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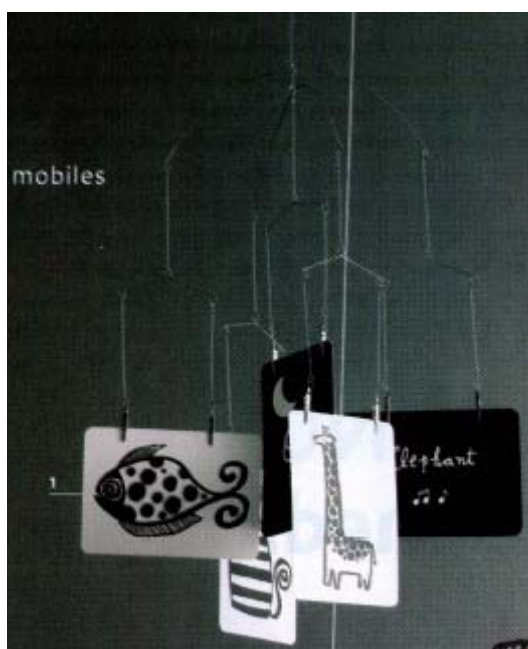
## high-wire acts

Six mobiles you'll be happy to have hanging around the house

**T**he mobile may be an icon of early parenthood, but the term didn't even exist until 1931. That's when Marcel Duchamp coined it to describe Alexander Calder's early motor-driven wire sculptures. Nowadays the word generally refers to kinetic sculptures that move with soft air currents, the type that Calder favored later in his career.

Of course, mobiles are more than museum pieces, stimulating minds of all ages with their gentle, unpredictable motion. Child-development experts credit them with enhancing visual activity and pattern recognition in infants: "They develop

babies' eye muscles and teach them about perspective," says Carol Cooper, M.D., author of *Baby Milestones: What to Expect and How to Stimulate Your Child's Development From 0-3 Years* (Hamlyn). A graphic black-and-white mobile is the best choice for a newborn, who will not be fully able to distinguish color gradations before 4 months old. For older children, there are many inventive designs that will encourage spatial awareness, art appreciation, and a good measure of respect for the designers who managed to create such balance. Nearly impossible to outgrow, these wind-catchers might even inspire a little Calder of your own.



### A NEWBORN'S MUSE

These animal pictures might be the second thing to trigger a baby's smile. (You know who's the first.)

**Fragility** Somewhat delicate. The cards wear with handling and hang from thin-gauge steel.  
**Assembly** Moderately easy; requires string for hanging.  
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