

Be an observer of your child

YOU CAN GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILD

from the very start of his life simply by observing. Observing your child doesn't take any special equipment or training, but it is one of the most helpful and enjoyable activities parents can do. It's important to learn about the ages and stages of child development, but getting to know the unique little person who is your child will help you individualize your expectations for your child.

OBSERVING HOW-TO'S:

BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS

- ◆ **Take time just to watch your baby.** You'll soon see changes in the sounds she makes, the way she notices her surroundings, and the way she holds and moves her body.
- ◆ **You may have some questions that** can be answered by taking notes as you observe. Be sure to record the same information every time you observe. Review your notes frequently to see patterns and changes.
- ◆ **Get down on your child's level** and observe her environment. You will get a different view of what needs to be changed to keep her safe.

OBSERVING HOW-TO'S: 12 TO 24 MONTHS

- ◆ **Spend time each day observing your child** from a distance. Position yourself so you can see him, but not be a part of his play or activity.
- ◆ **Observe how your child responds to different settings.** You may find he is more comfortable in familiar surroundings or more adventurous when encountering new places.
- ◆ **Keep a list of your child's favorite things,** the words he understands and those he says, and what he likes and does not like to eat. When he is older you will have a keepsake based on your observations.
- ◆ **Ty to be objective.** It might be hard not to put a judgment on what your child does, but you will learn the most if you remain objective.



OBSERVING HOW-TO'S:

24 TO 36 MONTHS

- ◆ **Observe your child's personal style** when it comes to routines. When you establish routines for your child, build on her natural rhythms if you can.
- ◆ **Be your child's play partner** to observe her interests and what she is learning. Be a partner who can give her hints, guidance, and encouragement when she's working out a problem.
- ◆ **Give your child only as much help as she needs** to move to the next step in developing a skill. Let her determine the timing of her learning. Observing helps you know when to provide help and when to hold back.

OBSERVING HOW-TO'S: PRESCHOOLERS

- ◆ **Have in mind what you want to observe,** and concentrate on those behaviors or areas of development.
- ◆ **Be open and receptive to whatever your child is showing you.** Don't interrupt your child to correct him or add to his play. You may be surprised at how competent you think your child is when you really focus on what he can do.
- ◆ **Note your responses to what you observe.** Observing your child can teach you a lot about yourself, too. ❖