



SPECIAL  
EDITION!

# Baby Play

## Activity Booklet



Playgroup

Playgroup at Home



**“A baby is born with a need to be loved - and never outgrows it.”**

**FRANK A. CLARK**



Babies see the world with fresh eyes, and as such see it full with wonder. During the early weeks and months of life, profound growth occurs as babies brains and bodies continue to adapt and develop. These are the building blocks of life and lay the foundations for the years to come.

Babies live in a sensory world and take most of their cues from their parents and carers. **You are their primary educators.** From your facial expressions, to the tone of your voice, your child comes to understand the rhythms and comfort of your daily life together. Through engagement, observation and play, their learning builds and grows.

Throughout this booklet, discover fun and relaxing ways to bond and learn with your child.

Enjoy this time together. One thing babies know from day one, is love.



**“A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities.**

**EDA J LESHAN**





## Your Activities:

### Exploring the Senses

- + Tummy Time Hoola Hoop
- + Peekaboo Board
- + Heuristic Treasure Baskets
- + Sensory Bottles

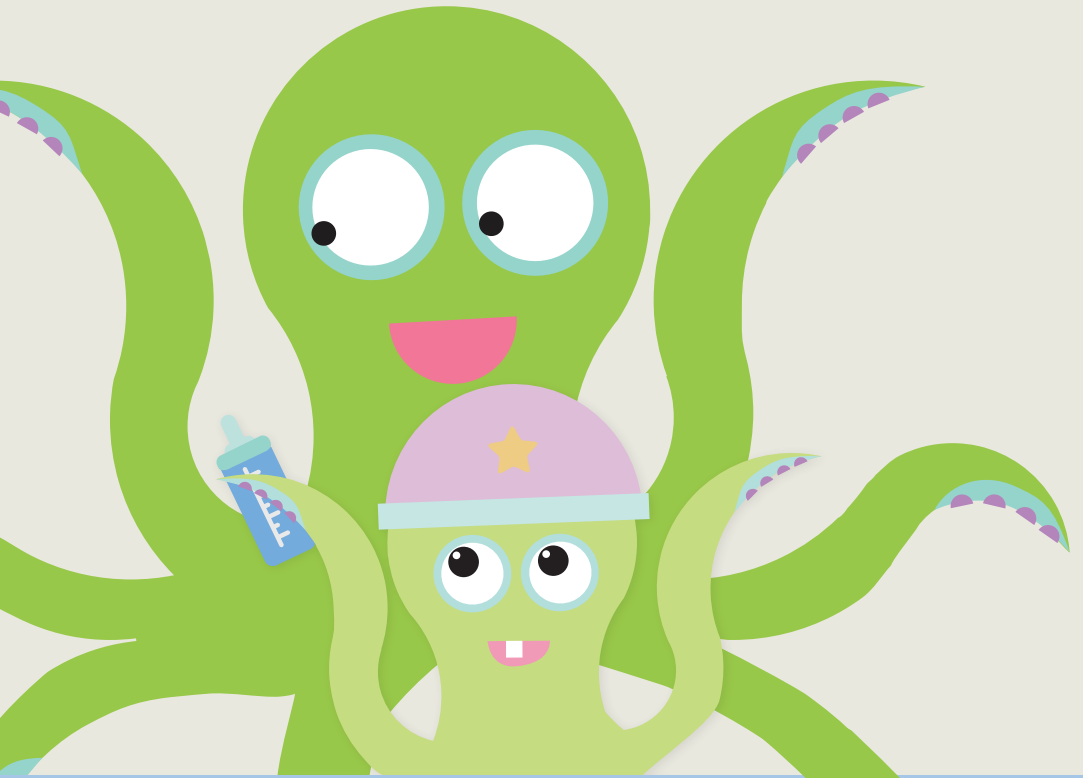
### Music Sweet Music

- + Sing with Me, Play Me a Tune
- + Listening and Learning
- + Homemade Instruments
- + Sounds of Nature
- + Five Little Ducks

### Rest and Relaxation

- + Making Bubbles
- + A Dose of Nature
- + Gentle Baby Massage
- + Twinkle Twinkle





Exploring  
the Senses.

**“All our knowledge  
begins with the senses.”**

IMMANUEL KANT



# Tummy Time Hoola Hoop



Tummy time is highly recommended for babies when the time is right. It is a great way for babies to develop and strengthen their neck, head and back. It is a good activity to do when your baby is in an active mood, under the supervision of an adult.

A homemade hoola hoop inspires sensory exploration and encourages babies to use their fine and gross motor skills, while practicing their hand and eye coordination.

## What you need...

One large hoop, preferably a little larger than your baby

Several sensory play objects that are safe to tie or fix to the hoop. For example - different shapes and sizes of ribbon in a variety of colours, teething toys, a rattle, a squishy ball

Super glue or string

\*Safety reminder: Please ensure that all items are safely fixed to the hoop ensure that they do not come loose or fall off.

## What to do:

+ Decorate your hoop with the different sensory play items that you have assembled

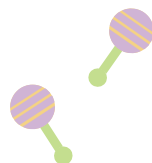
### Enjoy some tummy time!

+ Place your baby on a mat inside the hoop. Encourage your baby to see and feel the different items that are fixed to the hoop

+ Pique their interest by playing along and experimenting the with different sensory play items

+ As your baby gets older, you will notice that they start to reach out for certain items

Hang your hoop up in a safe place where your baby can watch the sensory play items move and sway in the air





# Peekaboo Board

## What you need...

- + Large pieces of coloured card
- + Paper or cardboard
- + Photos, pictures, leaves. Use your imagination and pick up things that your baby will enjoy finding.
- + Glue or double-sided tape
- + Scissors

## Peekaboo! I see you!

Babies love to discover new things and look for recognisable objects such as their teddy or blanket, or your face. This exciting discovery board allows babies to engage with the world around them. Use family photos, images cut out of magazines, pom-poms or natural items such as leaves and dried flowers to create sensory elements for you baby to find.

## What to do:

1. Cut coloured paper to size of your peekaboo items
2. Place a large piece of cardboard down and draw outlines of where you would like your peekaboo items to go
3. Adhere your hidden items to the cardboard and tape a coloured square of card over the top so that it acts as a flap
4. Continue to create these hidden flaps with different things to find underneath



Sit with your baby and enjoy this time together, having conversations about what you see. Talk about what is behind the peekaboo flap. Assist your baby to open the flap and use the element of surprise to extend the play and keep your baby engaged

## INSPIRATION

- + Write a name or draw an object behind one of your peekaboo squares. As your baby develops, these visuals will help with letter and shape recognition
- + Have a theme for your peekaboo board such as characters from a favourite book, family photos or nature items

# Heuristic Treasure Baskets

**The term Heuristic play describes the activity of babies and children as they play with and explore the properties of 'objects'. These objects are things from the real world.<sup>1</sup>**

Heuristic play involves the sensory exploration of everyday items such as pasta, a wooden spoon, a piece of string or leaves in the garden. The difference between heuristic play and playing with toys is that toys are often limiting in what they can do, meaning a car is meant to be rolled back and forth, while heuristic play with any household object allows your child's creativity to take over.

Having an everyday object to play with stimulates innovation, creativity and imagination as your child discovers the ways the object can be used. Heuristic play stimulates creativity and imagination.

Imagination leads a child's play with heuristic objects, rather than muscle memory taking over when a child knows that a noise happens when they push a button, for example. During heuristic play, open-ended play opportunities allow children to explore, learn and develop in a completely natural way.



**Time to get creative!**

See the next page for heuristic play ideas and inspiration



# Heuristic Treasure Baskets

## What you need...

A blanket to place on the floor for your baby to sit or lie on

An open and shallow basket for putting objects in that your baby can reach into

A variety of objects found around the home with different shapes, colours and textures. These may include: a spoon, a small container, a pine cone, a small jewellery box, a tennis ball, an unused toothbrush, a small heat pack or bean bag, a plastic cup, an ice cream scoop and so forth

**\*Safety reminder:** It is extremely important that each item in the basket is safe and clean. Ensure that all items will not break apart in your baby's hands or mouth causing a choking hazard.



## What to do:

- + Sit or lie your baby in front of the basket
- + Sit behind the baby and encourage the baby to inspect and play with objects by using simple words to describe them
- + Talk about the texture of the item, colours, shapes and what the item might be called or used for in the home

**TIP!** This activity is developmentally appropriate for babies who can already sit up safely and are beginning to reach out to grab things

[Discover more about heuristic play here and explore the ways that it can be extended into toddlerhood.](#)



# Sensory Bottles

**“Children see magic because they look for it.”**

- CHRISTOPHER MOORE

Sensory bottles are great play items for babies and you can make them at home. Create colours, patterns, glistening surfaces and great big blobs for your baby to play with and observe.

Sensory bottles incorporate a wide range of skills and can teach babies things such as colour and shape recognition, as well as introducing science concepts such as cause and effect as things sink and float.

Sensory bottles are a great play tool in many different circumstances. You might be able to calm your baby down if upset or distract them from a situation. You could give your baby a sensory bottle in the car, doctor's clinic or at the shops to keep them entertained.



## What you need...

### To get started:

- + An empty, dried out clear plastic bottle  
(We have used Voss water bottles although any clear plastic bottle will work)
- + Mixing bowl, spoons, funnel
- + Duct tape, super glue

## Filling your bottles

Use your imagination to fill your bottle with whatever you like! See the next page for ideas and inspiration



# Sensory Bottles

## What to do:

1. Set up all ingredients on a dry surface
2. Mix ingredients in the bowl/jug and then using the funnel, pour into bottle leaving a small amount of space to add your bits and bobs (such as shells, glitter etc)
3. Dry around the lip and then add super glue on the inside of the lid and place the lid on tight
4. Wrap some duct tape around the lid and neck of the bottle to ensure that the lid won't come off and the bottle won't leak

**\*SAFETY TIP: Ensure the lid is secured with super glue once the bottle is complete and then duct tape is wrapped around the lid and bottle**



## GLITTER BOTTLE

Half a cup of glitter glue

Enough warm water to fill bottle

Extra glitter and sparkles

**Tip: Whisk glitter glue and water before putting into the bottle for an even consistency**

## OIL BOTTLE

Clear baby oil

A few drops of food colouring

Shells, glitter, straws, buttons, sequins, pom poms

## NATURE BOTTLE

Long sticks, pebbles, leaves, rice, pasta, sand, bark, seeds, shells, dried flowers

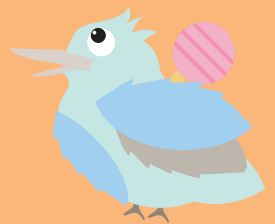


**“The senses, being the explorers of the world, open the way to knowledge.”**

**MARIA MONTESSORI**



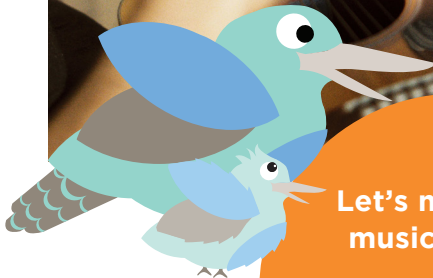
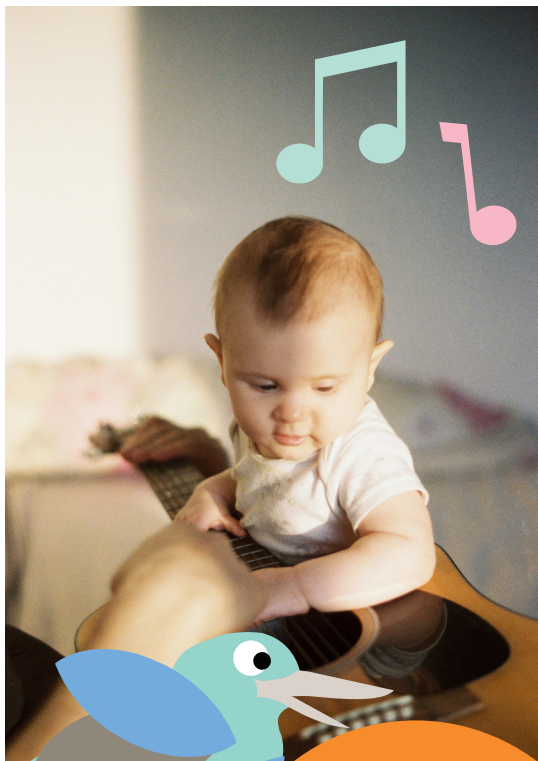
**MUSIC SWEET  
MUSIC.**



# Sing with Me, Play Me a Tune

Babies live in a sensory world where they take cues from all that they see, hear, smell, taste and feel. Certain melodies and tunes can provide comfort, curiosity, upset or joy. We can use music to calm a baby, nurse a baby to sleep, excite a baby and create intrigue.

