An important consideration in using social rewards is making sure they're delivered quickly following the child’s action. Desirable social rewards can include smiles, animated facial expressions, tummy tickles, singing, gentle blowing, brushing the skin with a feather or furry object, funny noises, touches, movements, lifting or rocking the child, hugs, kisses, and much more. Use your imagination!

- **Does my child have access to different toys that give immediate feedback?**

Prepare a list of your child’s toys. Identify those that provide some form of immediate feedback—a sight, sound, or tactile sensation, for example—that she finds pleasing. Make certain these types of toys are readily accessible to your child, and help her interact with each one until she becomes aware of the relationship between her action and the toy’s response.

Some familiar playthings that provide immediate responses to a child’s actions are mobiles or other hanging toys, various kinds of music-makers, pull toys, roly-poly toys, squeeze toys, and “busy-boxes” with an array of action-response pairs like small doors that a child slides open to reveal a colorful picture or a dial she can spin to hear an interesting sound.

- **Do the adults in my child’s life respond immediately and appropriately to my child’s behavior?**

Quick and pleasing responses by a parent or other adult to a child’s efforts to communicate, or to any other child behavior a parent or teacher might want to encourage, can be extremely rewarding. So, in setting up situations that allow your child’s actions to make something pleasant happen, don’t neglect the power of interactions with other people—social rewards.

- **Is it easy for my child to recognize that she is the one making something interesting happen?**

Smiling, laughing, vocalizing, and excitement are more likely to happen when the relationship between what a child does and what happens is clear and easy for her to understand. Toys that produce a simple response are better than toys that make lots of different sounds and movements. Social rewards work best when they are soft and simple, and occur after a child produces a behavior directed toward you.
Parents and caregivers can help strengthen the infant or young child’s understanding of the relationship between his behavior and something fun or interesting that happens next by providing a combination of rewarding responses, some from people (social responses) and some from the toys or objects with which the child is interacting (nonsocial responses).

**Mobile Magic!**

Even if you’re “all thumbs” with crafts, making toys that please little ones with consistent, interesting, rewarding results is within your grasp—and it’s fun! Mobiles can be wonderfully motivating playthings. They reward eager small hands with eye-catching movement and pleasing sounds. Even the slightest touch sets them swaying and noisemaking time after time—just the kinds of dependable responses that encourage and delight young children. Try these easy ideas:

**Favorite Toys.** Gather three or four of baby’s favorite small toys—colorful rattles, teething toys, squeaky animals—and attach them with short lengths of narrow elastic tape tied or stitched to a wooden dowel or to the bottom of a sturdy coat hanger.

**Kitchen Klackers.** Your kitchen probably holds a treasure trove of mobile materials. Sort through your odds-and-ends drawers for sets of aluminum or plastic measuring spoons, abandoned key rings, and any other child-safe items that can be suspended from a long-handled wooden spoon or stout chopstick. Another nice and click-clackingly noisy kitchen-theme mobile can be made entirely of old metal teaspoons dangling in a row.

Try hanging these mobiles over your child’s crib, reclining seat, or high chair, within easy touching distance. Another good spot is from an overhead kitchen light fixture, where you can stop and let your child touch it as you carry him by during the day.

**Tempting Toys!**

Certain kinds of toys and play materials make the cause-and-effect connection between a young child’s interaction with them and what happens next especially clear to the child. The way the toy responds helps the child realize that he is the one who is making something interesting happen.

Such toys include squeeze toys, push toys, busy boxes, and many others that produce immediate, interesting responses when a child explores and plays with them.

**Cupboard rhythm band.** If you don’t have access to commercial versions of such toys, or if your little one loses interest in them, use pie pans to bang together, upturned soup-kettle drums, and other household “rhythm instruments” to serve as handy playthings that allow a child to see how what he does can make something pleasing and fun (and noisy!) happen.