

1-2-3 . . . Swing!

When: With baby fastened securely in a baby swing

How to Play: Pull the swing forward a short distance and release.

Say: "1-2- 3." Then pause and say, "Swing!" or "Whee!" as you release. Repeat.

Tip: Look for signs that baby is anticipating the release, like kicking, leaning back or forward, or shaking her hands. Reverse the swing's motion and say "A-B-C" or "Ready. Set. Go!"

Promotes: Language skills; sequencing; rudimentary counting skills



Bend and Stretch

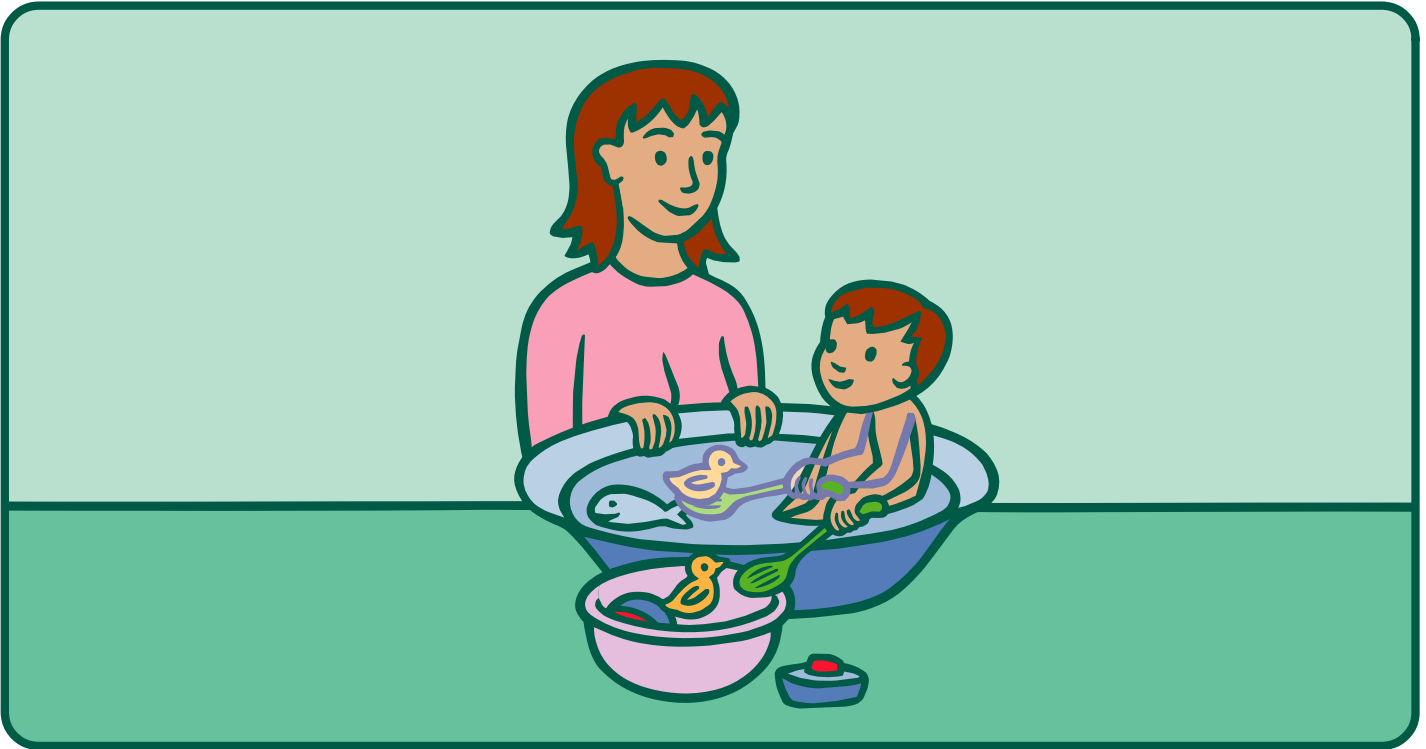
When: After a bath, when baby's muscles are relaxed

How to Play: Lay her on a blanket on her back. Grasp her hands and gently stretch her arms up and down. Follow with other stretches, like moving her arms in and out, high and low, and around. Then stretch her legs.

Sing Along: Baby's arms go up and down,
 Up and down, up and down.
 Baby's arms go up and down,
 All day long

Tip: Keep stretches gentle; never force movements. At first baby may only tolerate a brief playtime. In time, her attention span will lengthen. If baby fusses, play another time.

Promotes: Strength and flexibility; language skills; bonding.



The Big Catch

When: During bath time

How to Play: Put several floating toys in the tub. Show him how to use a strainer or slotted spoon to catch the objects and transfer them to a larger container. When it's full, baby can dump the toys and play again.

Sing Along: A-fishing we will go; a-fishing we will go.
 We'll catch a ____ and put it in the boat.

Tip: Try counting each toy as she scoops it up.

Promotes: Hand-eye coordination; balance and comfort in the water; fulfills a toddler's need to fill and empty; aids language skills