Songs, nursery rhymes and lullabies help children to recognise sounds and emotions. They encourage children to listen and grasp the concept of words and how certain sounds make us feel. With time this greatly helps with language development and communication. Much like having lots of books around for children to observe, having music playing, the radio on or podcasts chattering in the background creates an audio sensory environment, ripe with learning opportunities.



**Let's make some music together**

There is lots of ways to weave music into your babies day. See the next page for ideas and inspiration.



# Listening and Learning



## Easy and Enjoyable Listening

Incorporate the things that you love to do and enjoy with your baby. This is hugely beneficial for both of you as you can share and bond. It is also good for your own mental health to weave your own interests throughout the day. Put on some of your favourite music and dance around the house or listen to a radio program that you like. Lots of incidental learning ensues as they absorb the sounds of words and the flow of language.

### Good podcasts for babies and families:

#### [A Big List of Podcasts for Little Kids](#)

[The Beanies](#)

[Mamamia](#)

[BabyTalk](#) by ABC Radio

Check out [Kinderling Kids Radio](#) for family friendly radio

### Great places to listen to music

**In the bedroom:** Lullabies at night time help to create a calm environment. If used regularly, they can help children with their routine.

**In the car:** This is a great spot to hear the intricacies of music without external noise. If your baby is not a good sleeper, try the motion of the car and some gentle music to lull them off to sleep.

**In the garden:** Pop on some favourite ditties for your baby to bop along to while they watch the world go by.

Babies are accustomed to being in the womb where there is always a bit of noise. This is why lots of babies do not like complete quiet and prefer white noise, especially when they are trying to sleep. Gentle music or relaxing sounds in the background can help babies to settle. On Youtube, you can find the sound of [rain trickling](#) or the [sounds of nature](#) which are great to not only sooth the baby, but the rest of the family, too.

[Find lots of nursery rhymes to share with your baby here.](#)



# Homemade Instruments

Shake shake shake make your own musical rain sticks! Use things you can find at home to create your own sounds. This sensory experience will enable your baby to make their own music and express their emotions as they play. Join in and connect with your little one. This activity helps to forge bonds and develop communication skills - and also inspires a love of music.

## What you need:

- Cardboard paper towel roll
- Piece of aluminum foil
- Plastic cling wrap
- Rice, dry beans or sand
- Tape (or rubber band)
- Craft supplies

## What to do:

- + Crumple up a long, thin pieces of aluminum foil and insert it into the cardboard paper towel roll
- + Put a doubled-up piece of plastic wrap over one end of the roll and tape to secure in place
- + Pour a tablespoon of dry rice into the open end of the roll then seal the end with plastic wrap
- + Tape plastic wrap in place and decorate!



**TIP!** The aluminum foil will act as the barrier to ensure the rice moves through the roll at a slow rate, mimicking the sound of falling rain.

# Sounds of Nature



Going on a listening walk provides children with an opportunity to hear a range of new sounds. They may hear birdsong, insects buzzing or chirping, the wind through the trees, leaves crunching underfoot and dogs barking.

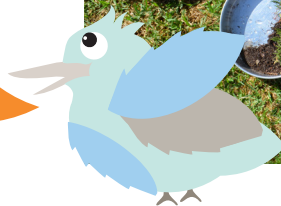
Talk with them quietly about the sounds they hear: Are they soft or loud? Long or short? Do they make a pattern? You may also hear sounds introduced into the environment by us like cars going by, construction work and aeroplanes flying overhead. This simple activity helps a child to develop their listening and communication skills and feeds their cognitive ability because they must stop and think about the noises they are hearing.

## What to do:

1. Listen and observe
2. Take a recording device and record some of the sounds you hear

**TIP:** On your walk, collect natural items like leaves, twigs, seed pods, shells, pebbles etcetera. These items can be used at home as instruments or attached with pieces of string to a clothes hanger to create a mobile

Rainy days can be a wonderful source of new listening experiences. The rain falling on the roof and against the windows, the wind and thunder associated with storms. Listen and enjoy!



# Five Little Ducks



Nursery rhymes engage young children and babies. Music and movement help to stimulate the speech and thinking areas of the brain. Incorporating music in your daily life creates opportunities for children to develop listening, language and physical skills. Music play also encourages self expression and the expression of emotion.

