

# PARENTING PROCESS FOR YOUR INFANT'S SUCCESS

ParentingMontana.org has tools to address common parenting issues. The tools use this 5-step process to build the skills infants will need to be confident, respectful, and make healthy choices.

Here is a quick reminder of what each step is, why each step is important, and how you can engage in each step with your infant.

## 5-Step Process

### Step 1: Get Input

For parents and those in a parenting role with infants, getting input is about getting to know and understand your infant's input by paying close attention to your infant's facial expressions, movements, and sounds including cries. Your efforts to learn from your infant build trust and help you better understand what they are trying to communicate.

For example, if an infant is uncomfortable, they may issue a less intense, short, whiny cry like "eh, eh, eh." Respond by loosening or changing clothing, swaddling, or changing their position and see if it helps to soothe. If your response to your infant's cues doesn't seem to help, that's okay. Test another response and see if it helps to soothe. It takes time to learn what your infant is communicating with you. As you practice, you'll become more adept at recognizing their style of communication.

### Step 2: Teach

For parents with infants, teaching is about learning and understanding your infant's rhythms, temperaments, and needs. Learning about your infant's cues and testing responses to see what works to soothe them takes time and practice. You will make mistakes. Giving yourself permission to not be perfect can ease anxiety in responding to your infant's needs. Meeting an infant's needs teaches them they are safe and others can be trusted.

For example talk up close to your infant. Make a point when they are in a high chair, crib, or stroller to get down on their level. Narrate what's going on around you. You could say, *"Mommy sees a duck. Quack, Quack. Does Hannah see the duck, too?"* Even though they don't verbally respond back to you, they are learning. *"See this rattle? Let me show you how it works."* or, *"Touch the button like this, and the music will start."* Rather than saying *"Don't touch that,"* say, *"Here, play with this."*



### Step 3: Practice

For infants, allow them the chance to take steps to meet their big challenges, whether they are working on tasting new foods for the first time, exploring the objects in their environment, or crawling or cruising the furniture. Be sure to consider how you can create the conditions to support their success (like creating a quiet, organized environment with infant-appropriate board books or toys). Initially, practice may require more teaching but avoid taking over and doing it for your infant.

You could say, *“Can you push the button again to make the music?”* (Gently guide their hand to the button and help them to push it).

### Step 4: Support

For parents and those in a parenting role with infants, support is about reinforcing your infant’s ability to be successful and helping them grow their skills. Learn about your infant’s development. Each new age presents different challenges. So, keeping up about what developmental milestones your infant is working toward offers you empathy and patience.

Safety and supervision is essential. Infants come to know and understand the world and the objects around them through all five senses: touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight. Support looks like creating an environment that is safe to explore. Place infant-appropriate toys and board books near your infant. Keep a watchful eye and redirect your infant’s focus to avoid unsafe situations.

You could say, *“Let’s play with the blocks instead of your sister’s marker.”* or, *“This is mommy’s cup of water. Here, can you hold your sippy cup instead?”* Your role is to make sure your infant’s environment is safe from harm and is supportive of your infant’s curiosity to explore their surroundings.

With infants, support is active. Use “Show me...” statements to ask them to demonstrate their new skill.

For example *“Show me how you can grab your toy.”* (Help when needed by moving the toy closer or helping your infant’s hand connect to the toy.) Don’t move on quickly if your infant shows interest in trying something new. Infants often need more time to stick with a challenge or pursue a goal. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to gain skills over time.

### Step 5: Recognize

Recognize your child’s effort and success to grow motivation. and build self-confidence and self-esteem.

*“I like how you are trying to reach for the toy you want to play with.”*

*“I can see that you are putting a lot of effort into rolling over.”*

*“You crawled over to reach the toy. Great job.”*

*“I noticed you listened when I asked you to back away from the staircase. I know you’re curious about climbing, and I am glad you are keeping safe.”*