

Ways to Use Rattles with Your Baby or Toddler

Information brought to you in partnership with Care About Childcare at Utah Valley University

Hand Eye Coordination: Slowly move the rattle across a child's field of vision, encouraging them to track the rattle with their eyes as it moves across their line of sight. This technique also encourages focus and attention.

Cause and Effect: At 4- to 7-months old, a baby will likely hold the rattle themselves. Place the rattle in the child's hand and assist them in shaking it to produce its distinct sound. They will remember that when they shake the rattle, it makes a sound, perceiving the idea of cause and effect, which is a cognitive concept.

Object Permanence: Sit with your infant and place the rattle on the floor in front of you. Playfully hide the rattle under the blanket and after a few seconds, lift the blanket up to reveal the rattle beneath it. You can also shake the rattle while under the blanket for the children to find.

Perception: During the first three months of your baby's life, you can shake a rattle to help them experience and perceive sound. Encourage textural perception by gently dragging a soft rattle across a baby's cheeks or down their legs, so that they becomes familiar with touch and starts to comprehend differences between touches and textures.

Imitation: When a baby is nearing their first birthday, you will notice that they begin to imitate you and the way you use certain objects. Instead of simply shaking or chewing on their rattle, they may begin to hold it to their ear pretending it is a phone because they have seen you do the same. At this age, look for rattles that resemble real life objects like phones, keys or a toy hammer. Imitating the actions they see around them will be their first attempts at pretend play.



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Different Sounds: Many rattles make noises and sounds when they are shaken. These sounds can range from the dull sounds typical of wooden rattles, to jingling or bell type sounds from metal rattles.

Fine Motor/Grasping: At first babies will hold their rattles tightly with a strong grasp reflex. As their fine motor skills develop, they will learn to hold and shake their rattle in the air. They will play by bringing their rattle to their mouth and safely exploring these baby toys not only with their hands, but their tongue and mouth. Many rattles also have moving parts that can be twisted, turned and spun, which can help further develop a baby's attention span and fine motor skills.

Teethers: Many rattles also have textured surfaces that allow them to also double as great teethingers, as babies chew and gnaw on toys to help soothe their gums when they cut new teeth.

Music Time: While listening to music or singing songs, use rattles/shakers as a hands on part of music time.

Since many rattles will go straight into a young child's mouth, cleaning rattles is very important! Plastic baby rattles are easy to clean and sanitize with a wipe. Fabric wrist rattles and other plush, soft toys with rattles can be washed in a garment bag/pillowcase in the laundry.

