



Chapter 7

Thinking Skills

A child develops thinking skills by having many opportunities to play with the people and objects around him. Any activity that helps a child learn gives him new ways to think about the world. This chapter gives some ideas for activities that can help a child develop thinking skills. Most children who can see begin to learn thinking skills at about the following ages:



Between 6 and 9 months, a baby learns that objects still exist — even when he no longer sees, touches, hears or smells them. For example, if he drops a cup, he knows it has not disappeared but is now lying on the ground.

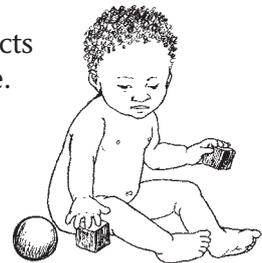


At about 9 months, a baby begins to copy what others do (imitation).

Between 9 and 12 months, a baby learns that he can make things happen. For example, he learns that if he hits a cup with a spoon, it makes noise. He also begins to solve simple problems.



At about 1 year, a baby can match 2 objects that are alike. Later, he will learn to sort and count objects.



A child who cannot see well can also learn these skills. With some help, he will learn them only 3 to 6 months later than a child who can see.

ACTIVITIES

If your child can see a little, be sure to adapt these activities to make the best use of his remaining sight (see Chapter 4).

Understanding objects

A baby knows that an object (or person) exists when it can be seen, touched, heard, smelled, or tasted. But if the object drops out of sight or no longer makes a sound, a baby thinks the object has disappeared.

A baby who cannot see well has more difficulty learning that these objects still exist than babies who can see. This is because he has less information about objects. For example, he may not be able to see that the object is still there when it stops making a sound.

- **To help your child understand that objects still exist when they cannot be seen, heard, felt, tasted, or smelled**



Tie strings onto toys and then onto chairs, tables, and your child's clothes or hands (see page 41).

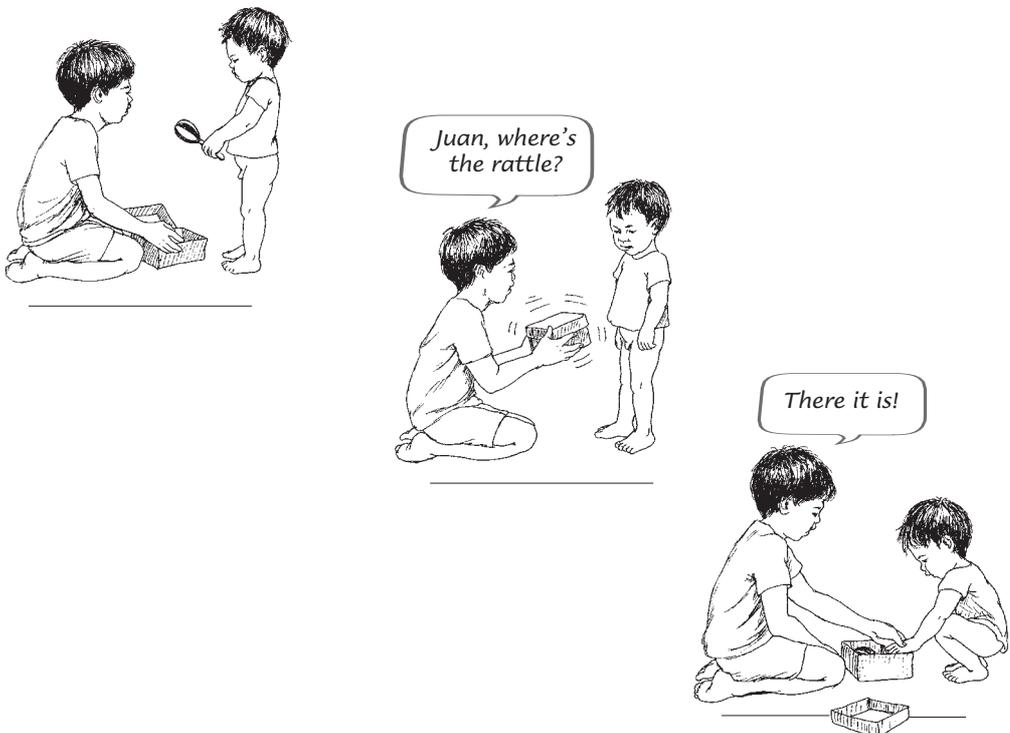
Put seeds or small stones into a round gourd or ball so it makes a sound as it rolls. Then encourage your child to roll the ball back and forth between you. The sound will help him learn that the object still exists even after it leaves his hands.



