

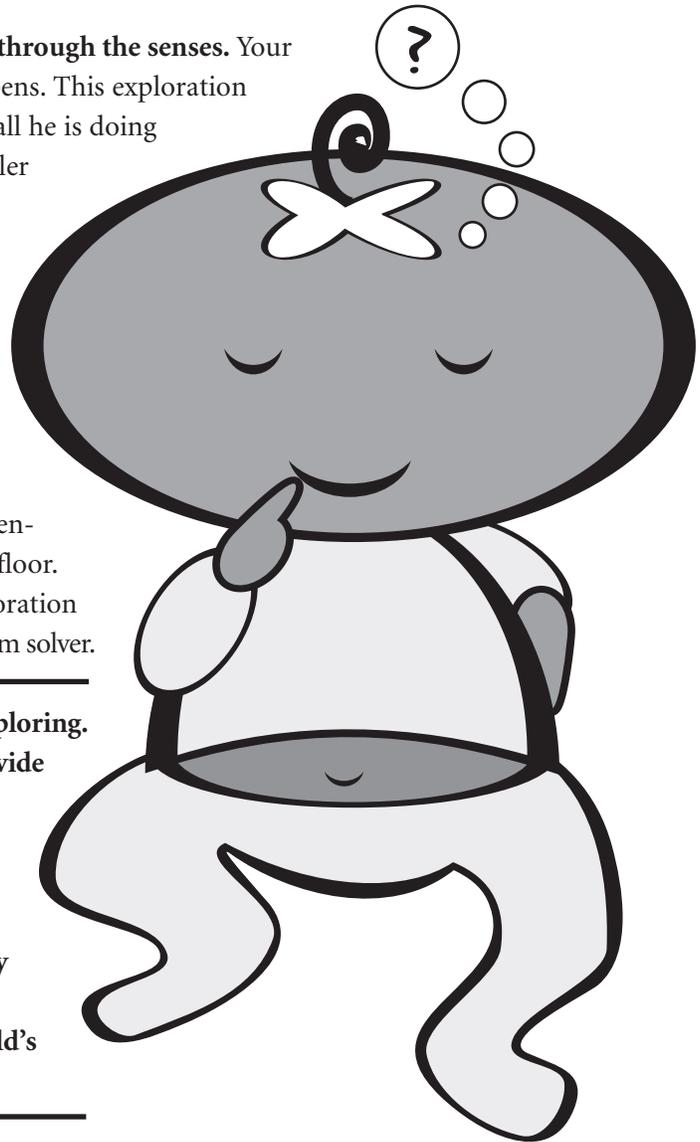
Your Baby Learns by Solving Problems

As your baby connects with you and the world around her, she develops confidence in her ability to solve problems. Problem solving helps her develop curiosity, patience and flexibility. As an infant your baby learns that her movements make things happen. On a very simplistic level she is learning about cause and effect. Toward the end of the first year your baby begins to understand that people and things in the world stay the same. Her memory is developing as well. These mental capacities form early “tools” for your baby to begin solving problems.

The toddler years are about experiencing the world through the senses. Your toddler may pour water on the floor to see what happens. This exploration can be demanding and challenging for you, but after all he is doing what his development calls for. By the time your toddler reaches 18 months, he remembers his experiences. By the time he is 20 months, he has watched you and other care givers for clues to solve problems.

Since he may problem-solve by watching you, be sure to talk to him through some of the simple problems you face during the day. This is an effective way to communicate with toddlers who don't always respond well to being told what to do. Ask him an open-ended question such as, “Oh my, there's water on the floor. What should we do?” Make sure to celebrate the exploration and your toddler will feel good about becoming a problem solver.

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- ▶ **Provide toddlers with materials that encourage exploring.**
 - ▶ **Toys such as jack-in-the-boxes and busy boxes, provide simple cause and effect opportunities.**
 - ▶ **Empty cardboard boxes, plastic bowls or scarves can provide toddlers with opportunities to manipulate materials in new and unexpected ways.**
 - ▶ **Ramps provide your toddler with the opportunity to observe objects which roll fast and slow.**
 - ▶ **Everyday materials are fun and can hold your child's interest for long periods.**
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Groups of children engaged in these activities can learn how to solve interpersonal problems as well. By providing opportunities to reinforce your child's attempts to explore and solve problems, you can stimulate your child's development and help your child take pride in his or her ability to find out more about how the world works.