

# Do You Really Need That Baby Class?

Well Rounded  
NY

By Renee Bock

If you are a mother with a new baby in New York City, you know the lure and the pressure to take classes with your baby. Everywhere you turn there are advertisements for the latest music class, the most awesome gym class, the coolest art class, all pushing you to feel that if you're a good mom, you need to give your child these kinds of experiences from birth. I felt that pressure when my now 16-year-old son was born, and we rode the bus 45 minutes to a music class. This is not a new phenomenon.

But do we need these classes for our infants? No. The most powerful draw to classes is simply that all of our friends are taking them. And that's a really good reason to go. A baby class is more for the Mom than the baby. It gets us out of the house, talking to other mothers with children the same age, and helps us feel like we are part of the world again. A music class can raise the spirits and energize us for the day.

Classes also provide a practical way to develop a baby's brain from birth. We hear that brains reach [80 percent](#) of their adult size by the time a child is 3 years old, and this statistic can really push us to get our baby learning. We hear that there are windows of opportunity for language and music development, so classes can help us take advantage of a magical time.

But before you write the check for your next class, know this: classes aren't necessary. Babies learn at home, in the stroller, in the bathtub, on the train, visiting grandma, and well, everywhere. The most incredible learning happens right in your own home. You don't need talking toys, musical toys, or other expensive items. You don't even need to leave the living room in order for your baby to learn. You simply need to adjust your vision to recognize that baby's natural interests and movements are profoundly educational.

Here's three ways to help baby learn even if he's not in class.

1. **Let him explore.** When babies are allowed to explore their bodies and their world through unstructured, open ended play they create their own learning agenda, develop determination, concentration, and a sense of self defined accomplishment. Have you ever noticed a baby on their back trying to reach for an interesting object just slightly out of reach? Have you looked closely at the facial expression, the way they [move strategically](#) as best they can until they finally turn themselves over and inch nearer? If we see the learning in these moments, and allow the baby to pursue a goal without interruption, then we've given the baby a tremendous gift. We've provided an opportunity for him to figure things out independently, and to get to know himself.
2. **Teach him.** Babies don't need fancy objects. You are the expert teacher. No one knows your baby better than you. If you see your baby just on the verge of crawling, you know what will motivate him to move and how to set up the space to get her going. Simple things you find in the dollar store -- silicone muffin tins, small pots, curlers that fit inside containers, objects you can crumple, textures that feel different -- all of these very inexpensive items will grab a baby's attention and make them feel successful on their own terms.
3. **Introduce him to other babies.** We know that babies [can socialize](#) and realize there are others like them in the world. Another baby's face is sure to fascinate so getting together with babies is an excellent idea.

Classes are a great way to reconnect with the world and see your child interact with other babies. But, if it's winter and you don't feel like making the trip, if you can't really afford a class this month, if you are exhausted, or baby is

really just happy where she is, you can relax.

All the baby needs is your solid and devoted attention during care routines, and the freedom and encouragement to explore their world. You'll enjoy your baby even more, as you get to watch him in detail and observe the tiniest milestones that add up to the person she will soon become. You set the stage for all that happens in the brain, creating a safe, peaceful and loving atmosphere, providing predictable routines of care, talking to your baby about meaningful things, and inviting her to flourish as a baby scientist and ever creative spirit.

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This piece was originally published by Renee Bock on [Well Rounded NY](#). Renee Bock is a dedicated early childhood educator, who is currently the Chief Academic Officer at Explore+Discover, a social learning center in Manhattan that is committed to setting the standard for infant and toddler care and education. Renee has more than a decade of experience in the field and holds a Master's in Early Childhood Education from Bank Street College in New York. She has three sons, Ariel (15), Raffi (14), and Shaya (12). She can be reached at [Renee@K3Learn.com](mailto:Renee@K3Learn.com).

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