

## Lesson Activities for 9- to 15-Month-Olds



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[Montessori for the Earth](#)

## Lesson Activities for 9- to 15-Month-Olds

### The Treasure Basket



Indirect Aim: Promote independence, enhance curiosity, and develop focus and concentration.

Direct Aim: Explore different objects.

Materials: Shoe box, wicker basket, or plastic container up to four inches high filled with different objects of various shapes, colors, sizes, and textures.

For younger infants, begin with only three or four objects small enough for her to pick up but not swallow, and that are easily seen in the basket. Older infants can have as many as ten objects that they can sort through.

Before introducing this activity to younger infants, place only the container in the environment for the infant to explore. After a few weeks, begin adding various objects for her to extract.

Change the objects every three or four days (or at least once a week). You can keep any favored object in the container, however. Clean objects as needed, or place them in the dishwasher (if dishwasher safe).

When introducing the treasure basket, sit facing the infant and take out one object, explore it, then return to basket (without talking!). Continue until infant begins to take objects out of the basket, then move away.

For younger infants who cannot yet understand the concept of choosing objects to explore, offer her two objects (one in each hand) for her to grasp. Eventually, after days or weeks, she will choose them herself out of the basket.

When infant loses interest, place the objects back in the basket and place back on shelf (or where ever you keep the basket). Make sure the treasure basket is accessible to the infant to go to whenever she wants to.

You can keep one treasure basket in each room that the infant is allowed to freely play in. If making a trip to grandma's house, you can bring along a smaller treasure basket.

Extension: At age 12 months (or when child shows interest in vocabulary) you can begin naming each object, slowly, one at a time, holding it up for the infant to see. Eventually, you can ask for an object by name to see if the child remembers it!

## Pot and Utensils Activity



Indirect Aim: Fine motor movement (hand and eye coordination).

Direct Aim: Listening to different sounds made by different objects (auditory discrimination).

Materials: A small pot and three utensils made of wood, metal, and plastic. The utensils should be placed on the left side of the pot (traditional method—takes longer) before giving the demonstration, or inside the pot (progressive method--faster).



Sit next to your baby and, going from left to right, take one utensil and hit the side of the pot several times. Pause. Place the utensil down (on the right side of the pot or inside). Take the next utensil and hit the side of the pot several times. Pause. Place the utensil down (on the right side of the pot or inside). Take the third utensil and hit the side of the pot several times. Pause. Place the utensil down (on the right side of the pot or inside). Take the utensils and place them back on the left side of the pot or keep them in the pot.

Allow your baby to explore the utensils and the pot, gently guiding her hand if necessary to help her pick up, hold, and or bang the utensils. When you are finished with your activity, place it in a nearby place for future play and lessons. From time to time, replace the utensils and pot.

Extension: Allow your baby to explore a variety of containers on a low shelf or in a cabinet; place several utensils in a bowl for your baby to explore.

## Hide an Object



Indirect Aim: Reinforce object permanence (cognitive skill).

Direct Aim: Find the hidden object, hide the object.

Materials: A small colorful object, like a rubber duck, and a box.

Place your baby next to you. Take the duck from inside the box and place it down next to the box so the infant can see it.

Take the duck and allow the infant to hold it and explore it. Say to the infant, “May I have a turn to hold it?” Hold the object and then say to the infant, “Watch me hide the duck.”

Hide the duck beside the box so the infant can partially see it (for the first lesson). Ask the infant, “Where is the duck?” The infant can retrieve the duck and give it to you.

Hide the duck again, this time so the infant cannot see it, inside the box or behind the box. Ask the infant, “Where is the duck?” The infant can retrieve the duck and give it to you.

If the infant has trouble finding the duck, help him by pointing to it and retrieving it, say “Here’s the duck!”

Continue the game. Older infants can have a turn to hide the object: “Now it is your turn to hide the object.”

Take turns hiding and finding the object.

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a nearby place for future play and lessons.

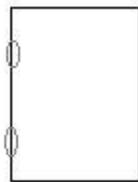
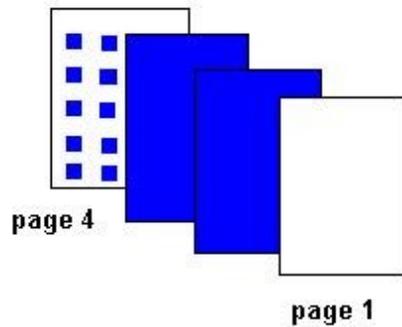
From time to time, replace the object.

