



# TINY MOMENTS, BIG IMPACT



## **Newborn Play Essentials: 3 Easy Activities to Boost Your Baby's Brain**

Written by Lauren Brown, creator of Busy Brains Activity Packs



# TINY MOMENTS, BIG IMPACT

## **Newborn Play Essentials: 3 Easy Activities to Boost Baby's Brain**

### **Welcome, New Parents!**

Congratulations on the arrival of your little one!

I remember those first few months were full of love and cuddles, but let's be honest, there's also a lot of tiredness! It's easy to feel overwhelmed. The good news is that the activities in this guide don't need lots of energy, hours of prep, or expensive toys. They're all about helping you connect, share some smiles, and just enjoy your baby.

Every cuddle, song, or little playful moment is helping your baby's brain grow, strengthening your bond, and laying the groundwork for future learning.

In fact, in the first few years, your baby's brain is growing faster than at any other time.

Research from Harvard University shows that the experiences they have now shape the very structure of their brain. Positive, nurturing interactions like talking, playing, and responding to each other build strong connections that are important for learning, language, and emotional well-being. The more these back-and-forth moments happen, the stronger your baby's brain becomes, giving them a great start for life.





## A Little About Me

I'm Lauren, a mum of three and a former primary school deputy headteacher.

After having my first child, I realised just how little support there was for parents in those early years and how overwhelming it can feel. After the newborn checks, I often felt like I was left to navigate it all on my own.

I wanted to be sure I was giving my kids the best start I could. I wanted to know they were developing as they should and making the most of the incredible growth happening in those early years, when their brains are absorbing so much so quickly. But there was nothing out there that was research-based, educational, and age-appropriate for parents. So I decided to change that!



I created Busy Brains Activity Packs to help parents just like you gain the knowledge and confidence to educate, entertain and engage with your child from day one.

## How to Use This Guide

This free guide gives you a little taste of the kinds of activities inside my Busy Brains Activity Packs, although the activities here are different. Just like my packs, you'll find simple, research-backed play ideas that slot easily into your daily routine. They're gentle, fun, and effective, helping you connect with your newborn while supporting their brain development.

If you enjoy these ideas, you'll love the full activity packs. Each set includes 31 double-sided cards packed with activities, milestones, and tips to support your baby's learning and development at every stage. The best part is you don't need special toys or lots of time; just a few moments of connection can lay the groundwork for your baby's future learning.

So let's dive in and start making those tiny moments count!

# TINY HANDS, BIG GRIP!



**Prep Time:** 0 Minutes

**Resources:** None (Muslin cloth and rattle optional)

**Educational Benefits:** Communication and language; Personal, social and emotional development; Physical development; Understanding the world

## TINY HANDS, BIG GRIP!

From birth, your baby instinctively grasps objects placed in their palm. Named the Palmar reflex, it typically fades away around 5–6 months.

**Try it!:** Place your **finger** in your baby's palm and wait for the grasp. Hold still momentarily so they can feel the sensation, then gently move your finger side to side or lift their hand slightly to introduce movement. Talk about what you're doing as you play. Try different textures like a **muslin cloth, baby-safe rattle, or silicone teether**. Let them grasp each one, then gently wiggle it to encourage their fingers to respond. To support release, stroke the back of their hand, then offer the object again to build awareness of opening and closing their hand. This simple activity strengthens your baby's hand muscles and coordination while helping their brain build important neural pathways for voluntary movements.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Your baby's brain is making over one million new neural connections every second in the early months of life! Simple interactions—like when your baby grasps your finger and you respond with a smile or gentle words—help strengthen these connections. This back-and-forth interaction, known as “serve and return,” is essential for brain development. Over time, these early reflexes evolve into purposeful movements.

# SIDE-LYING SPIN AND PLAY



**Prep Time:** 0 Minutes  
(10 mins with printable)

**Resources:** Towel (printable optional)

**Educational Benefits:** Physical development; Communication and language; Personal, social and emotional development; Expressive arts and design

## SIDE LYING PLAY

Many people talk about the importance of tummy time for babies, but fewer are aware of the benefits of side-lying. Side-lying, or laying a baby on their side, is a great position as it strengthens core muscles, improves hand-eye coordination, and prevents flat head syndrome by reducing pressure on the back of the head. **Try it!:** Gently roll baby from their back on to their side and place a **rolled-up towel** behind them to stop them from falling backwards. In this position, lay facing them while talking and singing, or supervise as they play with a **rattle** or **toy**. If you have a floor-length **mirror\***, place baby beside it so they can entertain themselves while you watch. Another activity to enjoy in this position is our **DIY high-contrast windmill** (the printable resource is the end of this e-book).

