What Stimulation Your Baby Needs To Become Smart

The first three years of life are critical to healthy brain development. William Staso, a school psychologist in Orcutt, California wrote in his book *What Stimulation Your Baby Needs To Become Smart* (1995), recommendations for seven critical periods in your child's development.

Month 1: Eliminate background distraction (radio, television, washing machine) so your baby is optimally relaxed and attentive to your talking, singing, or other foreground activity.

Months 1-3: For proper neural articulation, emphasize contrasts (light versus dark colors, low versus high pitch, simple versus complex timbre, rough versus smooth textures). Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that children whose fathers were actively involved in the first six months of their care scored higher on subsequent measures of intellectual and motor development.

Months 3-5: For visual development, use pictures of baby's real-world objects (spoons, cups, wagons, etc.) as a part of play activity.

Months 6-7: Emphasize cause and effect (turn the knob and the door opens), locations of various objects ("'Where's the kitty? There she is!"), and functions of environment objects ("What does the ball do? Bounce! See!").

Months 7-8: Emphasize sound as a signal of impending events (running water and a bath, car in the driveway and "Fonz's back!").

Months 9-12: Explore motor and sensory skills and how they combine (turning the faucet and feel the water). Twelve-month-olds can remember behaviors they have observed for thirty seconds for up to one week. By around twelve months of age, infants typically learn one or two new behaviors daily simply by observing people in their environment.

Months 13-18: Explore objects in the environment; this is the time to make the environment especially diverse and rich. Explore sequences and relationships (build towers of diverse shapes, make trains of different sizes- bigger, smaller, bigger, smaller….). Psychologist Harlene Hayne finds that eighteen-month-olds can remember observed behaviors for up to one month.

Source: Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D., (1999). The Owner's Manual For The Brain. Bard.