Other objects to use: Ball, stuffed animal, dish, rattle, sponge, cup, block, toothbrush.

You can also play this game without a box as a social game by hiding the object near your leg or behind your back.

This game reinforces object permanence, that is, if something cannot be seen it still exists.

## Pattern Booklet



**Bind the pages together with rings or string.**

Indirect Aim: Concentration skills.

Direct Aim: Visual development.

Materials: Two pieces of white construction paper and two pieces of blue construction paper cut in half (per booklet); hole puncher; yarn, string, or metal rings; laminate each page with contact paper (clear shelf paper) or bring to Kinko's (they can make it a booklet for you with binding and laminating).

Infants enjoy looking at patterns at this age, especially in colors that contrast each other (in this activity, blue and white): red and yellow, green and orange, red and black, etc. The pattern page you will make needs to be simple and the pattern needs to be repetitive (one page of small triangles, large dots, wavy lines, or squares, etc.). Page one will be white, pages two and three will be blue, and page four will be the pattern page, in this example. You can make as many booklets as you have time for, in various contrasting colors, each with a different pattern page.

The booklet will be made of three pages of solid color, and one page with a pattern on it (page three or four). You want the infant to anticipate finding the page with the pattern on it. And notice the behavior of your infant when she finds it!

Sit beside the infant and place the booklet in front of you (you can also place the infant on your lap). Carefully and slowly turn the pages. Allow the infant to touch the pages of the booklet if she wants. When you are done, let the infant explore the booklet.

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a basket in a nearby place for future play and lessons. From time to time, replace the booklet(s).

Extension: You can increase the number of solid pages in a booklet to five, six, and seven, but with only one pattern page per booklet.

## Pincer Grasp with Cheerios



Indirect Aim: Develop visual perception, focus, and concentration.

Direct Aim: Develop fine motor skills.

Materials: A small container or plate with Cheerios, the container or plate should be plain (not patterned) so the baby can see the Cheerios clearly.

Place your baby at his eating area, wipe his hands clean, and place the container or plate with Cheerios on the highchair tray or table top--if your baby is inclined to toss the container or plate of Cheerios, use only seven Cheerios and put them on the highchair tray or table top next to an *empty* container or plate.

Pick up a Cheerio and hold it up in front of the infant so he can see it, say "Cheerio," or "cereal." Place it on his tray or in his container.

Pick up the same Cheerio and place it *back* on his tray or in his container (where ever you picked it up from). You can repeat this step using your other hand.

Allow the baby to have a turn. (He may toss the plate and Cheerios, eat them, or bat them around.)

When the baby is done exploring, place the activity in a nearby place for future play and lessons.

Cheerios are a safe tool for developing pincer grasp because they are edible and dissolve easily in the baby's mouth. Also, the baby will put small objects in his mouth and could choke on non food items or other small food items, like whole grapes. Other food items chopped up can be used instead of Cheerios, depending on the age of your baby and advice of your pediatrician.

## Working on a Bench at a Table



Age: When child can sit up safely unattended.

Indirect Aim: Sitting on a stool and working at a table top.

Direct Aim: Practice sitting up with knees bent (90/90 sitting) and working on a high surface.

Materials: A stool 4 to 6 inches high (so that the infant's feet can lay flat on the floor) and a table top high enough so the infant's knees can go under it but low enough for her to rest her arms and hands.

A plastic storage box turned upside down is a great makeshift stool! You can also use a small wooden stool found in children's boutiques. A table can be made out of another stool with four legs, a box turned upside down, or a small handmade wooden table (sometimes found at a children's second-hand store). A low coffee table may suffice.

Place the table against a couch or wall (or it can be easily moved by the infant) and put the stool in front of it. Place a toy or favorite object on the table: "Would you like to sit on the stool?" Begin placing child on stool and allow her to play with the toy or object. If she resists, leave it for another day. Meantime, she can explore the bench and table on her own.

Eventually, she will sit for longer periods on the stool and at that time you can present more detailed activities that require more of her focus and attention. She will enjoy her new found skill, be less likely to crawl or toddle away, and may actually take the lesson and repeat it! (This is a great way to give lessons!)

