



# Bath Time & Your Baby:

*Loving and learning while getting clean*

## 18-24 Months

Bath time is about so much more than cleaning up after a messy day in the trenches. For your child, the bathtub is his personal water park, and a great opportunity for you to connect with her and teach her all sorts of important skills. Check this out:

I splash my hands in the water and laugh so hard when it makes the boat rock. You laugh too and start singing Row, Row, Row Your Boat. I join in and splash as we sing. But when I splash a little too hard, you say, “Keep the water in the tub, buddy.” Then you say: “Hey, look at this!” You pick up a handful of bubbles and blow out a big breath. The bubbles float everywhere. You pick up another handful and hold them out to me. My first try at blowing them doesn’t go so well. You show me how to do it one more time.

I take a deep breath—pfffft! Off they fly!

Bath time offers endless opportunities for young children to play and learn. When you sing as you play together, your child learns to connect words to familiar objects. And splashing gives young children experience with concepts like wet/dry and floating/sinking. Blowing bubbles helps them understand cause-and-effect. When you follow your child’s interests, set age-appropriate limits, and join in your child’s play, you are nurturing her development in critical ways.

[Find out what bath time teaches your child on the next page!](#)



## What you can do

## What your child is learning

### Social-Emotional Development

Have fun with your child. Laugh together, enjoy each other.

→ How to play well with others and that relationships are fun and satisfying.

Notice what your child is trying to accomplish. Give her just enough help to reach her goal. For example, show her how you blow hard to make the bubbles, then encourage her to try.

→ That she is smart and capable, and that she can rely on you for help when needed.

Set age-appropriate limits. Be sure to tell your child what she can do (blow the bubbles), not just what she can't (splash outside the tub).

→ How to cope with limits. Learning to substitute an acceptable activity for an unacceptable one is an important part of developing self-control.

### Language and Thinking Skills

Help your child develop pretend play skills. Ask questions like: Where is the boat going? Who is on the boat?

→ To be a good thinker as he develops stories as he plays. To learn language when he shares his ideas with you.

Build your child's vocabulary and ability to make connections between ideas. For example, you can describe the toy boat he is playing with, then sing a song about boats. You can also teach him new concepts. Do boats float or sink? What other toys float?

→ That his interests and ideas are important to you. That you will follow his lead.

### Physical Development

Encourage your child to try to undress herself before bath time. Can she pull off his socks and pants? Yank her t-shirt over her head? She may still need a little help for a while yet.

→ How to balance and coordinate her arms and legs in order to get undressed.

Let your child rub some lotion on her hands or legs after her bath.

→ Spatial awareness — where her body is in relation to other objects and people.

→ That this body belongs to her (body awareness), and that she can help to take care of herself.

Always remember, part of keeping bath time fun is making sure your child is safe. This means never leaving her unattended, even if she is in a bath seat. So gather all the things you will need for the bath beforehand and let the phone ring over to voicemail. Also, be sure to set your water heater below 120 degrees to prevent the possibility of scalding.

*For more information about bath safety, go to [AAP.org](http://AAP.org)*

*For more information on child development, go to [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org)*



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