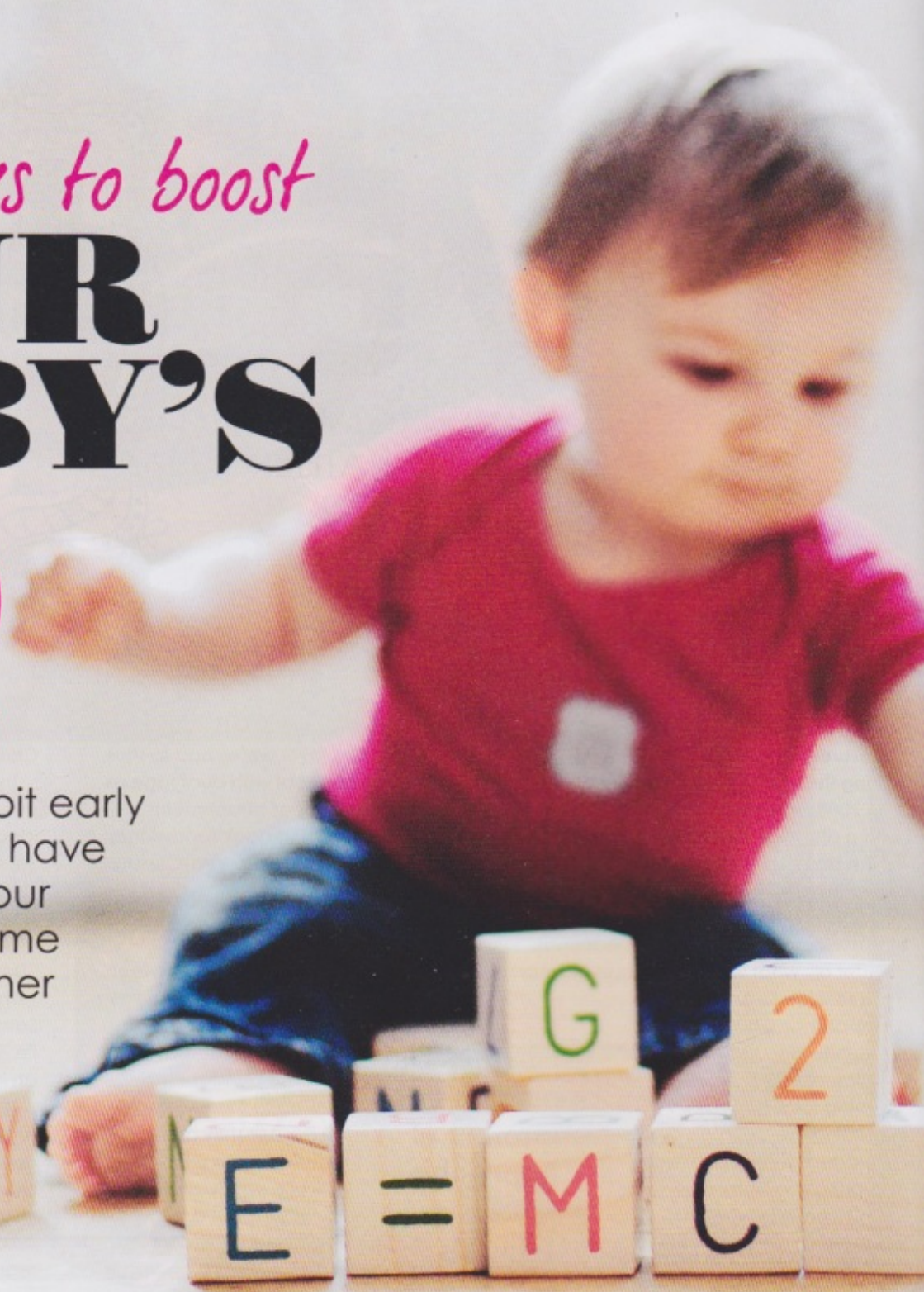


10 ways to boost YOUR BABY'S IQ



While it may be a bit early to tell whether you have a mini genius on your hands, here are some easy ways to give her the best start

1 **Baby talk**

"There are lots of wonderful things you can do to boost your baby's brain development," says neuroscientist Dr Lise Eliot, author of *What's Going On In There? How the Brain*

and *Mind Develop In The First Five Years* (£4.80, Allen Lane).