## **Noise Makers**

Indirect Aim: Early language development and fine motor skills.

Direct Aim: Auditory development.

Materials: Crumple up a few pieces of wax paper, newspaper, or pages of a magazine in a bandanna, large scarf, or handkerchief. Tie it up in a bundle.

### **Number One**

Place your baby next to you, take the scarf noise maker and feel it, shake it, and pat it. Allow the baby to have a turn. Gently guide her hand if needed.

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a nearby place for future play and lessons. From time to time, replace the scarf or cloth.

### **Number Two**

Materials: Plastic Easter egg taped around the middle (so it does not open) with rice, pasta, or beans inside. You can play a musical CD during this activity (optional).

Place your baby next to you, take the shaker noise maker and shake it. Allow the baby to have a turn. Gently guide her hand if needed.

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a basket in a nearby place for future play and lessons. From time to time, replace the contents of the egg.

Extension: Make two eggs shakers, one for each hand.

### **Number Three**

Materials: Use an empty oatmeal canister, cereal box, or shoe box with the lid taped on. You can cover the box on the outside with wrapping paper (optional).

Place your baby in front of you, take the noise maker drum and pat it with your hand. Allow the baby to have a turn. Gently guide her hand if needed.

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a nearby place for future play and lessons. From time to time, replace the box.

## Placing Spoons in a Bowl



Indirect Aim: Fine motor, future sorting and counting.

Direct Aim: Grasping spoons and eating utensils.

Materials: Four identical spoons, bowl or plastic container that will not tip over very easily.

Have your baby facing you, line up the spoons and place the bowl close to them (so that the spoons are on her left and the bowl is on her right).

Begin picking up the first spoon and placing it in the bowl, followed by the second spoon, place it in the bowl, then the third, and the fourth.

Carefully take one spoon out of the bowl and place it back on the mat or rug. Repeat until all the spoons are back in their place.



Give the baby the first spoon and help her place it in the bowl and say, "Place the spoon in the bowl." You may assist the baby if need be. Now sit away and allow her time to explore. When you are finished with your activity, place it in a basket in a nearby place for future play and lessons. From time to time, replace the eating objects with forks, small identical cups, or bowls and use a container that is the appropriate size to hold them.

Language: Name the object when you hold it.

## Rhythms



Indirect Aim: Developing auditory skills, experiencing rhythms in songs, listening.

Direct Aim: Respond to stimuli.

Materials: Wooden spoon, metal bowl, simple songs that you can sing (“Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” “A, B, C, D,” “Itsy Bitsy Spider.”)

Sit facing the infant with the bowl and spoon between you. Begin tapping the bowl to the rhythm of the song with the spoon without singing.

Next, start singing the song and tap to the rhythm of the song.

Hand the spoon to the infant to explore, and move the bowl closer. If necessary, take her hand gently and tap together while singing. Continue to sing when infant taps.

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a nearby place for future play and lessons.

From time to time, replace the spoon and baking tin with similar objects.

Other objects you can use: Plastic spoon, metal spoon, drum, block of wood, wooden bowl, baking tin.

## Exploring Various Food Textures



Indirect Aim: Developing hand and eye coordination and visual perception.

Direct Aim: Explore different food textures.

Materials: Small bowl neutral in color so child sees the food pieces easily, tray or mat, five pieces of one type of food such as pasta, cut up peeled fruit, firm gelatin, cheerios; and a napkin or cloth for cleaning hands when done. Each time you present this activity, you can change the bowl or container and or the food and the quantity.

Before introducing this activity wipe infant's hands clean.

Have the food pieces already in the bowl and set down in front of you and the infant (with you facing the infant). Take one food piece out of the bowl and feel it with your fingers, then place it back in the bowl. Take another piece and repeat, perhaps this time squeezing the piece (try handling food pieces in different ways!). Wipe your hands on the napkin or wet cloth.

Place the bowl closer to the infant and say, "Would you like to feel?" Allow the infant to explore the food (and container). It is OK if she mouths the food pieces, dumps them out, etc. Move away and just observe her. When she loses interest, place the food back in the bowl and put away on the food shelf area. Wipe up remaining mess.

Extension: Present various food pieces of different textures together in the bowl. Allow an older infant to grasp the food pieces and transfer them onto a plate or another bowl that you include in the activity (after showing her, first).

