

Treasure Baskets: Babies making choices

Babies are curious about their surroundings and enjoy exploring and learning about their world.

Treasure Baskets give babies the opportunity to explore a wide range of stimulating experiences – and they help to keep them happy!



New horizons

As your baby starts to sit up – perhaps supported by cushions or pillows to begin with – they will be able to see and hear more of the things around them as a whole new horizon opens up.

Until they are able to move around, they can sometimes get frustrated and perhaps a bit grizzly by not being able to reach any of these new and exciting things. Having a Treasure Basket nearby can help to ease these frustrations.

Treasure Baskets

A treasure basket is a low-sided, sturdy basket or container with soft edges that can be filled with a variety of household, recyclable and natural objects for babies to explore.



Treasure baskets offer babies the opportunity to explore a variety of different objects as well as being able to make their own choices. These experiences help to build important connections in their brain which support their learning and development.

Choosing objects for Treasure Baskets

Everyday items from around the home can be used to fill a treasure basket. Choose items to encourage your baby to use their senses – things that feel, smell, taste, sound and look interesting.

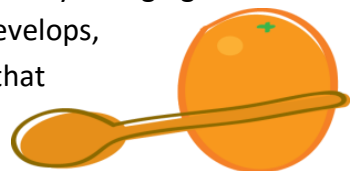
Keep in mind that your baby will want to explore the objects with their mouths, so make sure that everything you choose for the basket is safe. Avoid small objects or anything with sharp edges – *If in doubt, throw it out!* Check the contents regularly, giving things a good clean and throwing away any damaged items.

You'll find that your home is full of 'treasures' for your baby to explore, from ladles to wooden spoons to pastry brushes!

Here are some ideas of things to include:

- natural objects – fir cone, large pebble, loofah, sponge, big shell, pumice stone, fruit (apple, lemon, orange)
- wood – rattle, spoon, egg cup, bowl, pegs, pastry brush (check the bristles are firmly attached), napkin ring, coaster
- metal – bunch of measuring spoons, large empty tin, small saucepan, whisk, bells, bowls, tin lids, tea strainer, garlic squeezer, bunch of keys
- odds and ends – small purses, cardboard boxes, inside of kitchen rolls, crisp packet (rinsed thoroughly and turned inside out), pieces of fabric such as chiffon, lace, velvet etc.

Unlike a bought toy which stays the same until it is outgrown or broken, the Treasure Basket can be constantly changing and evolving. As your baby grows and develops, they will enjoy exploring any new items that you add.

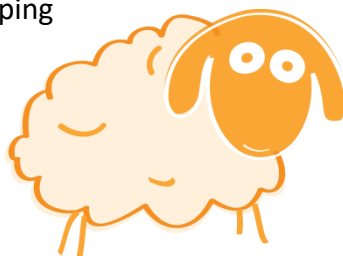


Learning curiosity and confidence

Choose a safe and comfortable space for your baby to explore their treasure basket – perhaps with some cushions for support.

Staying close by and quietly watching your baby will help them feel safe and secure. This will give them the confidence they need to play and learn as they explore and experiment with new and exciting things. There is no need to talk or intervene unless they need your attention.

You may notice your baby glance at you if they are unsure of something – or they may choose to involve you in their exploration, perhaps by holding out an object, or dropping it and looking for a reaction. A reassuring smile or word is likely to be all they will need to encourage their curiosity as they continue exploring and learning about their world.



When babies know that others notice and encourage them, they gain confidence in exploring.

Exploring and learning

Your baby will enjoy exploring and learning about the objects in their treasure basket in lots of different ways, such as:

- touching, sucking, licking
- banging, picking up and dropping
- moving things from hand to mouth
- looking carefully

You may have noticed that babies tend to explore objects by putting them in their mouths. Their gums are very sensitive and they are able to tell a lot about how something feels, smells and tastes.

Exploring objects in this way also helps to develop their mouth and tongue muscles that they will use later when they start talking. As your baby grows and develops they will find new ways of exploring too.



Treasure baskets give babies opportunities to explore and learn.

Learning to choose

We are often the ones who decide what to give our babies to play with. Exploring a treasure basket gives babies lots of opportunities to decide for themselves what *they* want to play with.

Making their own decisions to explore objects that they are interested in gives babies the opportunity to express their preferences. Through this they begin to realise that they are independent individuals who can take an active part in their world.



Try watching your baby closely as they explore the items in their treasure basket:

- do they have a favourite item?
- are they fascinated by metal objects, noisy things or bright things etc.?

Being able to make choices helps babies feel good about themselves.