

DIY Baby Play Activities

Many of these activities use some of the same materials. While their individual costs may be high, many items, like ball pit balls, only need to be bought once to be used for a variety of activities.

If on a limited budget, consider buying items that have the most uses.

Things to Collect

- Empty Cereal Boxes
- Empty Pringles Cans
- Empty Voss Water Bottles
- Empty Cylinder Oatmeal Containers
- Cardboard Boxes
- Sensory Surfaces/Textured Materials

Things to Have on Hand

- Pipe Cleaners
- Construction Paper
- Packing Tape
- Masking Tape
- Duct Tape
- Hot Glue
- Yarn
- Buckets/Tubs/Baskets various sizes

Things to Purchase (not on hand items, like pipe cleaners)

Item	Number of Activities	Cost
Ball Pit Balls	3	\$13 (per 100)
Pool Noodle Pieces	4	\$20 (\$1 per noodle)
1.5" Pom Poms	5	\$2 (per 20)
12"x12" Foam Puzzle Tiles	2	\$20 (set of 20)
Foam Shapes	3	\$12 (100 sheets)

Dollar Tree Items

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Muffin Tins | • Pool Noodles |
| • Cookie Sheets | • Balloons |
| • Colanders | • Paintbrushes (water play) |
| • Jump Ropes | • Playing Cards |
| • Whisks | • Laundry Baskets |
| • Hair Gel (sensory bags) | • Smoothie Straws |
| • Easter Grass | • Rice |



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<h2 data-bbox="142 282 695 331">Cereal Boxes & Straws</h2> 	<p>Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="762 342 1150 505" style="list-style-type: none">• Empty Cereal Boxes• Smoothie Straws• Pencil• Packing Tape <p>Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p>Cost: \$0-10</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 285 1955 792" style="list-style-type: none">• Collect empty cereal boxes.• Tape all sides of the box to make the seams sturdier.• Punch holes in the front of the box using a pencil or similar tool.• Test a straw to make sure your holes are large enough for a straw to fit but not so large that the straw flops over and falls into the box.• <i>Optional:</i> Make a pattern with your straw holes, such as a letter of the alphabet.
<h2 data-bbox="247 857 594 906">Muffin Tin Play</h2> 	<p>Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="762 919 1262 1081" style="list-style-type: none">• Muffin Tins• Ball Pit Balls• 1.5" Pom Poms• Construction Paper (optional) <p>Time to Make: 20 min. (if adding colored circles) < 5 min. (if no circles)</p> <p>Cost: \$20+</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 857 1976 1187" style="list-style-type: none">• Put out ball pit balls (or pom poms) and muffin tins.• <i>Optional:</i> Cut colored circles and tape or hot glue into the cups of a muffin tin. Make sure these match the colors of the ball pit balls or pom poms you have.



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<p data-bbox="243 285 594 337">Water Painting</p> 	<p data-bbox="762 285 961 326">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="762 337 1167 626" style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard Surface (tray) • Construction Paper • Water-Only Paintbrushes • Reusable Cups • Bucket for Clean Water • Bucket for Dirty Water • Paper Towels <p data-bbox="762 678 1171 719">Time to Make: 5 min.</p> <p data-bbox="762 768 993 808">Cost: < \$10</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 285 1969 545" style="list-style-type: none"> • Setup station with materials listed to the left. • Put a piece of construction paper on a tray. • Caregiver fills reusable cup with clean water (only about an inch per child). • Child “paints” as long as they like.
<p data-bbox="243 862 600 914">Baby Pool Play</p> 	<p data-bbox="762 862 961 902">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="762 914 1241 1024" style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby-Pool (hard plastic is less likely to be tipped by babies) • Choice of Filling <p data-bbox="762 1089 1314 1235">Fillings: Ball Pit Balls, Pool Noodle Pieces, Easter Grass, Shredded Paper, Receipt Paper, Puppets, Balloons, Rice, Beans, 1.5” Pom Poms</p> <p data-bbox="762 1292 1209 1333">Time to Make: < 5 min.</p> <p data-bbox="762 1406 978 1446">Cost: \$10+</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 862 1860 902" style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill pool with chosen materials.



