

Especially for practitioners working with infants!

More Infant Lap Games

Sound Awareness

Infant-adult lap games have long been a joy to babies. The lap games described in this practice guide are some of the first games a baby plays. They are games you can use to help very young children vocalize and “talk” more and more.

What is the practice?

Lap games like “Peek-a-Boo,” “I’m Gonna Get You” and “So Big” are fun but also help infants learn about give and take during parent-and-child play. The more you play the games with a child, the more she will try to do all or part of the activity. The more she tries, the more likely she will squeal and make gleeful sounds.

What does the practice look like?

Lap games are a fun way to encourage a child to watch, listen, and learn to play with others. The most important parts of lap games are the your-turn/my-turn exchanges between you and the child. At first, you will do most of the work. As the child becomes more familiar with a game, she will try to start a game. Encouraging the child to start or continue a game will help her learn that she can get someone to play with her.



How do you do the practice?

Several simple but powerful lap games are described next to give you an idea about how to make a baby a “star player.” You can find many other lap games by searching the Web using infant lap games.

- Lap games work best when the child is alert and well-rested. Most infants like lying on their backs or lying face up on their parent’s lap while playing these games.
- Three lap games that are enjoyed by most infants are Peek-a-Boo, So Big, and I’m Gonna Get You. There is no right or wrong way to play the games. The important thing about these, as well as other lap games, is the give-and-take, your-turn/my-turn, and back-and-forth play between you and the child.
 - ▶ **Peek-a-Boo.** Cover the infant’s eyes with a cloth, remove it, and say “Peek-a-boo, I see you!” Repeat the game as long as the child seems to enjoy it.
 - ▶ **So Big.** Gently stretch the child’s arms above her head while saying “So big!” Kiss or blow raspberries on her tummy after her arms are stretched out.
 - ▶ **I’m Gonna Get You.** Say “I’m gonna get you,” and repeat the phrase three or four times. Keep moving closer to the infant’s face and finally kiss or tickle her neck.
- Lap games can be played as often as the child seems to enjoy them. After she “catches on” to how a game is played, encourage her to do part of the movements of the game (e.g., lifting hands above her head while playing So Big). Any time the child vocalizes or makes any sounds, repeat them and make them part of the game.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child try to start or do some part of the game?
- Does the child squeal, make sounds, or laugh as each game ends?
- Does the child seem to recognize how the game is played?

Take a look at more fun infant lap games

Big Fun!

Four-month-old Madison loves movement. Because of this interest, her home visitor and her father developed a special way of playing “So Big” with her. She often starts the game by raising her arms above her head and by “hollering” at her dad to get his attention. Dad then says, “Daddy sees Madison who is so, so big” and tickles her under her arms. Madison squeals with delight and starts the game again. She and her dad repeat the game many, many times. As he sees Madison’s changing responses, Dad changes his response to Madison when she raises her arms above her head. Sometimes Dad blows raspberries on her tummy and sometimes he gives her kisses on her neck.



Gotcha!

Seven-month-old Daniel loves it when his child care teacher Becky plays I’m Gonna Get You with him. Becky starts the game by holding her hands out in front of her and closing and opening them. She repeats “I’m gonna get Danny, I’m gonna get Danny,” while moving her hands closer and closer to his stomach. She finishes by gently grabbing Daniel around his tummy and rocking him back and forth. Daniel gets her to “do it again” by looking at Becky and babbling happily.

Getting a Kick Out of It

Eli, 8 months old, is not able to use his arms and hands very well. His mother has found a fun way to play Peek-a-Boo with him. Eli loves to kick and does so vigorously! Their home visitor helps his mother get Eli to play Peek-a-Boo. They sew a ribbon onto a small towel and attach the other end to Eli’s ankle using a Velcro band. Mom gently bends Eli’s legs while placing the cloth over his face and asks, “Where is Eli? Where is Eli?” Eli almost immediately kicks off the towel and his mother exclaims, “Peek-a-boo! I see you!” Eli has started to bend his knees on his own to tell his mom he wants to play the game again.

