Infants

Kick It! (Fig. 1)
Let your baby find out what her legs can do while she learns about cause and effect.

- Lay the baby on her back.
- Place a small pillow or a stuffed animal by the baby's feet.
- Encourage her to kick it!

Also:

- If the baby doesn't kick the object on her own, hold it just close enough to let her feel it with the bottom of her feet.
- Make sure she gets to kick with both right and left feet.
- Use language to encourage her and describe what she's doing. For example: "You're kicking the pillow!"

Fig. 1

Crossing the Midline (Fig. 2)
Have playtime activities that help your baby's right arm or leg cross over to the left and the left arm or leg cross over to the right. This crossing over is an important step in helping your baby learn.

- Place the baby in a comfortably seated position.
- Sit or kneel in front of him and hide a favorite toy behind your back.
- Make a game of handing him the toy so he has to reach *across* his body to get it.

Also:

- Repeat this, encouraging the use of both left and right hands, as long as the baby stays interested!

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Let It Pour (Fig. 3)
This outdoor summer activity promotes both eye-hand coordination and coordination in general.

- Place a plastic sheet or old tablecloth on the porch, patio or grass, and seat the baby on it, along with two large plastic cups – one empty and one filled with water or sand.
- Demonstrate pouring the water or sand from one cup to the other.
- Encourage the baby to try it!

Also:

- Later you can use two cups of different shapes that hold the same amount – for example, one 8-ounce cup that's short and squat and one 8-ounce cup that's tall and narrow.
- Fill one cup to the rim and demonstrate pouring the water or sand from one cup to the other.
- Encourage the baby to try it, too.

Fig. 4

Creepy/Crawly (Fig. 4)
Crawling and creeping not only help your baby get around but also use the right and left sides of the body at the same time. This helps later with reading and writing skills.

- Lay the baby on her tummy on a carpet or smooth, clean surface.
- Place a favorite toy in front of her, just out of her reach.
- Encourage her to go get it.

Also:

- Let the baby reach and retrieve the toy, but then make a game out of moving it out of reach again.
- Repeat as long as the baby stays interested.

Adapted from "Kids In Action: Fitness for Children, BIrth to Age Five," The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports