

Helping Your Baby Find a Lovey

An excerpt from *The No-Cry Sleep Solution* by Elizabeth Pantley

Some babies attach themselves to a blanket or toy that becomes a “lovey.” This is a transitional object that comforts your baby in your absence. In some cases, you may be able to help your baby become attached to a lovey or comfort object so that he has something to cuddle and help him fall asleep without your help.

A “lovey” does *not* take your place. Instead, it is something that your baby can use to feel safe when you are not with her.

Choose a safe lovey

Choose a soft toy that your baby is already attracted to, or pick a safe stuffed animal that meets these criteria:

- No button eyes or nose, nor any small, potentially removable pieces.
- No clothes, hat, or other removable pieces of fabric.
- Firm, not floppy.
- Small and easy for baby to hold and manipulate.
- The ideal: Stuffed animals created especially for babies.

For example, I purchased a little flannel doll called a “Snoedel” (see www.snoedel.com) for Coleton (please note that I have no affiliation with this business other than as a satisfied customer). After he became accustomed to having it in bed, he let us know that he was tired by asking for his “noodle.” (Or we would encourage him to *get* tired by cuddling him with his “noodle.”)

When you have carefully chosen the lovey, place it between the two of you whenever you nurse your baby, give him a bottle or rock him. At other times of the day, you might even want to “wear” this lovey inside your shirt for a few hours to give it that lovely Mommy (or Daddy) smell, since babies can recognize their parents’ scents. At first, it is best to use this lovely only at sleep times so it becomes one of the sleeptime cues.

Mother-speak:

“I finally found a “lovely” that I like for Carrson, and he likes it also. When we hold it between us when we nurse, he plays with it and talks to it. It’s becoming a ‘friend’.”
Pia, mother of 8-month-old Carrson

You can introduce a lovey at any age. If your baby is young, you can choose something yourself, and gauge baby’s response to the toy. As your baby gets older, she will have a definite say in determining what toy attracts and soothes her; this is evident anytime you see a child wandering around with a well-worn blanket, a hairless teddy bear, or a scrap of Mommy’s old nightie. When *your* baby becomes a toddler, you may find that he will expand the usefulness of this lovey by holding onto it whenever he needs a little extra

security. So if you have any say in the matter, do direct your child toward something that you'll enjoy having in the family for years to come.

If baby does indeed get attached to this lovey, be sure to buy at least two to prevent any lost-lovey disasters—or at least choose one that's easily replaceable or commercially available.

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