Beware of choking hazards, especially grapes, cut them in half.

Some foods might be too slippery, such as banana or avocado, so you can roll them in oatmeal. And peel fruits, such as apples.

This is not a feeding activity, although most infants will attempt to eat the food.

Do not leave the child alone with food pieces in case of choking hazards.

## Lesson Activities for 12- to 15-Month-Olds

### **Pulling Scarf Game**



Indirect Aim: Coordination and balance control.

Direct Aim: Social development through cooperation (playing a game).

Materials: A long colorful scarf or sock, a basket or container for the scarf.

Place your baby in front of you, take the scarf out of the container, and put one end of the scarf in your baby's hands and the other end in your hands.

Allow the infant time to examine and explore the scarf, and when she pulls or tugs on it, pull it towards you.

If the infant cannot hold onto her end of the scarf, you can tie it around her wrist.

If the infant lets go of her end of the scarf, place it back into her hands to grasp. She may also want to mouth it.

Create a gentle motion of pulling back and forth between you and the infant, smile, sing a song, and make it fun! Keep playing with the scarf, offering it to her if she drops it, then put it away when she loses interest.

You can also use language for this game, "pull," "tug," and "push." You can also begin the game by saying, "We are going to play the see-saw game or tug-of-war (or peace) game."

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a basket in a nearby place for future play and lessons.

From time to time, replace the object. Other objects you can use: A stuffed animal, paper towel tub, or an envelope.

## **A Language Activity with Feeding Objects**

Indirect Aim: To be able to put activities away, motor and cognitive development.

Direct Aim: Develop skills for recognizing objects.

Materials: Three items used at feeding time (spoon, cup, bowl, plate, and or fork), a small basket, a tray.

Place the three feeding items and the basket on the tray. Sit facing the baby with the tray between you. Show the basket to the baby, "This is a basket." Put the basket next to the tray.

Pick up the cup and say, "Cup." Let the baby hold the cup. Next, ask the baby to please place the cup in the basket. "Thank you." Do the same with the bowl and spoon.

Take each item out of the basket, one at a time, and put them back on the tray.

Ask the baby to find (or pick up) the spoon and place it in the basket. "Yes, that's the spoon!" Repeat for the bowl and cup.

If the baby gets the wrong item, say, "This is the cup, I wanted the spoon. Can you find the spoon?"

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a nearby place for future play and lessons.

From time to time, replace the objects.

## Warm and Cold



Indirect Aim: Vocabulary (language expansion).

Direct Aim: Experience and develop the sense of temperature.

Materials: Two plastic containers that are identical, warm water, and ice. A towel can be used under this activity for spills, or removed for further experience of the spilled water and ice by the infant, on a tile floor.

Optional: Use washcloths instead, one dipped with warm water, the other with dipped with ice water; place each washcloth in a separate container (the containers should be identical). Allow the infant to explore the washcloths. Use language “warm” and “cold.”

Sit in front of the infant, place the containers on the floor, one at a time (you can use lids while doing this, then remove them, but the infant will not be able to do remove them herself, and will probably want to!). Place your fingers in the warm water, “The water is warm.” Allow the infant to explore the water and the container, even if she spills it--let her continue to explore it.

Next, bring out the cold container with ice water. Place your fingers on the ice water, “The water feels cold.” Allow the infant to explore the ice water and the container, even if she spills it--let her continue to explore it. When she loses interest, sponge the water up or use a towel, the infant can help if she chooses to.

Extension: Feel items in the environment and say “Warm, cold.” (Cold for baby wipe or ice cream, warm for bottle, bath, or laundry right out of the dryer.)

You can also begin to introduce the word, “hot” for items you don’t want your little one to touch, or food she needs to blow on (which they love to do!): stove, heater, hot tea or coffee, fireplace, metal objects out in the sun, hot water from the faucet, etc.

You can point out hot, warm, and cold objects in books, and use the same language for them (“hot, warm, cold”); and then ask the child to “Point to hot” when the child sees a picture of a fireplace, for example, or “Point to cold” when the child sees a picture of an ice cube.

## **A Language Activity with Object Descriptions**

Indirect Aim: To help develop concentrations skills.

Direct Aim: The skill of listening is practiced.

