Floor Time Activities for Infants (0-17 Months)

Floor Time activities for infants are important times for adults to encourage physical development, language development, and social-emotional development. The Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers include competencies in each of these domains.

For any Floor Time Activity, sit with the infant on a soft rug or blanket on the floor so that you and he can play together and enjoy close eye contact. Talk with the baby about what you are doing, using a soft voice and a rising and falling tone so that your voice is interesting and comforting even if the child does not yet understand the words. Gently massage the baby’s arms and legs, hug him, and take every opportunity to let him know that he is special and you are happy to spend time with him. If you are working with two or three infants, place them very near you on the floor and encourage them to notice each other’s actions. Watch out for moving arms and legs that might accidentally bump another child! Remember that infants do not intentionally hurt each other and smooth hurt feelings with hugs and gentle words.

Each of the following activities includes related competencies in the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines (Mississippi Head Start Collaboration Office, 2010) and related items on the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2006).

Use the daily lesson plans in this curriculum to make sure you use at least one Floor Time activity each day. Use more activities as time allows.

References
Climbing Fun

For toddlers who are beginning to climb, provide sturdy indoor climbing equipment. Always support children to prevent accidents.

Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS I-T ELG Competency: 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items: 16, 25, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do You Hear Me?

Approach the baby from outside her view and sing or say her name, ring a bell, or use a squeaky toy to attract her attention.

Materials

- Bell or squeaky toy

Reference


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS I-T ELG Competency: 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Item: 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drum Beat

Provide a plastic bowl or drum for each child. Tap one of the bowls or drums, saying "1, 2, 3" to the beat. Encourage the child or children to drum and count with you. If the bowls and drums make different sounds, extend the activity by alternating them or passing them around.

Materials
- Plastic bowl or drum for each child

Reference

Related Standards
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS I-T ELG Competencies: 1.1, 2.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items: 18, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dump and Fill

Provide a small assortment of objects such as rolled socks, soft blocks, or small dolls and a wide, shallow container that is small enough for the child to hold. Demonstrate: “I’m going to put the sock in the bowl. I’m going to put the doll in the bowl. Now I’m going to dump them out of the bowl.”

Ask the child questions to encourage discussion and extend the activity: “What should we put in first? What will you put in next?”

Materials

- Assortment of small objects:
  - Rolled socks
  - Soft blocks
  - Small dolls
- Wide shallow container that child can hold

Reference


Related Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS ELG Competencies:</th>
<th>1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items:</td>
<td>12, 15, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feely Bag

Place several objects with different textures, such as a wooden spoon, bath sponge, soft stuffed animal, hairbrush, cotton ball, and plastic kitchen scrubber, in a cloth or paper sack. (Never use plastic bags in classrooms with young children.) Ask each child to reach in the bag and find something soft, hard, smooth, or rough. When the child pulls out an object talk about the texture of that object.

Variation

• Squirt hair gel into heavy-duty plastic zippered bags. Add sequins to the gel if you have some. Seal the bags and add packing tape across the seals. Chill the bags in the refrigerator and then place them in the Feely Bag for the child or children to handle. Talk with them about how the bags feel. Allow the bags to reach room temperature and invite the children to handle them again. Ask, “Are the Feely Bags still cold?”

Materials

• Cloth or paper sack
• Assorted items with different textures:
  ▪ Wooden spoon
  ▪ Plastic spoon
  ▪ Bath sponge (unused)
  ▪ Plastic kitchen scrubber (unused)
• Hair gel
• Heavy-duty plastic zippered bags
• Packing tape
• Sequins (optional)

Reference

I See

Say “I see ...” with anticipation and look dramatically around the room, beneath a child’s blanket, behind a child’s ear, etc., before finishing with an object in plain sight, such as “LaNita’s shoe!” Repeat with other objects until children ask for a turn.

Reference

Related Standards
MS I-T ELG Competencies: 1.1, 1.2
ITERS-R Item: 27
Inch Worm

Place the baby on her tummy on a smooth floor. Place an interesting toy a few inches from the baby’s head. Call her attention to the toy. Sitting behind the baby, press your leg or hands against her feet. The baby will push against you, causing her to propel a few inches forward toward the toy. Keep moving the toy and pushing against the baby’s feet until she has inched forward and covered some ground. Be careful not to move the baby too fast or let her bump into anything. Afterwards, allow the baby to examine the toy as long as she enjoys playing with it.