"Talk to your child, engage verbally and read to her in a way that provokes dialogue. Picture books are a great stepping stone for conversation. Even when babies are

babbling they form words, so repeat the noises back to her – it gives her feedback about what they sound like. A lot of parents talk but don't listen, but if a baby feels understood and heard it's incredibly reinforcing for verbal development."

2 **Early pathways**

The right activities during the first few months of a baby's life can lay the foundations for pathways between their billions of brain cells. "The more the pathways in your baby's brain are used, the more they become roads helping with IQ, learning, resilience and social skills," says child behaviour expert Richard Curtis (thekidcalmer.com).

"Activities involving tickling, gentle pushing and pulling, stroking and bouncing all help your baby learn the fun of physical activity and emotional safety. Eye contact and having different games your baby plays with different adults can help strengthen connections in the brain."

3 **I want to break free!**

Exercise improves cognitive function in people of all ages, so give your baby time out from her bouncy chair and opt for some tummy time.

"Wriggling on the floor not only helps your baby develop strong head, neck and shoulder muscles, it's also much more mentally stimulating than remaining passive in a seat," explains Dr Lise.

4 **Find your voice**

"Music is one of the fundamental things that stimulates the human brain," says Liisa Henriksson, a classically trained pianist, songwriter and author of *The Music Miracle:*

The Scientific Secret to Unlocking Your Child's Full Potential (£12.99, Ernest House). "Mums have a natural instinct to sing to their babies for a reason.

It is beneficial as it helps to develop the connections between the two halves of the brain. It doesn't matter if you think you can't hold a tune, just keep singing! The biggest thing holding people back is a lack of self-confidence, but actually singing is natural to all humans, so let yourself go!"

5 **Ditch the iPad**

While it's tempting to distract your child with the latest brain-boosting app, real-life interaction is key to aiding IQ. "Social stimuli is most important," says Dr Lise. "Encouraging your child to partake in three-dimensional activities such as playing in sand or using building toys promotes physical understanding and geometry skills. These sorts of toys aren't just for boys – girls like them too."

6 **Dig out the classics**

According to Liisa, newborns are born with an understanding what is in tune, out of tune or off time. And babies who attend educational music groups for half an hour a week have improved social and communication skills.

"Babies understand the obscure time signatures in music such as jazz, and major and minor chords," she explains. "By singing nursery songs to your baby and playing records with different time signatures you'll help stimulate her brain."

7 **The power of touch**

Does your baby grab your fingers and grip her blanket? Reaching out for different materials is a natural part of learning. "Place different textured objects around your baby, such as rugs, clothing and cushions," suggests Sam Flatman, an educational consultant for learning through play equipment specialist Pentagon Sport (pentagonsport.co.uk). "Sensory play supports cognitive development because it builds nerve

connections, which then improves your baby's ability to complete more complex tasks as she grows up."


8 **Massage isn't just for Mummy**

Infant massage promotes better sleep in infants, which in turn keeps them calmer and enables them to learn. "Regular, early massage can lead to cognitive benefits for babies of all gestational ages," adds Dr Lise. "Daily massage by parents can also contribute to lower anxiety levels, better mood and higher levels of attentiveness in children."

9 **Mimic magic**

Babies love to hear their parents' voices and watch their facial expressions change – and then replicate them. "This is an early sign of communication and socialisation," explains Sam. "Indulge your baby by using different expressions and changing the pitch of your voice. After a little while she will normally try to copy you."

10 **Bilingual benefits**

It is never too early for your child to learn another language – and babies who hear more than one language as they learn to speak reap the rewards. "If you're in a situation where your child can learn more than one language, go for it," says Dr Lise. "As well as grasping two languages, bilingual babies have an easier time switching their attention back and forth." 

Songs to boost brain development

✦ **Running Up That Hill by Kate Bush** "Scientists have found that when babies hear songs with a strong rhythmic beat (like this track), they start to try to dance to it," says Liisa. "Keeping the beat is no small feat: this core music skill alone has been linked to higher intelligence!"

✦ **Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen** "The varying tempos of this classic provide a basis for understanding both fast and slow music."
✦ **Yellow Submarine by The Beatles** "This is based on a shuffle beat and research shows helping a child to clap to different rhythms challenges the brain."

✦ **Scarborough Fair by Simon & Garfunkel** "This song is in the 'Dorian mode', a minor type scale, not so commonly heard in children's songs. Listening to different modes builds up a baby's musical understanding, just like learning uncommon words widens your vocabulary."