Materials: A tray or mat with two familiar objects that are the same color but are different in shape, like a red ball and a red block, a wooden bowl and a wooden spoon, a yellow sponge and a yellow cup, etc.

Sit facing the baby. Place the tray next to you then take one object and place it in front of you and the baby. Using the "I Spy" verse, describe the object: "I spy with my little eye something in front of you that is round, red, and bounces." Now pick up the red ball and examine it. "See, it is red and round, and it can bounce!" Let the baby examine the ball, then place it on the tray.

Take the second object and place it in front of you and the baby. Using the "I Spy" verse, describe the object: "I spy with my little eye something in front of you that is square, red, and hard. I can build things with it, like a tower!" Now pick up the red square and examine it. "See, it is red and square, and it is hard!" Let the baby examine the block, then place it on the tray.

Take both objects and place them between you and the baby. Using the "I Spy" verse, describe the object but this time ask the baby to hand it to you: "I spy with my little eye something in front of you that is square, red, and hard. I can build things with it, like a tower! What is it? Can you find it?"

If the baby gives you the wrong object, say, "Thank you, this is the ball, it is red and round. Can you give me the block? It is square and hard."

Allow the baby to explore and play with the objects, and when she is no longer interested, put them away in a nearby place for future use. From time to time, replace the objects.

Extensions: When your baby is good at this game, use three or four objects. Eventually, you can use objects that are less familiar or new to the baby.

## Putting In and Taking Out



Indirect Aim: Teach the process and concept of “putting in” and “taking out”; language of “in” and “out”; sorting skills.

Direct Aim: Coordination of hands and eyes (hand-eye skills).

Materials: One basket, plastic or metal container, or bowl and a small ball or block of a contrasting color. Use a container that is all one color: you want the baby to be able to see the object when inside the container (a red ball and a white bowl, for example).

It is also nice to use a metal container and a hard object so the object will make a noise when dropped or placed in the container. Lastly, a small ball is easier for a younger baby to hold in one hand as compared to a block.

Place your baby in front of you, with the metal bowl and object in between you (the object will be on the left side of the bowl--the baby’s left). Take the ball and place it in the bowl. (Optional: smile and or clap and or say “Yeah!” after the ball drops.) Slowly take the ball out of the bowl.

Take the ball again and place it in the bowl. Say “In” after the ball drops. Slowly take the ball out of the bowl and say “Out.” Now ask the baby, “Put the ball in.” (For the first few times you give this lesson, it is better to end your request with the word *in* so that you are emphasizing the word *in*, rather than saying “Put the ball in the bowl” as the word *in* gets a little lost in the middle of the sentence.)

Now ask the baby, “Take the ball out.” (For the first few times you give this lesson, it is better to end your request with the word *out* so that you are emphasizing the word *out*, rather than saying “Take the ball out of the bowl” as the word *out* gets a little lost in the middle of the sentence.)

Your baby may dump the ball out of the bowl, if this is the case, gently take her hand and help her take the ball out of the bowl to help develop hand-eye coordination.

When you are finished with your activity, place it in a nearby place for future play and lessons.

From time to time, replace the object and or the container.

## **Sequence of “Putting In and Taking Out” Part One: One Object in a Bowl or Container**



To begin teaching the concepts of putting in and taking out, use one object **ONLY** so as to isolate both the task and the concept you want the child to learn, and eventually master.

And remember to keep your child challenged and working at his skill level (the task should not be too easy, which can cause boredom, or too hard, which can cause frustration).

Begin your first lesson with one sphere (ball) in a bowl or container; or use one soft object in a bowl for babies who cannot hold a ball.

Advance every few weeks or so, to a contrasting shape:

1. One cube (block) in a bowl or container.
2. One triangular prism in a bowl or container.
3. One sphere (ball) in a box, truck, or simple toy-like container; or one soft object in a box, truck, or simple toy-like container for babies who cannot hold a ball or a cube.
4. One cube (block) in a box, truck, or simple toy-like container.
5. One triangular prism in a box, truck, or simple toy-like container.

## **Sequence of “Putting In and Taking Out” Part Two: Shaped Containers**



Use one object ONLY so as to isolate both tasks (picking up an object, placing it in a container, taking out an object) and the concepts (putting in, taking out) that you want the child to learn, and eventually master.

