

# Parenting Your Unique Child

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Month 8-9

## Temperament traits are not "good" or "bad"

Each temperament trait has its advantages and disadvantages. Here are examples of the pluses and minuses for each temperament trait:



### High sensitivity

- + lets parents know when feeling sick, sensitive to peoples' feelings
- wakes easily from noise and lights, sensitive to feel of clothing, wet diapers

### Low sensitivity

- + not likely to become over stimulated in noisy, bright, crowded places.
- harder for parents to tell when sick, less sensitive to peoples' social cues

### High activity level

- + may develop large motor skills earlier, may enjoy sports when older
- dislikes being restricted in car seat or high chair, more accident prone

### Low activity level

- + enjoys quiet activities, may develop small motor skills earlier
- takes more time to do things

### High intensity

- + lets parents know how she feels, may enjoy drama classes when older
- very loud in expressing feelings, can become upset easily

### Low intensity

- + seldom throws tantrums
- harder to tell what child is feeling

### High adaptability

- + easily adjusts to a new caregiver, new foods, or changes in activities
- when older may not stick up for himself

### Low adaptability

- + likes routines and predictability, when older less likely to be influenced by peers
- dislikes changes or surprises, has difficulty shifting from one activity to another (like from waking to sleeping)

### High regularity

- + easy to get on a schedule, parents know when baby is going to be hungry or sleepy
- takes time to adjust to change in daylight savings or "off schedule" days

### Low regularity

- + more flexible in eating and sleeping schedule
- may not be tired at bedtime or hungry at dinner time

### High persistence

- + sticks with a task until it's done, not easily frustrated
- may not want to stop what she's doing

### Low persistence

- + easy to move onto a new activity
- easily frustrated so takes more time to learn a new skill, more dependent on adults

### High distractibility

- + easy to soothe when upset or distract from "off limits" activities
- has more difficulty focusing on a task, easily sidetracked

### Low distractibility

- + can focus on a task even with noise and other people around
- hard to soothe when upset or distract from "off limits" activities

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## *Some temperaments are challenging for parents*

Even though temperaments are not good or bad, some combinations of temperament traits are more challenging for parents to handle. For example, babies who are low in adaptability and high in intensity are more likely to protest loudly each transition (or intrusion) during a day. Here are some examples of common transitions or intrusions:

- Waking to sleeping
- Bathing (intrusions - washcloth on skin, water in face)
- Eating (intrusions - spoon in mouth, putting on bib)
- Being picked up (intrusion)
- Getting in and out of car seat
- Being dressed or diapered

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## *Knowing your baby's temperament can help*

Knowing your baby's temperament and learning parenting strategies that are tailored for your baby, will help you handle these challenges more effectively. For example, if you know your baby adjusts more slowly to unfamiliar people, you can ask grandparents or friends to give baby time to "warm up" to them before they pick baby up. This will reduce the likelihood of baby getting upset/crying and her grandparents feeling bad.



## *Find out your baby's temperament*

We recommend you complete another temperament questionnaire for your infant at this time (this is free). If you didn't do this earlier, don't worry, you can still do it now. Start by going to The Preventive Ounce [www.preventiveoz.org](http://www.preventiveoz.org) website and clicking on *Image of Your Child*. You will receive a temperament profile of your baby, a forecast of likely-to-occur behaviors, and strategies for handling these behaviors.

Sometimes baby's temperament may seem different from when he was 4-months (some traits may be more visible now – like persistence), or it may remain pretty much the same.

Even if your baby's temperament is easy for you to handle, getting to know your child's temperament can be helpful. For example, a low sensitivity baby who is sick may be more quiet or just rub at her ear, rather than cry loudly. Being aware that an infant is less sensitive helps parents know to be tuned into signals that baby may be sick.