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## Chapter 2

# Getting Started

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**A** baby starts learning as soon as she is born. In the first 5 years, she will learn more skills, and learn them more quickly and easily, than at any other time in her life. So it is important to begin early assistance activities as soon as possible.

You may find it difficult, though, to know how to begin doing these activities with your child. This chapter is designed to help you get started and contains information on:

- making the best use of the information in this book
- deciding which activities to do first
- fitting these activities into your family's daily life

### How can this book help?

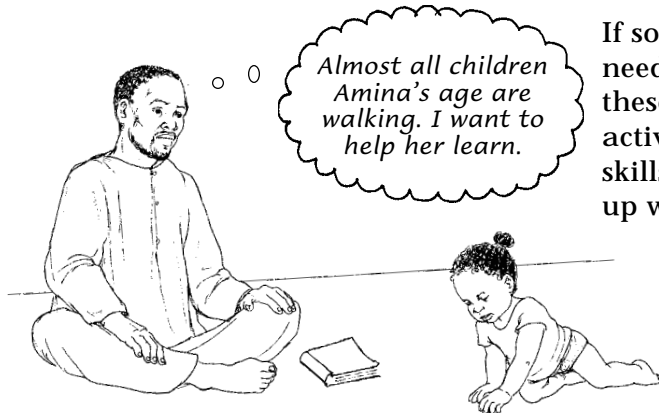
In this book, we give information, reasons for doing things, ideas, and suggestions. You can use this book to:

- understand more about blindness and child development.
- learn the reasons for doing each activity. This will make it easier for you to create other activities that accomplish the same goals.
- learn from others parents who have raised children with vision problems.
- develop and carry out learning activities that work best for you and your child.

## Which activities should I do first?

Parents often think they need special training to plan early assistance activities for their child. But this is not so. As a parent, you know more about your child than anyone else. To decide what activities to do first, start by asking yourself questions like these:

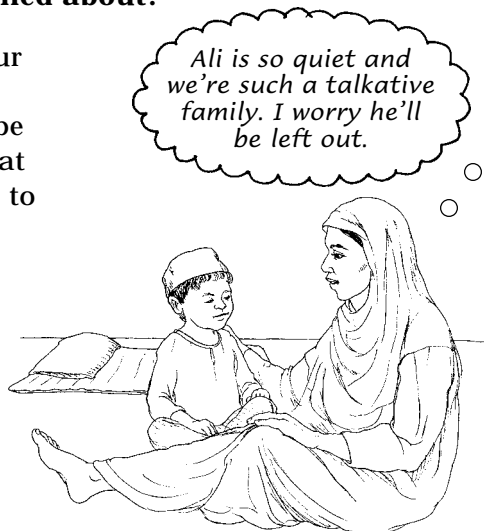
### Are there things my child cannot do that other children her age are doing?



If so, your child probably needs special help learning these skills. Choosing activities that build these skills can help a child catch up with other children.

### Are there areas of my child's development that I am particularly concerned about?

These might be ways your child lags behind other children, or they might be areas of development that are especially important to you or your family.



For more information on the ages and order in which children usually learn new skills, see the Child Development Charts beginning on page 176.

## FINDING ACTIVITIES THAT CAN HELP

Once you have identified areas in which your child needs help, look at the Table of Contents on page 5 to find the chapter of the book that covers this area of development. Each chapter contains information and activities to help your child learn new skills. For example:

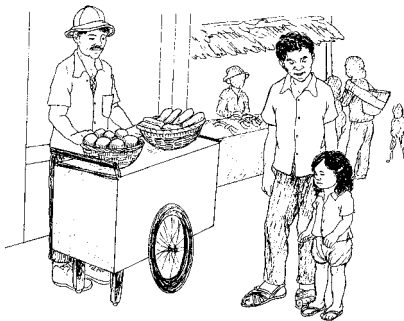


The first activities in each chapter help a child learn the most simple skills in that area of development. Once a child has learned these skills, she can begin working on the more difficult skills described later in the chapter. If your child can already do some of the skills described, start working on the skills immediately following those she knows. If she does not know any of the skills, then start at the beginning of the chapter.

Try to work on skills in the order they appear in the chapter. This is important because children develop skills step-by-step, in a certain order. **Trying to teach your child an advanced skill before she has learned the smaller, simpler skills that come first can lead to disappointment for both you and your child.**

## How can I fit these activities into my family's daily life?

It is important to think about how to do early assistance activities in ways that do not make more work for you. By making everyday activities into learning experiences, teaching your child will be easier for you and will not take extra time.



**Explain the sounds and smells to your child when you go to the market.**



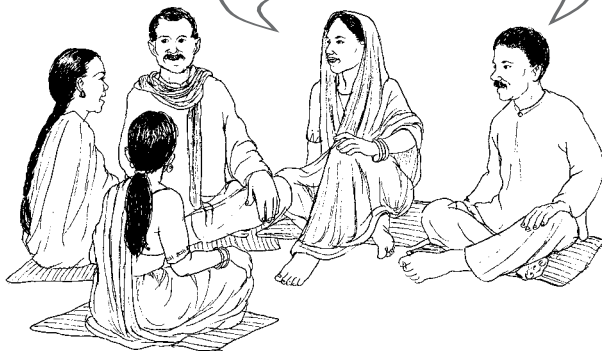
**Talk about what you are doing as you work.**

## MANY PEOPLE CAN HELP DO THESE ACTIVITIES

Encourage family members, neighbors, and friends to become involved, too. People around you often want to help, but they may feel uncomfortable because they do not know how. Share what you have learned about vision problems, the activities you and your child are working on, and the reasons for doing these activities.

*I worried I wouldn't have time to teach my son Guddi. But between myself, my husband and the other children, we have found many ways to do things with him as we go about our chores.*

*My mother-in-law and neighbors also help with our daughter. At first they thought it would be hard because they weren't sure what to do. I explained what Namita needed to learn and how to help her, and now they spend time with her every day.*



Children can also help if you show them how. Explain how they can adapt some of their games to include your child. Then encourage them to come up with new ideas on their own.

*The children have discovered that Hanke can follow them when they clap their hands. Now they can all play tag.*