Tie a piece of string to a favorite toy. Show your baby the toy and string and then place the toy out of his reach. Encourage him to pull the string to get the toy. Remember, since strings can be a hazard for small children, watch him to make sure he does not wrap the string around his neck.



Show your child how to drop an object into a box and then shut the lid. Then show him how to open the lid and reach in to find the object again.



Doing the same things others do (imitation)

Children who can see learn a lot by watching others and trying to do (imitate) what they do. Children who cannot see well, however, must learn to pay attention to sounds and other clues to know what people are doing.

► To encourage your child to imitate others

Imitate him. When your child makes a noise, make the same noise back.



Do something that makes a sound and encourage him to repeat what you do.



When he gets older, encourage him to dress up and pretend he is someone else.

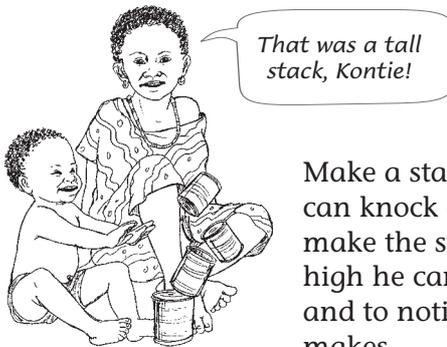
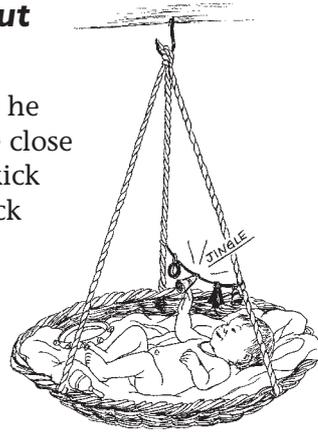


Understanding why things happen (cause and effect)

When a young baby plays with toys, he does not know what will happen. But slowly he learns that by doing certain things — like banging a toy on the floor — he can make other things happen — like a loud noise. This is an important lesson for a baby, because he is learning that he can have an effect on the world around him. He also learns that he has some control over what happens. This makes him more curious about how things work.

► To help your baby learn about cause and effect

Place noisy toys across the area where he sleeps or plays. Make sure the toys are close enough so he will accidentally hit or kick them. Soon he will learn to hit and kick them on purpose.



That was a tall stack, Kontie!

Make a stack of small boxes or cans that your baby can knock down. As he gets older, he can learn to make the stack himself. Encourage him to see how high he can make the stack before pushing it over, and to notice the different sounds each box or can makes.

Encourage him to put things inside a box and then toss them out.



Solving problems

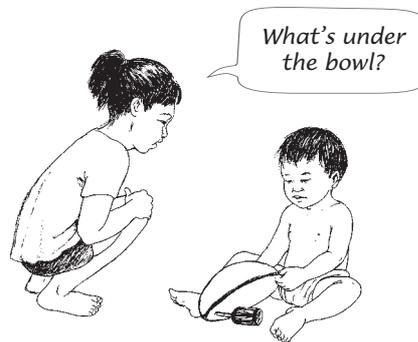
Your child has already learned something about solving problems. For example, if he cries when he wants something, he has learned that crying can get him what he wants. But by crying, he is asking someone else to solve a problem. He also needs to learn that he can solve many problems himself.

► To help your baby learn how to solve problems

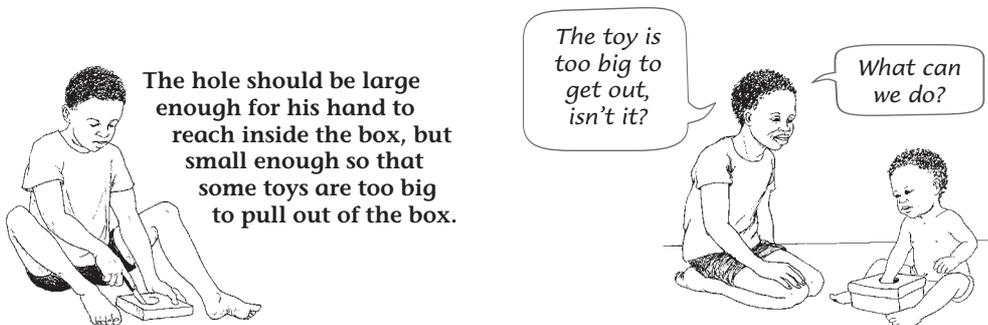


Put a cloth over his face. He may pull it off right away. But if he does not, pull it off yourself and then put the cloth on his face again.

Play hide-and-seek with your child's toys. Shake a noisy toy and then hide it under a cloth. See if he can pull the cloth off to find it. Next, try turning a bowl or a pan upside down and putting it over the toy. See if he can figure out how to turn the bowl over.



