

Especially for parents of young children! 

# Baby's First Games

 Rhymes and Sound Awareness

Both familiar and made-up lap games introduce infants to the exciting world of playful interactions with others.

## What is the practice?

First games build a baby's ability to play with others. They also teach little ones how to get another person to do fun and interesting things.

## What does the practice look like?

Lap games involve back-and-forth, your-turn/my-turn play between an infant and a parent. The play can include silly sayings and short rhymes. The adult does something, the child does something, and then the adult continues or repeats the game.



## How do you do the practice?

Here are some tried-and-tested lap games sure to delight your young child. Search the Web using the term **parent infant lap games** to find more first games for babies. The games included in this practice guide get infants excited about playing and interacting with their parents. It is best to play games that include words and movements that especially interest your child.

### **Peek-a-Boo (also known as Peep Eye)**

Peek-a-Boo simply involves covering something (adult's face, baby's face, a favorite toy) and saying, "Where is \_\_\_? What should we do?" and then uncovering the person or thing and saying, "Peek-a-boo! Peek-a-boo! I see you!" The game is often first played by hiding your own face with your hands. It can progress to covering your child's face with a small cloth or towel. You will be doing all or most of the game when first playing Peek-a-Boo. Try repeating the movement and words a few times, then wait until your child does something to tell you to do it again. It won't take long for him to start removing a cloth placed over his face. Seeing you will likely get him to smile and vocalize to you.

### **So Big**

So Big involves gently stretching your infant's arms above his head while saying, "How big is (child's name)? He is so, so, sooo big. Someone's gonna get you. Here comes a pig." The game ends with you saying, "Oink, oink" and kissing your child's tummy or neck. Infants lying on their backs will sometimes lift their arms to try to start or continue playing the game. Babies who can sit up on their own often stretch their hands and arms over their heads. Any time your child tries to start or do part of the game, respond by filling in the rest of the game. Keep the fun going!

### **Ride a Little Pony**

Infants with head control and who can sit up with or without support delight in playing this game. Let your child sit on your knees facing you. While gently bouncing him up and down, chant: "Ride a little pony down to town. Better be careful, so you don't fall down." As you say "don't fall down," pretend to let your child fall by opening your legs and letting him slide down between them. Infants who especially enjoy this game might try to bounce when placed on the adult's knees as a way to start or continue the fun.

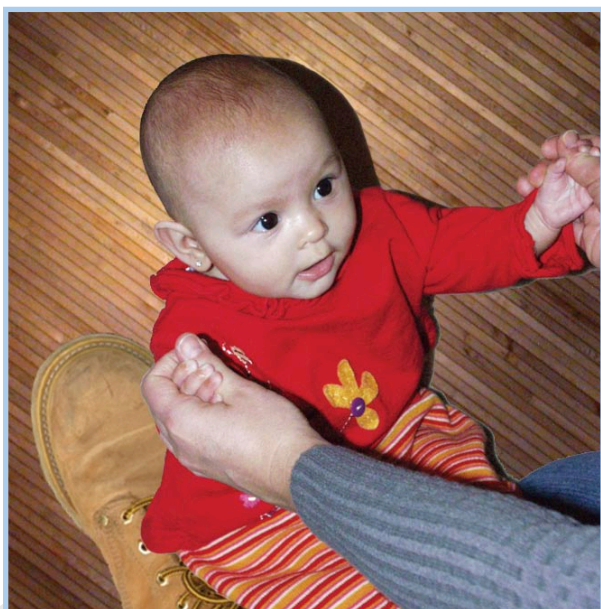
## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child make movements to start or continue a game?
- Does your child smile or laugh when a game ends?
- Does your child vocalize to express delight?

# Take a look at more of babies' first games ...

## Peek-a-Boo to You!

Andy, 3 months old, and his father have found a fun way to play Peek-a-Boo. When Andy wakes up after sleeping, Dad hides behind Andy's favorite blanket and calls in a sing-song voice, "Where's Andy? Where's Andy?" Hearing his father's voice, Andy starts cooing and wiggling with excitement. As soon as Andy "calls" back, Dad pops his head from behind the blanket and says, "Peek-a-boo! I see you!" Dad hides and the game begins again. Andy looks to the right and then to the left to see where his dad will appear next.



## Heigh-Ho!

Five-month-old Cindy and her dad play many different rough-and-tumble games. She has learned to make sounds to tell her dad to "let the games begin!" Cindy especially likes "riding" on her dad's leg. Her father puts her in a sitting position on his foot facing him while holding onto both of her hands. He bounces her up-and-down while saying, "Ride a horse. Ride a horse. Cindy goes around. Not too fast, not too fast or Cindy falls down" while pretending to have her "crash." She looks at her dad and makes all kinds of sounds to get him to play the game again.

## Mommy's Prarfalls

Robert, 10 months old, isn't able to stretch his arms above his head because of some physical difficulties, but this does not stop his mother from playing lap games with him. She takes what Robert can do and turns it into a fun game. With Robert lying on his back, she gently pushes his feet so his knees bend toward his chest. Mom says, "Robert is so strong. What a big frown! He is so strong. He pushes me down!" while she pretends to fall over. He grows more and more bright-eyed each time the game is played. Robert has started to laugh out loud as he pushes his feet to see his mother's antics!