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<p data-bbox="163 302 676 350">Pom Pom & Ball Drop</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 302 961 334">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 354 1255 591" style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard Backing Material • Empty Pringles Cans • Construction Paper • Hot Glue • Packing Tape • Sharp Kitchen Knife • 1.5" Pom Poms or Ball Pit Balls <p data-bbox="764 639 1192 672">Time to Make: 30 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 737 1276 802">Cost: \$15+ (depends if backing is available on hand)</p>	<ul data-bbox="1379 302 1969 854" style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce edges of backing material as needed to make sure nothing is sharp. • Use sharp kitchen knife to cut empty Pringles cans to a variety of lengths. A knife works great to cut an inch or so above the metal bottom of the can, removing all of the sharp bits in one cut. • Measure your cut can's length. Cut a piece of construction paper to the same length. • <i>Optional:</i> Laminate paper for durability. • Wrap the construction paper around the can and tape it on securely. • Hot glue construction-paper-wrapped cans to the backing materials. • As needed, further secure each can by wrapping packing tape around the front to secure it to the board.
<p data-bbox="268 902 571 951">Texture Tiles</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 902 961 935">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 954 1192 1062" style="list-style-type: none"> • 12"x12" Foam Puzzle Tiles • Various Sensory Surfaces • Hot Glue <p data-bbox="764 1143 1339 1256">Surfaces: Sandpaper, Cardboard, Bubble Wrap, Felt, Foam, Carpet, Craft Sticks, Googly Eyes, Pom Poms, Fur, Memory Foam, Pipe Cleaners, Rocks/Moss</p> <p data-bbox="764 1305 1192 1338">Time to Make: 30 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 1370 961 1403">Cost: \$20</p>	<ul data-bbox="1379 902 1978 1321" style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide how many tiles you are going to make. • Cut textures to smaller than the size of the tiles (about 10" x 10") • Hot glue to attach textures to tiles (or use other adhesives as necessary, like zip ties). • After glue has dried, thoroughly test all surfaces to make sure items are stuck to the tiles. <p data-bbox="1379 1338 1948 1403">*Check after each use for peeling items. Reinforce as needed.</p>

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<p>Pipe Cleaner Sculptures</p> 	<p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colanders • Pipe Cleaners <p>Time to Make: < 5 min.</p> <p>Cost: \$5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make one sample. • Put out collection of pipe cleaners and colanders.
<p>Spider Web Baskets</p> 	<p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laundry Baskets • Yarn • Baby Safe Toys <p>Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p>Cost: \$0</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find various baby-appropriate toys or non-choking hazard items. • Place in a single layer of toys on the bottom of a laundry basket or similar basket with holes on the sides. • Tie string across the basket. • For older children, tie more string (make it more complicated). • For younger children, tie less string. Make it challenging, but not so hard they lose interest.