Give your child a box filled with different sized objects and let him play with them. Then cut a hole in the lid of the box, but make the hole smaller than some of the objects. Put the lid on the box and encourage your child to take all the objects out. See if he can figure out how to take off the lid to get the biggest objects out.



Matching and sorting objects

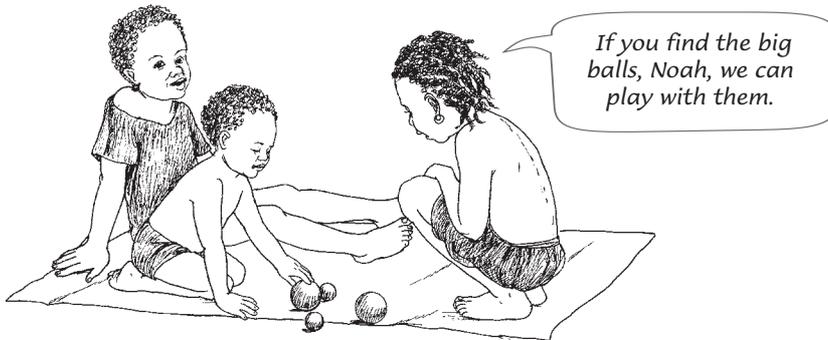
Every child needs to learn how objects are similar to and different from each other. Matching and sorting objects helps teach a child to pay attention to important similarities and differences.

► To help your child learn how to match objects

Put 2 different objects — like a spoon and a pan — in front of your child and let him explore them. Then give him a third object that is like one of the first 2 objects. Ask him to find the 2 objects that are shaped the same.



Ask your child to match objects that are the same size or color, or that make the same sound, or have the same feel.



Cut a hole in a box that is the same shape as a simple toy. Then ask your child to find the same shape to put in the box.

► **To help your child learn how to sort objects**

Make a hole in a box and then ask your child to find all the toys that are small enough to go through the hole into the box.



Make a game of putting similar objects together in a pile.

Make a game of comparing objects.

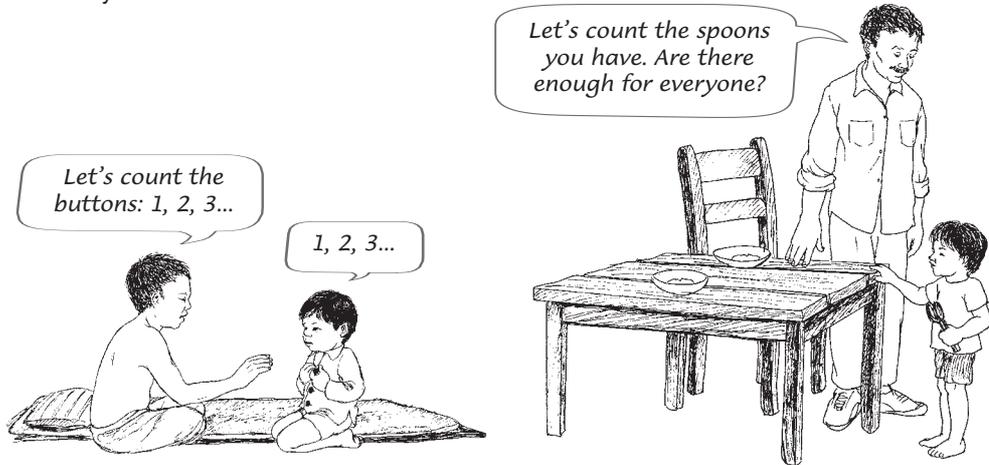


Make a shape puzzle. Cut out shapes — like circles and squares — from a piece of strong cardboard. Help your child fit them back into the correct places. When he can do this, try harder shapes, like triangles and stars.

Counting

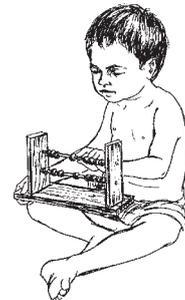
► To help your child learn to count

Throughout the day, look for ways to teach your child to count.



Make a simple counting frame. Your child can slide beads or rings from one side to the other to count, add, and subtract.

When your child becomes more skilled with numbers, he can learn to use the methods in your community that rely on touch, like counting stones or using an abacus.



Increasing your child's thinking skills

As your child develops, he must learn to use his skills to form more complete ideas about the world around him. You can help by providing him with many different opportunities to learn about his world.



► To increase your child's thinking skills

Help your child learn more about objects by teaching him to feel the whole object, even when it is very large. Encourage him to identify the object's size, shape, weight, and feel.