## What to do:

1. Sing the *Five Little Ducks* nursery rhyme with your baby. Take a duck away each time one doesn't come back, or use 'duck' puppets to act out the song
2. Sing as many times as you like!
3. Use musical instruments as you sing
4. Encourage words like faster, slower, up and down. Vary the delivery of the songs by singing softly, high or low
5. Mathematical concepts are incorporated into this activity by using rhythm, patterns and subtraction

## What you need...

- + Music!
- + Puppets or plastic ducks to visually show your baby what is happening
- + Musical instruments

## Inspiration

Sing other interactive songs like *Teddy Bear Teddy Bear*, *Hey Diddle Diddle* or *Pussy Cat Pussy Cat*. Find the lyrics to *Five Little Ducks* on the next page!



# Five Little Ducks



Five little ducks went out one day - Over the hill and far away  
Mother duck said “Quack, quack, quack, quack”  
But only four little ducks came back.

Four little ducks went out one day - Over the hill and far away  
Mother duck said “Quack, quack, quack, quack”  
But only three little ducks came back.

Three little ducks went out one day - Over the hill and far away  
Mother duck said “Quack, quack, quack, quack”  
But only two little ducks came back.

Two little ducks went out one day - Over the hill and far away  
Mother duck said “Quack, quack, quack, quack.”  
But only one little duck came back.

One little duck went out one day - Over the hill and far away  
Mother duck said “Quack, quack, quack, quack”  
But none of the five little ducks came back.

Sad mother duck went out one day -Over the hill and far away  
The sad mother duck said “Quack, quack, quack, quack”  
And all of the five little ducks came back!

