

Especially for parents of young children! 

Made-Up Infant Lap Games

 *Rhymes and 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 parent whose infant has just learned to reach for things. The description will give you some ideas about lap games you can make up and play with your own child.

What is the practice?

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

What does the practice look like?

Infants around 2 to 3 months of age become especially good at reaching out for things—toys, food, and people. Infants are fascinated with what happens when they touch or swipe at something. Parents can take advantage of their baby's interest in reaching by turning it into a game that makes the baby want to reach even more. Encouraging your child to do something he enjoys can be turned into a fun learning activity. Simply reward him by doing something else that is enjoyable.

How do you do the practice?

This is how one father used lap games he made up to help his daughter learn about the fun of interacting and communicating:

- The father saw that his daughter was especially interested in reaching for and touching his mouth.
- The first thing the father did was kiss his daughter's hands whenever she touched his mouth.
- The father then changed the game by pretending to "nibble" on his daughter's fingers. This made the little girl squeal with delight. He would say "munch, munch" every time his daughter reached toward his mouth.
- Finally, the father "made up" a rhyme to make the game even more fun. He would say, "Daddy's getting hungry, he better eat some lunch. Can he eat (baby's name)'s fingers? Munch, munch, munch!" While saying the rhyme he would pretend that he was eating his daughter's fingers. The little girl hardly ever got tired of playing this game!



How do you know the practice worked?

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

Take a look at more made-up games ...

Kiss my nose!

Two-month-old Brianna especially enjoys a nursery rhyme her Mom has made up that gets her daughter all involved in the game. Mom says, "Brianna has 10 fingers, and Brianna has 10 toes. Brianna has a big smile, and Brianna has a nose!" while touching her daughter's fingers, toes, and mouth and finally kissing her daughter on the nose. The game is sometimes played by Mom holding Brianna's fingers and feet up in the air while she recites the rhyme, and by waiting for Brianna to smile and vocalize before kissing her on the nose.



Pull-up partners

Aisha, a 4-month-old, can't sit by herself without falling over. But she still loves to be in a sitting position! Her mother plays a game with Aisha that thrills her daughter. Mom places Aisha on her back and says, "Aisha's so strong. What can she do? Pull up, pull up. To see me and you!" while holding out her hands for Aisha to grab onto and pull to a sitting position. Mom asks, "Do you want to play again?" while waiting for Aisha to reach out toward her. Aisha squeals with delight while she reaches for her mom. The game continues!

Just the right touch

Luci has been home for about five months after spending the first half of her life in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. 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 crib. Luci's parents noticed that, even after coming home, Luci still likes to be touched whenever she is held. Mom turned the baby's interests into a simple but powerful game that she and Luci have started to play. Any time Luci moves an arm or leg Mom tickles and rubs her while saying "Luci's moving / and Mommy knows / she likes to be touched / so here we go!" Luci has figured out that, if she "shakes, rattles, and rolls," Mom will massage and rub whatever body part she moves. Mom has started to tickle Luci after finishing her rhyme which gets her baby to smile and squeak with glee.