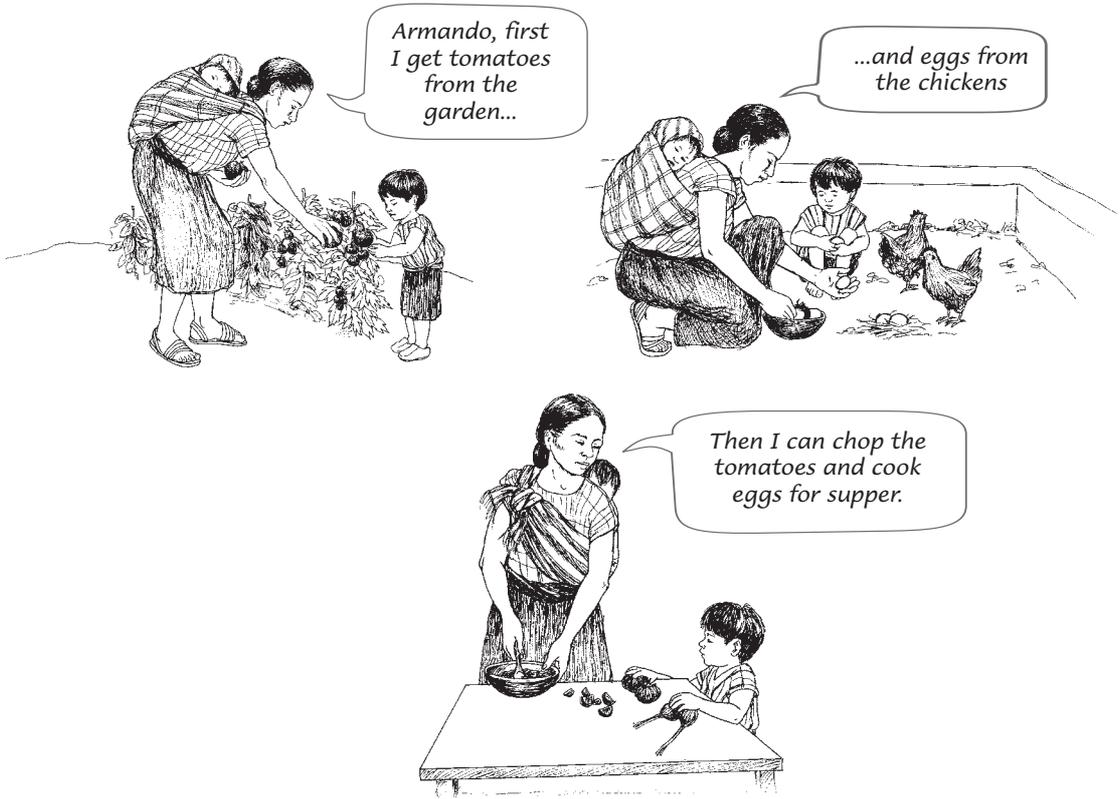
I'll put Raimon on my shoulders so he will know how big the tree is.

If your child can see a little, ask him to describe objects to you or to draw them. This way you will know if he sees well enough to understand what the object really looks like. If he has not seen the object correctly, explain what it is like.

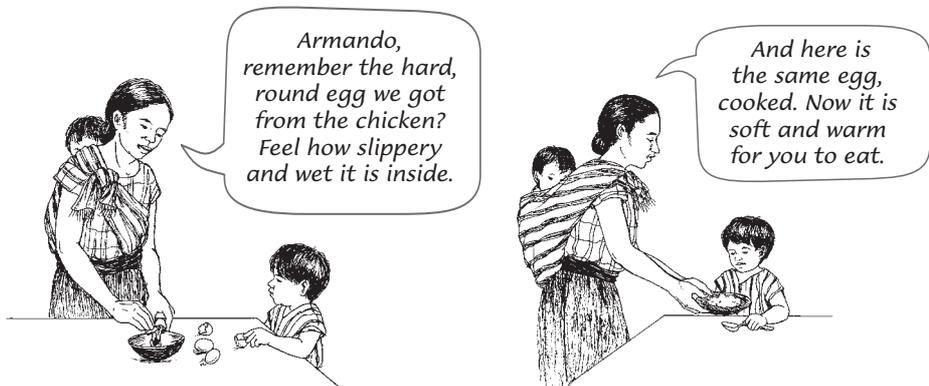


What a nice dog. Can you tell me what he looks like?

Help your child learn about all the different parts of an activity. For example, take your child with you to explain all the things you must do to prepare a meal.



Help your child learn how objects can change. For example, in the cooking example above, the child can also learn how the vegetables and eggs change and feel different after cooking.



Help your child connect one experience with another. For example:

