

# Five key ideas for new parents

You can help your child learn and be happier just by following these five simple guidelines.

## Understand and respond to your baby’s needs.



You can’t “spoil” an infant, so go to her when she fusses or cries. **By responding to your baby’s cues, you teach her that you care about her needs and that she can trust you.**

Ignoring a baby’s needs can do harm by causing stress levels to rise. You may not always understand your baby’s cues, but be patient. This is a learning process for both you and your baby. If she likes what you are doing, you know you are getting it right.

## Take care of yourself so you can take care of your child.



Becoming a parent can be overwhelming and exhausting. Unless you take care of yourself, you will have a hard time taking good care of your child. For this reason, it is important to have support from friends, family or community organizations. **Do not be afraid to ask for help caring for your child.**

## Talk, sing and read to your child.

Let your child hear your voice as much as possible. The young brain is especially interested in sound. **You can form a deep emotional connection between you**



**and your child by simply sharing the sound of your voice.** Sounds are also important to a child because they are the building blocks of speech and language.

## Create a predictable world for your child.

**Providing routines and expected responses gives your child a sense that the world is a trustworthy place.** It also teaches him that he can depend on you. If your child understands this, he will spend less energy fussing over his needs and more time learning. Routines can include basic activities like feeding and bathing.



## Provide a warm and loving environment.



**Helping your child feel safe and secure is the key to encouraging growth and development.** A child who feels loved will have an easier time learning about the world around her. Therefore, make sure you interact with your child, providing love and affection.

MARK JOSEPH PHOTOGRAPHY/CHICAGO

Born Learning™ is a public engagement and material distribution campaign that provides important information about what young children need every day to ensure quality early learning. Designed to support you in your critical role as a child’s first teacher, Born Learning materials are made available through the efforts of United Way, United Way Success By 6 and Civitas. For more information, visit us online at [bornlearning.org](http://bornlearning.org).

Civitas thanks Parents as Teachers, an international early childhood parent education and family support program, for their ongoing support.

This Civitas tool was adapted for the Born Learning campaign. © 2005 Civitas