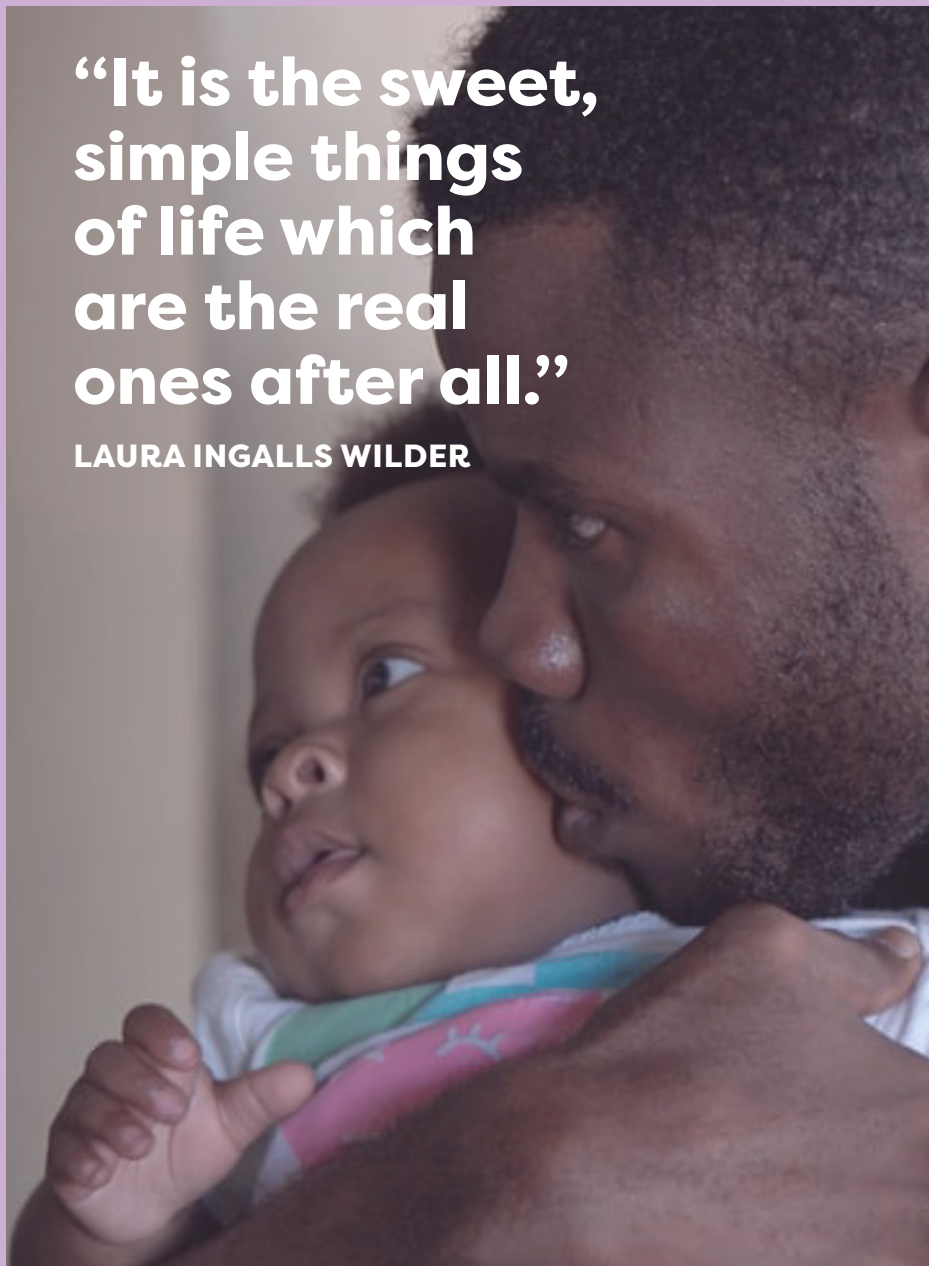




**Rest and  
Relaxation.**

**“It is the sweet,  
simple things  
of life which  
are the real  
ones after all.”**

**LAURA INGALLS WILDER**



# Making Bubbles



Bubbles are a great source of delight for children. Bubble play is a socially interactive activity that brings children and babies together. When babies and children chase bubbles, they are developing gross motor skills. When babies and children blow bubbles, they are developing mouth muscles and speech sounds. It is also lots of fun!

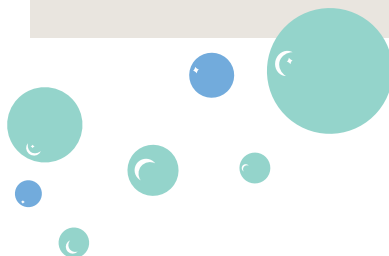
## What to do:

1. Make up bubble solution and pour into a container
2. Blow the bubbles around your baby and up into the air. They will enjoy watching the bubbles float and pop
3. Encourage your baby to catch the bubbles and introduce sound words like 'pop'
4. Blow the bubbles up high and encourage your baby to stretch and catch
5. Talk about the different colours the bubbles make as they float around

**\*SAFETY TIP:** Special care should be taken with the bubble mixture to ensure it doesn't come in contact with eyes and is not swallowed.

## What you need...

- + 1/4 cup glycerin
- + 1/2 cup water
- + 1 tablespoon liquid detergent
- + Bubble blowers
- + Container or tray





# A Dose of Nature



The great outdoors have an array of sights, sounds and fragrances to stimulate the senses. It truly is a great learning ground for babies.

## What you need...

- + A large basket or container
- + Your sense of adventure and a curious mind

## What to do:

Venture out on a walk in the stroller. Take a basket or bag and collect as many different leaves, flowers and interesting little treasures as you go.

An enormous amount of observation and discussion can occur when out in nature. Look for and discuss different colours, shapes, sizes, types of textures and the seasons.

### Babies love to pick up, throw and feel leaves.

Contact paper is a great resource particularly if babies are unsure of that 'messy feeling'. Collect natural items and stick them to a piece of contact paper, creating opportunities for further exploration at home.



# Gentle Baby Massage



Massage time is a wonderful way to calm your baby and create bonds. Massages also help to aid digestion and circulation. Enjoy a quiet massage after bath time or before bed.

## What you need...

- + A warm environment
- + A soft place to lie your baby down. Pop your baby on a comfortable towel or if it is a nice day lie down on a picnic rug
- + Baby oil or moisturisers that are gentle on babies skin

## What to do:

It is good to give your baby time without a nappy. A daily massage with moisturiser can help with nappy rash


[Check out the Maternal Child Health APP for helpful advice during your early days with your baby](#)

**Handy Hint:** Sing to your baby while you massage them! Twinkle Twinkle Little Star is a classic. See lyrics on the next page.








# Twinkle Twinkle



Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky.



Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!



When the blazing sun is gone,  
When he nothing shines upon,  
When you show your little light,  
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.



Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!



“Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.”

ROBERT BRAULT

## Credits

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REFERENCES 1. Masters, M. *Heuristic Play Part I - The Treasure Basket*. Little Acorns to Mighty Oaks. 2nd December 2013, <https://www.littleacornstomightyoaks.co.uk/blog/2013/12/02/heuristic-play-part-i-the-treasure-basket> - Accessed 25th July 2020

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