1. One sphere (ball) in a shaped container or one soft object in shaped container.



2. One cube (block) in a shape container.



3. One triangular prism in a shape sorter:

## Sequence of “Putting In and Taking Out” Part Three: Shape Sorters



Start with simple shape sorters (with three different shapes); use only one shape, like a sphere, until the child has mastered putting that shape into the sorter, then progress to a contrasting shape, like a cube.

Use only the cube shape until the child has mastered putting that shape into the sorter then progress to a contrasting shape, like a triangular prism. Use only the triangular prism shape until the child has mastered putting that shape into the sorter then progress to two contrasting shapes, like a triangular prism and a sphere.

Use only the triangular prism and the sphere until the child has mastered putting those shapes into the sorter then progress to two contrasting shapes, like a triangular prism and a cube. Use only the triangular prism and the sphere until the child has mastered putting those shapes into the sorter then progress to two contrasting shapes, like a cube and a sphere. Use only the cube and the sphere until the child has mastered putting those shapes into the sorter then progress to three contrasting shapes, like a cube, a triangular prism, and a sphere.

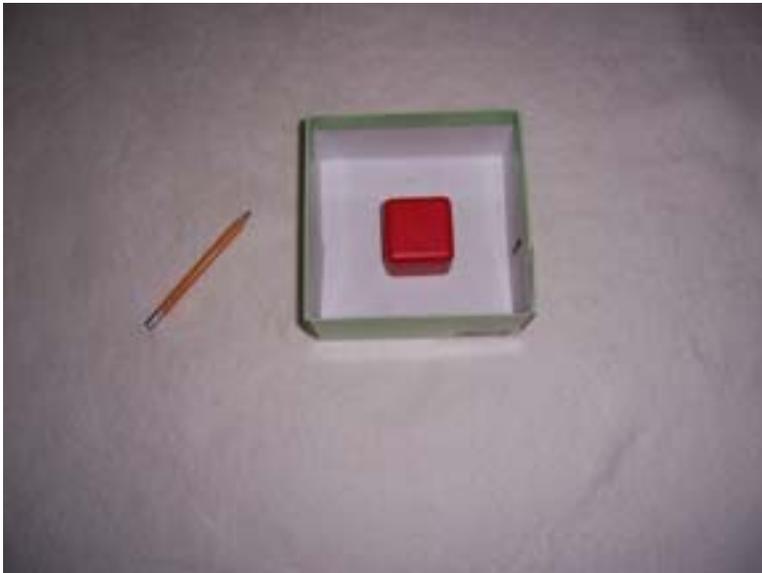


When your child has mastered putting three different shapes into a simple shape sorter, begin using more advanced shape sorters, with four to six shapes. Give your child only one of each shape, however. And you may need to take the top off for easy access to the appropriate shapes.

## Make Your Own Simple Shape Sorters



The Sippy Cup Shape Sorter: Use contrasting solid colors (an orange ball and a blue sippy cup, for example) so the baby can see the ball when it is in the sippy cup. Also, use a ball small enough so it does not get stuck at the bottom of the cup!



The Shoe Box Shape Sorter: Use a child's shoe box, they are sturdier and smaller. Turn the shoe box right side up and begin tracing the shape with a pencil.



Place the shoe box on top of a heavy catalog, like a JC Penney Spring catalog, or a phone book, in order to cut out your shape. Use a box cutter or sharp paring knife (you can also use a heavy needle to make dotted holes and then punch out the shape). Be careful not to cut yourself! Go slowly!



Turn the shoe box upside down! Now you can decorate the box, if you wish, or have an older sibling decorate it, and ideally it should be a solid color.



The Pie Pan Shape Sorter: Place the pie pan on top of a heavy catalog, like a JC Penney Spring catalog, or a phone book, in order to cut out your shape. Use a box cutter or sharp paring knife (you can also use a heavy needle to make dotted holes and then punch out the shape). Be careful not to cut yourself! Go slowly!



Turn the pie pan upside down!

Please note: using containers such as a sippy cup, a shoebox, and a pie pan are ideal because the baby can take out the object very easily by picking up the container, whereas using a container with a plastic lid, such as a coffee can, is more difficult because it takes more skills to open.

Other containers you can use: oatmeal box, large family size cereal box or frozen food box (just cut out the bottom so the baby can get the object easily).

**Lisa Nolan**

## Montessori for the Earth