Materials

- Interesting small toy

Reference

Jump in Place

With an infant who is not yet standing or walking, hold her securely under the arms, look into her eyes, and bounce her gently in place, saying “Jump, baby, jump!”

Related Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS I-T ELG Competencies: 1.1, 4.1, 5.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items: 12, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning in a Baby’s World: Using the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines; A Complete Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers
FLOOR TIME ACTIVITIES FOR INFANTS (0-17 MONTHS)

Kick, Kick, Kick

Lay the baby on his back on a rug or blanket. Place several small objects near his feet. One by one, show an object to the baby and then place it against his feet. When the baby kicks a toy away, congratulate him with soft positive sounds such as “Whee!” or “Woo!”

Materials

- Soft blocks
- Small balls

Reference


Related Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS I-T ELG Competency</th>
<th>ITERS-R Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>16, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning in a Baby’s World: Using the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines; A Complete Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers
Lids, Lids, Lids

Provide an assortment of clean plastic food tub lids and clean plastic or metal jar lids in different sizes and colors. Babies will enjoy grasping, handling, and slapping lids on the floor.

Variation

• With older children, invite them to put all of the lids of one color or size together.

Materials

• Assortment of clean plastic food tub lids (must pass choking tube test)
• Assortment of clean plastic or metal jar lids (too large for children to swallow)

Reference


Related Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS I-T ELG Competencies: 3.3, 5.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Item: 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Load the Trucks

Provide one or more toy trucks or wagons, all with cargo space, for each child. Provide an assortment of child-safe objects (too large to be swallowed) for the children to use. Demonstrate loading the trucks and pretending to drive them. Encourage the children to talk with you about the activity and the different toys and objects: “Let’s put these little blocks into the wagon. Now let’s put 1 big block into the truck. Darius, would you like to put something in this truck? Latrice, can you help me pull the wagon? Can you help me push the truck?”

Variations
- Take this activity outdoors.
- Provide materials for this activity in the Pretend Play area.

Materials
- Toy trucks and wagons
- Assortment of manipulative objects to place in trucks and wagons (must pass choking tube test)

Related Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS I-T ELG Competencies:</th>
<th>1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 4.1, 5.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items:</td>
<td>15, 20, 25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Maze

Create a simple L-shaped maze on the floor by draping sheets or towels over low chairs and tables to make walls. Place the infant in a sitting or crawling position at one end of the maze. Peek around the corner and say “I see you! Can you come to me?” Encourage the child to crawl toward you.

Materials

- Low chairs or tables
- Several sheets or large towels

Reference


Related Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS I-T ELG Competencies</th>
<th>ITERS-R Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5, 5.1</td>
<td>12, 16, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Pounding Play

Provide a pounding toy such as a toy mallet for each child. If necessary, help the child sit so that she is free to grasp and handle the pounding toy. Demonstrate hammering and encourage the baby to reach across her trunk to hammer the toy. Talk with the child or children as they experiment with the pounding toy: “Can you pound the peg? You pounded it hard. Can you also hit it softly?”

If you are working with two or more infants, be sure that none is able to accidentally hit another.

Reference
Rattle Play

Place the baby on his back and gently shake a rattle or bell in a circular motion approximately 12 inches above his head. Watch for him to hear or see the object and talk about the experience: “Do you see the rattle?” Shake it again and ask “Do you hear the rattle?”

Materials

• Rattle or bell

Reference

Reach for It

Place the infant on her tummy. Provide a variety of interesting safe toys and books on the floor within her reach. This will encourage the baby to lean on one hand so that she can reach and grasp a toy with the other. If she tries to move to a hands-and-knees position, help her as necessary. Do not let the baby become so frustrated that she cries. If she is not able to reach or crawl to the toys, give her help.

Variations

• With an infant who is beginning to pull himself up, place him in a sitting or crawling position near a sturdy, low table, chair, or sofa. Place a variety of interesting soft toys and books on the table, chair, or sofa, in view but out of reach. Encourage the baby to look at and reach for the toys. If he tries to pull up to reach the toys, help him as necessary.

• With a child who is practicing climbing, place new, interesting objects on a sturdy, low upholstered chair or sofa for her to reach. Always brace and watch a child who is climbing.

Materials

• Assortment of interesting safe toys:
  ▪ Soft toy animals
  ▪ Toy key rings
  ▪ Small plastic stacking rings or cups
  ▪ Rattles

• Board, vinyl, or cloth books for infants

Reference

Sing a Name

Make up a song with the names of the child or children, such as to the tune of "B-I-N-G-O."

Reference

Related Standards
MS I-T ELG Competency: 1.1
ITERS-R Items: 18, 27
Sit Up

Place the infant on his back on a soft rug or blanket on the floor. Sit cross-legged at the baby’s feet so that you can easily reach him. Support his head and neck with one hand and his back and shoulders with the other. Gently pull the baby forward into a sitting position. Do this several times if the baby enjoys the activity. (This activity helps babies develop strength and motor control in their trunks.)

Variation

• Once the baby is comfortable with sitting up, hold his hands and gently tug him toward you. If he bends at the waist and rises toward you, continue tugging. This activity helps babies develop strength and motor control in their trunks and limbs. If he does not rise toward you, continue to gently lift him.

Reference

**Socks**

Collect a wide assortment of socks in different sizes, colors, textures, and styles. Provide a basket or box of socks for children to take out and replace. Talk with the child or children about the game: “DeShawn, can you take the socks out of the box? Lily, I see you put the green socks in the box.”

**Variation**

- Remove your shoes and demonstrate how to take off your socks. Invite the children to join you in practicing taking off socks. On another day, practice putting socks on.

**Materials**

- Assorted rolled pairs of socks:
  - Infant, child, and adult sizes
  - Different colors
  - Different textures
- Basket or box

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**Related Standards**

MS I-T ELG Competencies: 5.2, 6.3
ITERS-R Item: 15
Stacking Game

Provide an assortment or set of nesting objects such as measuring cups, clean plastic food containers, or stacking rings. Demonstrate how to stack two objects together and invite the child to help you stack a third. When all are stacked, have fun knocking them over and playing again.

Talk as you play about how objects are on top of, under, or inside each other. Talk about the colors and shapes of the objects.

Materials

• Assortment of nesting objects:
  ▪ Measuring cups
  ▪ Clean plastic food containers
  ▪ Stacking rings

Reference


Related Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MS I-T ELG Competencies: 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items: 15, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning in a Baby’s World: Using the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines; A Complete Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Early Childhood Institute
Sticky Ball

Begin to unroll a roll of masking tape and roll the tape back into a loose ball with the sticky side out. Keep adding tape until the ball is the size of a baseball. Hand the ball to a child and encourage him to throw it back to you. Talk about how the ball feels. When the child is comfortable with the ball, encourage him to toss it to a friend.

Variation

- Make more sticky balls in different sizes and colors by using different amounts and colors of masking tape. Talk with the child or children about the different sizes and colors. Example:

  “I’m going to toss the big blue sticky ball to you, Lavon. I’m going to toss the little orange sticky ball to you, Janeal.”

Materials

- Rolls of masking tape or duct tape in different colors

Reference


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Item: 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tummy Play

Lie on the floor and hold the baby on your chest so that he faces you. Place a toy that makes interesting sounds in front of the baby and shake it. Talk gently to him about the toy. This activity will help babies develop their head and neck muscles while learning to tolerate play on their stomachs.

Variations

• Sit on the floor or on a chair and lay the baby on his tummy across your lap.
• Place the baby on his tummy on a soft blanket or rug.

Material

• A rattle or other interesting small noise-maker toy

Reference


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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items: 16, 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Turn Over, Baby

Place the baby on his back. Sit behind the baby’s head and hold an eye-catching small toy above his face. When you have the baby’s attention, slowly move the toy to one side, allowing the baby to follow the toy with his eyes. Encourage the baby to grab for the toy. As the baby turns to follow the toy, gently push against his back to help him turn over. When the baby turns over, give him the toy. Repeat the activity, encouraging the baby to turn over to the other side.

Materials

• Eye-catching small toy

Reference


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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Item: 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where Is It?

Show a child an item such as a small stuffed toy dog. While she watches, place a box, bowl, or basket over the object so that it is hidden and ask, “Where is the dog?” Repeat as long as the game interests the child.

Later, hide the object while the child’s attention is elsewhere and then ask, “Where is the dog?” Talk about how the basket is over the dog and the dog is under the basket. Finally, place the toy inside the basket and exclaim, “Now he’s in the basket!”

Materials
- Box, bowl, or basket
- Stuffed toy animal

Reference


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</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITERS-R Items: 12, 27</td>
</tr>
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