the balance or coordination to stand up and walk, let alone crawl. They've got so much to say, yet they don't have the words. But they experience every imaginable feeling, sometimes all at once.

Although there is great variation in development at this age, during the next 3 months many of the skills babies are eager to master will, in fact, kick in. Until then, they are likely to get frustrated often; and you will most likely bear the brunt of that frustration. Somehow, you need to walk the line between doing things for your 6-month-old that she can't do yet, and finding a way to help her do things for herself. If, for example, she wants to crawl toward a toy but finds herself moving backward instead of forward, you can sit behind her and place your palms against the soles of her feet. Then she might be able to push herself forward and get it for herself. Of course, there's always the possibility that she'll be mad if you do that, because what she really wants is to do it on her own. But hang in there - if you're patient, she'll learn patience and persistence, too.

Saying Goodnight

Some 6-month-olds may snuggle happily into their cribs at bedtime and drift off, many are inclined to put up a good fight...no matter how tired they are. How can we avoid a daily struggle when we, ourselves, are just as tired as our babies?

If your baby could talk:

*Want to know why I cry and fuss so much when you put me to bed? Well, why in the world would I want to leave your nice warm arms to lie alone in my crib? All I know is that I'm happy when I'm with you, and bed time means an end to all of that. How can you help? Well, if we do lots of nice things that lead up to bed time, it will help me feel relaxed. A bath, a dimly lit room, a book, a gentle song and a rub on the back. I like that. And make sure to give me something to hold on to when I can't hold on to you . . . my teddy or comfy blanket are good. Okay, I still might cry a little, but I think I'm ready. I can't promise anything, though, about tomorrow.***What your baby is learning:**

What your baby is learning:

Separating from the people they love is one of biggest challenges young children face. When you make this transition easier by snuggling up and devoting uninterrupted time at bed

time, your baby learns that she is special and deeply loved. This forms the foundation for healthy social and emotional development and future positive relationships. When you establish regular bed time routines, you offer your baby the predictability she needs to feel in control of her world. When she knows what to expect, she feels secure, and is more willing to believe that while people sometimes disappear, they also can be trusted to return. This helps her adapt to separations.

When you gradually help her unwind, in preparation for bed time, and give her the opportunity to fall asleep on her own (without feeding or rocking), you are helping her learn how to soothe herself to sleep. This is an invaluable skill that will benefit her (and you!) for years to come.

What you can do:

- Give your baby a chance to get herself to sleep. Babies are often much more resourceful than we think. While it can be very distressing to parents to hear their baby struggling, if you always do it for her, she misses opportunities to figure out how to soothe herself to sleep.

Reading your baby’s cues

	What to expect	What you can do
<i>I’ve got brain power</i>	Your baby's brain power grows as he experiments with toys in more complex ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a variety of safe toys for the bath-- containers, rubber toys, plastic bath books, plastic ladles. Join his exploration and show him different ways to use the objects. • Show him how to take a cup of water and pour it over the ducky to let him watch what happens. Help him fill up the whale and squirt the water out.
<i>I can move and shake</i>	Your baby is increasingly mobile - creeping, crawling and even pulling herself up to stand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an environment that is safe for exploration. Make sure only safe objects are within her grasp and that anything she might use to pull herself to standing is sturdy and fastened down to support her weight. • Remind yourself that babies develop their motor skills at very different rates. Sometimes early crawlers are late walkers (why bother walking when she can get to where she needs to go so easily on all fours?). Development is an unfolding process... not a race.
<i>I’m good with my hands</i>	Your baby's ability to use his hands and fingers is increasing every day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the next few months he will begin to hold things between his thumb and forefinger. This makes it much easier for him to do things with his hands, like feeding himself. • Play back-and-forth games. He'll love to hand you things that you hand back to him. This can go on for hours, and it's a great way to learn give-and-take! • Now that your baby can pick up lots of things, make sure he doesn't get his hands on objects he can choke on -- anything that

		he can fit entirely into his mouth.
<i>I see you</i>	Your baby begins to understand that people and things exist even when she can't see them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play peek-a-boo. Even though you're hiding your head for just a moment (and in a very obvious way), this kind of game is practice for saying good-bye in other settings. • Play disappearing and reappearing games, such as find the missing toy (hidden under cloth, table, etc.) or drop an object and watch her try to locate it.
<i>Who, may I ask, are you?</i>	Your baby begins to be uncertain or fearful around strangers or even family members he doesn't see very often. Becoming quiet or even distressed when meeting someone new is quite typical of 6- to 9-month-olds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce your baby to new people from the safety of your arms. Ask the new person to approach him slowly. • Give the new person one of your baby's favorite toys or books to help engage him. • Prepare your extended family and friends for your baby's new wariness and make sure they understand that it isn't anything personal.
<i>Now hear this</i>	Your baby begins using sounds and gestures to communicate her wants and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become your baby's interpreter. If she points to her bottle, ask, "Do you want some juice?" • Encourage communication and motor skills by describing what she is doing. When she throws a toy down, you can say, "Okay, you don't want the car. But you're looking at the bear. Do you want to hold him?" Then put the bear within her range and encourage her to get it.
<i>I'm a copycat</i>	Your baby becomes a great imitator. Imitating is not only a great learning tool . . . it's lots of fun..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play copycat games. Make a sound and give him time to copy you.. • Push a button on the jack-in-the-box to make the clown appear, then wait for him to do it. This teaches him cause-and-effect and that he can make things happen.
<i>Inquiring minds want to know</i>	Your baby is intensely curious and wants to spend almost every waking hour exploring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow her lead on what interests her and encourage exploration. • Think about the way your baby explores things. Does she explore a book, for example, from beginning to end, page by page? Does she turn it upside down, flip the pages quickly or look at one page again and again. There are no "rights" or "wrongs." Some babies may find books so delicious that they'll want to chew on them for a while. That's okay, too, as long as they're safe.