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<p data-bbox="289 277 550 329">Water Play</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 277 961 313">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 347 1325 509" style="list-style-type: none"> • Tub • Water • Floor Covering • <i>Optional:</i> Foam Shapes, Hand Colanders, Rubber Ducks, Duplos, Pool Noodle Pieces <p data-bbox="764 529 1045 565">Time to Make:</p> <p data-bbox="764 599 1209 672">5 min. (setup) 20 min. (if cutting foam shapes)</p> <p data-bbox="764 735 1016 771">Cost: \$0-10+</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 285 1982 683" style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover floor with tarp. • Place tub of water with about 1-2" of water on top of tarp. • Optionally, add play items: <ul data-bbox="1472 431 1982 683" style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand Colanders—great for scooping up Duplos, foam shapes, and other items • Foam Shapes—pre-purchase or cut by hand or Ellison Die machine. Stick to windows or mirrors when wet. • Pool Noodle Pieces, Rubber Ducks—items that float
<p data-bbox="289 821 550 873">Liquid Tiles</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 821 961 857">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 891 1325 1200" style="list-style-type: none"> • 12"x12" foam puzzle tiles • 9"x12" lamination pouch • Iron • Baby Oil • Items to Add to Pouch: Glitter, Foam Shapes, etc. • Duct Tape • Industrial hole punch • Zip Ties <p data-bbox="764 1268 1199 1304">Time to Make: 20 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 1365 1079 1401">Cost: \$25+ (set)</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 829 1982 1390" style="list-style-type: none"> • Trim laminating pouch to 9"x9". • Use iron to seal two edges of laminating pouch, creating a pocket (one edge sealed at start). • Fill pouch with 1-2 squirts of baby oil. • Add choice of filling (glitter, foam shapes, etc.). • Remove as much air as possible. • Iron shut fourth side of pouch. • Thoroughly seal edges with duct tape, making duct tape border extend at least an inch beyond edge of pouch. • Punch hole in each corner of pouch, with hole overlapping duct tape but NOT lamination pouch. • Punch hole near each corner of foam tile. • Use zip ties to secure bag to tile.



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<p data-bbox="285 277 554 329">Taped Toys</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 277 961 313">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 350 1276 467" style="list-style-type: none">• Cardboard or Magnet Board• Masking Tape• Toys <p data-bbox="764 521 1192 557">Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 610 970 646">Cost: \$0-5</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 277 1986 610" style="list-style-type: none">• Collect baby-safe toys or small to medium baby-safe objects.• Use masking tape to secure to cardboard, magnet board, or other hard surface.• Use one piece of tape per item, so items are easily removable by small hands.
<p data-bbox="243 821 596 873">Tugging Boxes</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 821 961 857">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 894 1318 1166" style="list-style-type: none">• Cardboard Box• Yarn, Ribbon, String, Rope (various colors, textures, and thickness)• Pencil• Packing Tape <p data-bbox="764 1219 1192 1255">Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 1325 991 1360">Cost: \$0-10</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 821 1965 1369" style="list-style-type: none">• Use a pencil or other sharp tool to punch holes in all sides of box. (At least two per side including top and bottom.)• Pull different types of yarn, ribbon, string through a pair of holes. Leave a few inches of extra string hanging out of one end of the box.• Tie a large knot on each end of the string so it does not pull back into the box when the other end is pulled.• After all string is secure, use packing tape to tape the lid of the box closed.



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<p data-bbox="178 277 661 332">Jump Rope Beading</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 277 961 316">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 349 1136 423" style="list-style-type: none">• Pool Noodle Pieces• Jump Ropes <p data-bbox="764 483 1192 522">Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 573 989 612">Cost: \$5-10</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 277 1980 553" style="list-style-type: none">• Cut pool noodles into approximately 1-2” pieces. Heavy duty scissors or a large kitchen knife work best.• Put out jump ropes and pool noodle pieces.
<p data-bbox="275 786 569 841">Balloon Play</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 786 961 824">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 857 1209 948" style="list-style-type: none">• Balloons• <i>Optional:</i> Flyswatters <p data-bbox="764 1015 1192 1053">Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 1104 989 1143">Cost: \$0-10</p> <p data-bbox="764 1224 1325 1403"><i>Make sure to supervise this activity carefully. We have had many fewer popped balloons than expected, but make sure to collect the remains as soon as they have popped.</i></p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 786 1980 1208" style="list-style-type: none">• Inflate balloons. An electric balloon pump (\$20 on Amazon) is a game changer.• Put out balloons on the floor or in a baby pool.• <i>Optional:</i> Also put out plastic flyswatters. This can result in babies hitting each other instead of the balloons.



