

# Five to thrive



The things you do every day that help your child's growing brain

In the first year of life the brain doubles in size. If a baby's brain develops healthily they are more likely to be happy and successful as older children and adults.

Your child's body grows better when you give the child good food. Your child's brain grows better when you do five simple things...


**Respond • Cuddle • Relax • Play • Talk**

For more information on how you can help shape your baby's brain go to:

[www.hertsdirect.org/mybabysbrain](http://www.hertsdirect.org/mybabysbrain)

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KATE CAIRNS ASSOCIATES



A stack of five colorful blocks. From top to bottom: a purple block with 'TALK' on two sides, a light blue block with 'PLAY' on two sides, a green block with 'RELAX' on two sides, an orange block with 'CUDDLE' on two sides, and a red block with 'RESPOND' on two sides.

**Talk** – When you talk to your baby they copy you; the more you talk the more they can make sounds into words. Copy your baby’s sounds and make new ones and read to your baby even when they are very young.

**Play** – The best toy for your baby is you. When you stick your tongue out or pull faces, your baby copies you and this helps build connections in their brain. Play works best when you are on the same level. Follow your child’s lead, this tells them their ideas are important.

**Relax** – When you relax your heartbeat and breathing slows down, and so does your baby’s. When you feel calm so does your baby. Try to end exciting and stimulating play with wind down time; soft lighting, warmth and gentle sounds help.

**Cuddle** – When your baby is close to you their body works in tune with yours. When you feel excited or stressed your heart beats faster and so does theirs. Use different kinds of touch; massage, stroking and tickling are all good for your baby’s brain.

**Respond** – A baby’s brain processes information slower than adult brains. When you respond in the same way over and over again the connections in the brain grow stronger. Try copying the sounds or facial expressions of your baby to see how they react.