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"Some days will test you more than others; sometimes you'll be able to rise to the challenge, other times you will need to step down to preserve your strength. Both are brave & valid."  
-Laura Jane Jones

Independence Day is celebrated in the United States on July 4th each year. Speaking of independence, we wanted to share why independent play for your child is important:

- Promotes healthy growth through social stages
- Provides an atmosphere without over-stimulation
- Blanket time and playpen time offers structured environments for independent exploration
- Sets the stage for future quiet time.

So how do you support independent play for your child? Here are some tips:

- Starting a quiet independent play time is ideal when baby is around five months old. Children of all ages can be taught to play quietly on their own.
- Make sure baby is rested, fed and has had ample time with a parent before beginning.
- Be close by at first.
- Stick to just a few developmentally appropriate toys.
- If baby cries, go over and gently soothe and re-introduce the toy.
- Start with just 5 or 10 minutes of alone time and then gradually extend the time.
- Creating space in your day to provide a stable and safe environment for your child to explore his ever-expanding world is a benefit to all in your family.

Have an older child? Here are some additional tips:

- Create a "yes space"--this is a place where children have just the right amount of playthings, at just the right difficulty and interest for them, and where nothing is unsafe or forbidden. A "yes space" encourages them to explore without restrictions and can build your child's attention span and supports independent play.
- Offer fewer choices and rotate toys--this can help your child get deeper into play, play for longer periods of time, and form more meaningful bonds with the toys.
- Set up stations--You could offer a handful of blocks in one basket, a small collection of nature items in another, and crayons and paper at another. The key is to keep stations simple and allow your child to move freely between them.
- Practice supportive play--when adults play with our children, we often take charge rather than allowing our children to discover more about themselves and what they can do. When your child asks for help, try suggesting a solution for them to try rather than doing it yourself.



Find out more information about these tips at: <https://tinyurl.com/3jjh27am> and <https://tinyurl.com/fxnhyw2b>

# Craft Corner

## Apple Stamping Ladybug Art

<https://tinyurl.com/3j4t5cwn>



## 4th of July Handprint & Footprint Flag

<https://tinyurl.com/yck7xk55>



## Butterfly Sponge Art:

<https://tinyurl.com/2xxbfjssp>



Playing in the sand can be a great opportunity for children to have unstructured play time. Learn more about its benefits at: <https://tinyurl.com/3n93ackw>

### Sand Play Safety Tips

- Visit a beach with a reputation for being clean and strict rules prohibiting littering.
- Natural sand usually doesn't emit dust or leave clothes and hands dusty, while the crushed mineral sand you want to avoid typically does.
- The safest sand boxes are typically plastic.
- If you own a sand box, cover it when it's not in use to keep animals out.
- Avoid wet sand which can be a breeding ground for parasites and pinworms.
- Raking sand regularly will help to keep it clean, fresh, and dry.
- Instruct children to wash their hands after playing in the sand.
- Sand and water reflect the sun so remember children should wear sunscreen when playing outdoors for any length of time.

### Resources

- **Maternal Mental Health Hotline: 1-833-943-5746**
  - Call or text 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Available in English, Spanish, and other languages by request for pregnancy, postpartum, and pregnancy-loss support. Trained counselors are there to provide free, confident, culturally- and trauma-informed support as well as referrals to community-based and telehealth providers.
- **Baby Games Calendar**  
<https://pathways.org/baby-milestones-calendar/>
  - Enter baby's birthday to find activities, milestones, and games based on their age.

# This Massage Can Help:

- ▶ Promote a healthy parent-baby relationship
- ▶ Increase parent confidence levels
- ▶ Improve baby's sleeping, feeding habits, communication skills, and sensory awareness
- ▶ Reduce hospital stays for preemies

## Preemies



This massage intervention was originally developed for premature infants in the NICU known as ATW.

The intervention helps NICU infants feed better and reduce hospital stays. If you have a premature infant, talk with your healthcare provider to see if your baby would benefit from this technique.

For more help, watch our instructional video online at [www.Pathways.org](http://www.Pathways.org).

Please visit [www.Pathways.org](http://www.Pathways.org) to find more FREE resources on child development.

Massage+ 30, 10, 5 is an intervention known as ATW (Auditory, Tactile, Visual, Vestibular) among healthcare providers.

- Auditory - talking
- Tactile - stroking or massaging
- Visual - making eye contact
- Vestibular - rocking



The intervention is based on 35 years of research with funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Research was conducted by Rosemary White-Traut, PhD, RN, FAAN, a member of the Pathways.org Medical Roundtable.



Pathways.org empowers parents and health professionals with FREE tools and resources to maximize a child's motor, sensory, and communication development.



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[www.pathways.org](http://www.pathways.org)



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# An Introduction to Massage+ 30, 10, 5



**FREE tools to maximize child development**

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<https://tinyurl.com/lywc6vzce>

# What is Massage+ 30, 10, 5?

- ▶ 30 seconds - talk to baby
- ▶ 10 minutes - while talking and looking at baby, massage baby's head, chest/belly, arms, legs, and back
- ▶ 5 minutes - rock baby and continue to talk and look at baby



Pathways.org

A simple 15-minute intervention used to improve infant development. This technique involves gently talking to, massaging, and rocking baby.

## Possible Disengagement Cues:

- Crying
- Whining
- Fussing
- Spitting up
- Hiccups
- Places hand out to stop
- Frowning
- Refuses eye contact
- Struggling movements
- Sticking out tongue

## How to Apply Massage+ 30, 10, 5:

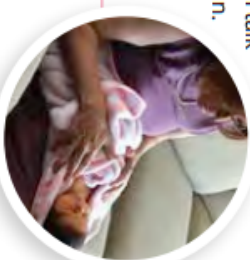
By doing Massage+ 30, 10, 5, you are getting to know your baby better.

### Instructions

- Allow enough time so you are not rushed
- Create a dimly lit, quiet room
- Do the massage at the same time each day
- Give baby 100% of your attention
- Talk and look at baby while massaging and rocking
- Repeat the steps of the massage that baby liked until you have completed a full 10 minutes
- Then proceed to swaddling and rocking for 5 minutes

### Infant Directed Talk

Before starting the massage, for 30 seconds talk softly, raise the pitch of your voice, and say a couple words, then wait for baby to respond, then talk again.



### Head Massage

Gentle/moderate strokes with your entire hand from forehead to back of head to neck. 6 to 10 times



### Chest/Belly Massage

Long smooth strokes from shoulder to diaper 6 times. Then massage straight down over chest and belly button (or around the belly button for new babies) to diaper. 6 times



Please note: If baby shows signs of disengagement during the massage, return to massaging areas baby prefers.

### Arm Massage

Gentle/moderate strokes from shoulder to wrist, hands and fingers. 6 times each arm



### Leg Massage

Gentle/moderate strokes from hip to ankle and feet. Try to cover as much of the leg as you can. 6 times each leg



### Back Massage

Two fingers to stroke straight down each side of the back alternating sides 6 times. Finish with a circular motion over the spine. 6 times



### Rocking

Wrap/swaddle baby in a blanket and gently rock side to side. If baby doesn't like that try up and down. Full term babies often like up and down rocking. 5 minutes



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<https://tinyurl.com/ywcvzce>