

*Especially for practitioners working with infants!*

# Games Babies Play

*Sound Awareness*

Made-up lap games can be just as much fun as “tried-and-tested” games. This practice guide includes an example of a game played by a child-care teacher whose infant had just learned to reach for things. The description will give you some ideas about lap games you can play with the children with whom you work.

## What is the practice?

Lap games provide infants opportunities to have adults repeat or start a game that a child particularly likes or enjoys. These simple, but very important, learning opportunities help infants learn the your-turn/my-turn nature of adult-and-child communication.

## What does the practice look like?

Infants around 2 to 3 months of age become especially good at reaching for things—toys, food, and people. Infants are fascinated by what happens when they touch or swipe at something. This guide explains how one teacher took advantage of a baby’s interest in reaching. He incorporated reaching into a silly, made-up game that increased the child’s reaching even more.

## How do you do the practice?

The following steps show how the teacher used a made-up lap game to encourage the activity by making it even more enjoyable for the infant. These are some simple things anyone can do to play made-up games!

- The teacher, Cliff, observed that baby Mary was especially interested in reaching for and touching his face.
- The first thing the teacher did was kiss Mary’s hands whenever she touched his face.
- Cliff then changed the game by pretending to “nibble” on Mary’s fingers. This made the baby squeal with delight. Cliff would say “munch, munch, munch” every time Mary reached toward his face.
- Finally, Cliff “made up” a rhyme to make the game even more fun. He would say, “Teacher’s getting hungry, he better eat some lunch. Can he eat Mary’s fingers? Munch, munch, munch” while making believe that he was eating her fingers. The baby never got tired of playing this game!



## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child try to get you to play the game again?
- Does the child get excited and vocalize as part of playing a game?
- Does she anticipate the climax of the game (e.g., by getting bright-eyed)?

# Take a look at more made-up lap games

## *Just for Her*

Four-month-old Brianna especially enjoys a nursery rhyme her mom has made up just for her. Her home visitor has suggested some ways to get Brianna more actively involved in this game. Mom says to her daughter, "Brianna has 10 fingers, and Brianna has 10 toes. Brianna has a big smile, and Brianna has a nose!" All the while Brianna's mom touches her daughter's fingers, toes, and mouth and finally kisses her daughter on the nose. The game is sometimes played by Mom holding Brianna's fingers and feet up in the air. Mom recites the rhyme, and waits for Brianna to smile and vocalize before kissing her on the nose.



## *Can't Get Enough of It*

Five-month-old Cicely cannot sit by herself without falling over, but she still loves to be in a sitting position. Her caregiver, Mara, plays a game with Cicely, who cannot get enough of the game. Mara places Cicely on her back and says, "Cicely's so strong. What can she do? Pull up, pull up, to see me and you!" While she says these words she holds out her hands so Cicely can grab on and pull to a sitting position. Mara asks, "Do you want to play again?" while waiting for Cicely to reach out toward her. Cicely vocalizes with delight while she reaches for Mara. The game continues!

## *Shake, Rattle, and Roll!*

Justine has been home for about four months after spending the first half of her life in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Mom and Dad spent a lot of time at the hospital stroking and massaging her arms and legs while their daughter was in the NICU. Justine's parents noticed that she still likes to be touched whenever she is held, even after coming home. With the help of their early interventionist, Mom turned this interest into a simple but powerful game that she and Justine have started to play. Anytime Justine moves an arm or leg, Mom tickles and rubs Justine while saying, "Justine's moving and Mommy knows she likes to be touched so here we go!" Justine has figured out that if she "shakes, rattles, and rolls" her mom will massage and rub whatever body part she moves. Mom has started to tickle Justine after finishing her rhyme which gets the baby to smile and squeak with delight.