Once complete, hold it beside your baby and blow to make it spin.

## DID YOU KNOW?

In the first three months, babies have limited vision. They can only see around 20-30 centimetres away - about the distance to your face when you hold them. Their colour vision is still developing, so they respond best to high-contrast black, white and red patterns. Bold designs help stimulate their visual system, improve focus, and encourage early eye tracking; essential skills for reading and coordination later on!

\*Please ensure the mirror is securely attached to the wall.

# CRINKLY PLAY



**Prep Time:** 0 Minutes

**Resources:** Crinkly book (or baking paper or cereal packet insert)

**Educational Benefits:** Physical development; Communication and language; Personal, social and emotional development; Expressive arts and design, Understanding the World

## CRINKLY PLAY

**Crinkle books** captivate and encourage exploration. If you don't have one, create a similar experience by scrunching up **baking paper** or the **plastic liner from a cereal box**. **Always supervise your baby** during play, especially when using homemade items. To incorporate crinkle play into your baby's routine, try these approaches. 1. During tummy time, lie in front of your baby and gently crinkle the material to encourage them to lift their head and strengthen neck muscles. 2. Hang the crinkle item just within their reach to promote swiping and grasping motions, aiding motor skill development. 3. Crunch the material above their head to encourage them to turn towards sounds. 4. Slowly moving the crinkle item from side to side encourages eye tracking. 5. Placing it under their feet teaches cause and effect through kicking motions.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Engaging your newborn in auditory activities is vital for their sensory development. A US study found that even at birth, babies' brains can organise sounds and recognise when a new one appears. This skill helps them tune into specific noises, like their parent's voice, amidst a world full of sounds. It's a key part of how babies start to make sense of the world around them and is essential for developing listening and language skills.



# CONGRATULATIONS!

You've taken a wonderful step in supporting your baby's development through play. Those little moments, no matter how simple, are building your baby's brain, strengthening your bond, and laying the foundation for a lifetime of learning.



## What's Next?

- ✓ Check your inbox for more expert-backed play ideas, tips, and exclusive offers to make playtime even easier!
- ✓ Join me on **Instagram** & **Facebook** (@busybrainsactivitypacks) for daily inspiration, activity ideas, and child development insights.

## Want More No-Fuss, Research-Backed Activities?

If you've enjoyed these ideas, you'll love my **Busy Brains Activity Packs!** They're designed to take the guesswork out of play, giving you simple, engaging activities tailored to your child's age and stage—plus milestone guidance, extra online and downloadable resources and expert tips, all in an easy-to-use format.



☀ Get yours today! [www.busybrainsactivitypacks.co.uk](http://www.busybrainsactivitypacks.co.uk)

📦 Prefer ongoing support as your child grows? Check out our **subscription service** for regular activity packs delivered straight to your door!