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<p data-bbox="268 277 569 331">Magnet Play</p> 	<p data-bbox="762 274 961 315">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="762 347 1272 423" style="list-style-type: none">• Large Magnets• Cookie Sheets (Dollar Tree) <p data-bbox="762 480 1209 521">Time to Make: < 5 min.</p> <p data-bbox="762 570 1016 610">Cost: \$5-10+</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 277 1976 561" style="list-style-type: none">• Put out cookie sheets and large, baby-safe magnets.<ul data-bbox="1472 367 1976 561" style="list-style-type: none">• If making your own magnets, make sure magnet piece is thoroughly attached to paper or large enough to not be a choking hazard if it falls off.
<p data-bbox="180 784 659 837">Pool Noodle Abacus</p> 	<p data-bbox="762 784 961 824">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="762 857 1136 967" style="list-style-type: none">• Pool Noodle Pieces• Yarn• 2 Chairs <p data-bbox="762 1040 1199 1081">Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p data-bbox="762 1130 968 1170">Cost: \$2-5</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 784 1976 1308" style="list-style-type: none">• Cut pool noodles into approximately 1-2" pieces. Heavy duty scissors or a large kitchen knife work best.• Tie one end of thick yarn securely to a chair.• String about 20 pool noodle pieces onto the piece of yarn.• Make sure to leave enough room on the yarn for babies to move the pool noodle pieces around.• Tie the other end of yarn to another chair.

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<p data-bbox="243 277 596 329">Card Slot Drop</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 277 961 313">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 347 1297 586" style="list-style-type: none">• Empty Cylinder Oatmeal Containers (or similar shaped containers)• Playing Cards• X-Acto Knife• Duct Tape <p data-bbox="764 646 1192 682">Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 748 968 784">Cost: \$0-5</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 277 1969 574" style="list-style-type: none">• Clean out empty oatmeal container.• Cut a slit in the lid large enough for a playing card to go through.• Wrap duct tape around edges of slit to cover all sharp pieces.• Put out playing cards and empty oatmeal containers.
<p data-bbox="270 859 569 911">Sticky Paper</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 859 961 894">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 928 1052 1044" style="list-style-type: none">• Contact Paper• Shipping Tape• Foam Shapes <p data-bbox="764 1110 1192 1146">Time to Make: 10 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 1206 993 1242">Cost: \$0-20</p>	<ul data-bbox="1377 859 1955 1230" style="list-style-type: none">• Cut out foam shapes by hand or with Elision Die machine.• Cut squares of contact paper. Tape to a flat surface in your room.• Put out foam shapes (or other items) and encourage babies to see what sticks.

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Activity	Details	How to Make
<p data-bbox="243 277 596 329">Sensory Board</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 272 961 313">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 345 1268 459" style="list-style-type: none">• Tri-Fold Board (bright color)• Various textured items• Hot Glue <p data-bbox="764 521 1192 561">Time to Make: 15 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 610 953 651">Cost: \$5+</p>	<ul data-bbox="1379 277 1961 854" style="list-style-type: none">• Cut a tri-fold board in half to create a baby-size board. A colored board makes the sensory board more visually appealing.• Hot glue a collection of textured surfaces. Try to use a variety of textures and depths, with some items that can be manipulated in different ways (hanging ribbons that aren't entirely taped down, shower curtain rings hanging off side of board, etc.).
<p data-bbox="149 902 695 943">Pom Poms and Whisks</p> 	<p data-bbox="764 902 961 943">Materials:</p> <ul data-bbox="764 976 1100 1057" style="list-style-type: none">• Whisks• 1.5" Pom Poms <p data-bbox="764 1130 1171 1170">Time to Make: 5 min.</p> <p data-bbox="764 1219 995 1260">Cost: \$5-10</p>	<ul data-bbox="1379 902 1919 984" style="list-style-type: none">• Stuff whisks with 1.5" or larger pom poms.