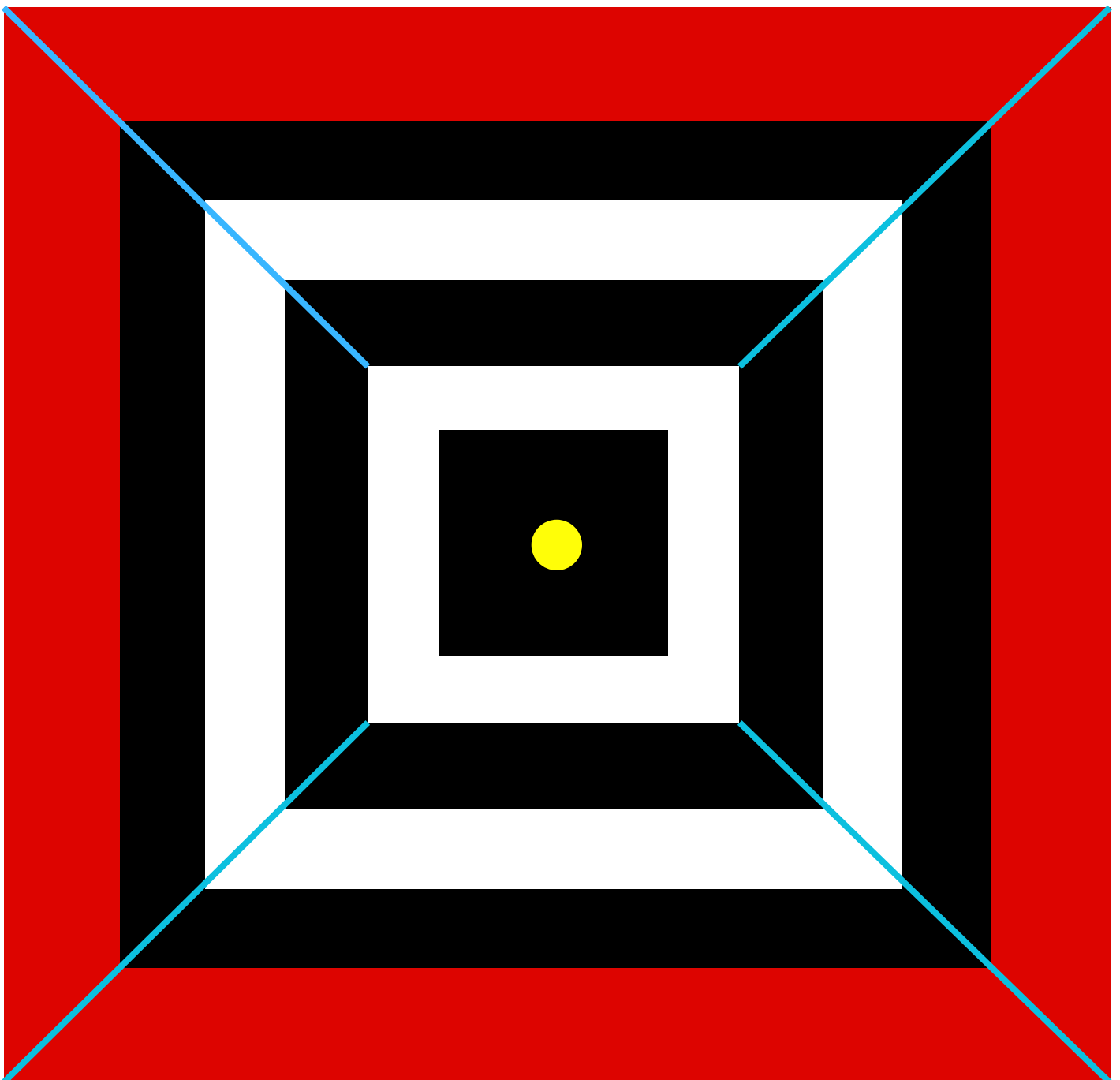
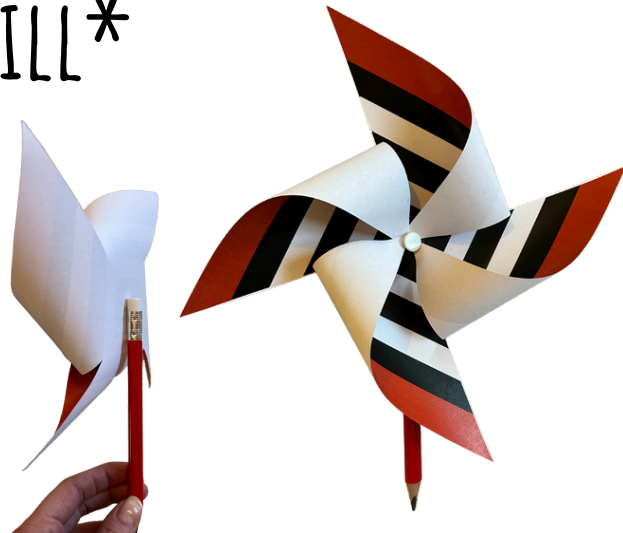
♥ And finally, a heartfelt thank you for letting me be part of your journey. Your baby's brain is growing every second, and I feel truly grateful to help you create meaningful, playful moments together!

Happy playing!  
Lauren x



# DIY HIGH-CONTRAST WINDMILL\*

1. Print or trace this square shape onto paper or thin card.
2. Cut around the edges and along the diagonal blue lines, stopping where the lines end.
3. Bring every other corner to the yellow circle and glue them in place at the centre.
4. Carefully push a drawing pin through all four folded corners and into the eraser of a pencil.
5. Blow on the edges of the pinwheel to make it spin.  
If it doesn't rotate well, loosen the pin slightly.



\*For use with adult supervision only