

*Especially for practitioners working with infants!*

# Infant Lap Games

*Sound Awareness*

## What is the practice?

Both familiar and made-up lap games introduce infants to the wonderful world of playful interaction with others. These games develop a child's emerging understanding of how to play with others and get someone to do something fun and interesting.

## What does the practice look like?

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

## How do you do the practice?

Here are some "tried-and-tested" lap games that are sure to delight any child. Search the Web using **parent-infant lap games** to find more of baby's first games. The games included in this practice guide are ones that get infants excited about playing and interacting with their parents. It is best to play games that include words and movements that especially interest a particular child.

### **Peek-a-Boo** (aka 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 face with your hands and progresses to covering the 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 and wait until the 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 the 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 the child's tummy or neck. Infants lying on their backs will sometimes lift their arms up in the air to try to start or continue to play the game. Sitters often stretch their hands and arms over their heads. Anytime the child tries to start or do part of the game, respond by "filling in" the parts of the game to keep it going.

### **Ride a Little Pony**

Infants who have head control and can sit up with or without support delight in playing this game. Hold the child in a sitting position on your knees, facing you. While gently bouncing him up and down, say "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 have the child fall by opening your legs and letting him slide down between them. Infants who especially like this game will try to bounce when placed on the adult's knees to get the game started.



## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child bounce to start or continue the game?
- Does the child smile or laugh when he falls?
- Does he child vocalize to communicate delight?

# Take a look at fun infant lap games

## Peek-a-Boo Delight

With the help of his home visitor, 5-month-old Andrew and his mom have found a fun way to play Peek-a-Boo. Every time Andrew wakes up after sleeping, his mother hides behind the crib bumpers and says, "Where is Andy? Where is Andy?" As his home visitor predicted, the sound of his mother's voice starts Andrew cooing and getting excited. As soon as Andrew "calls" to his mother, she pops her head over the side of the crib and says, "Peek-a-boo. I see you!" She hides again and the game starts over. Andrew looks to the right and then to the left to see where his mother will appear next.



## Easy Rider

Ten-month-old Cindy and her caregiver, Phillip, play many different kinds of rough-and-tumble games when she wakes up from her afternoon nap. She has learned to make sounds to tell Phillip to "let the games begin." Cindy especially likes "riding" on Phillip's leg. Phillip 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 Phillip and makes all kinds of sounds to get him to play the game again.

## Inventive Lap Games

Eleven-month-old Robert is not able to stretch his arms out above his head because of some physical difficulties. This does not stop his mother from playing lap games with him that she and Robert's early interventionist invented. They have figured out how to take what Robert can do and turn it into a fun game. With Robert lying on his back, Mom gently pushes his feet so his knees bend toward his chest while saying, "Robert is so strong. What a big frown. He is so strong. He pushes me down" while she pretends to fall over. Robert gets more and more bright-eyed each time the game is played. He has started to laugh out loud just as he pushes his feet to see his mother fall over!



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# 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.



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# 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.



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# Diaper-Changing Games

*Sound Awareness*

Changing a baby's diaper is sometimes not much fun for parents or other caregivers. Here is how you can turn this frequently occurring routine into a fun-filled learning activity.

## What is the practice?

This practice involves using a routine daily activity to build a child's skill at listening and interacting with adults — important skills for communication. This is done by playing simple word-and-movement games as part of diaper changing. The games are best played when the child seems content to be lying on her back and having her diaper changed. It will not take long for the child to look forward to what you will do next and express it by vocalizing and showing excitement.

## What does the practice look like?



Diapering games use diaper changing as a way to involve a child in sound and movement play, depending on her interest. It can be something as simple as describing what you are doing and responding to your child's vocalizations. Try turning diapering into a "sing-along."

## How do you do the practice?

Here are some ideas you can try to make diaper changing time a fun activity. Encourage parents to use them while changing their baby's diaper.

- Make funny sounds to get the child's attention (e.g., "Phew!"). Try saying something like, "Did you smell that? What do you think?" Repeat any sounds the child makes. Be responsive to and encourage her to vocalize and get excited (but not too excited!).
- Describe what you are doing in a playful manner. "Baby's got a dirty diaper. What should we do? Clean it up; clean it up for [Mommy] and you."
- Touch games often work well. As you are changing the infant's diaper, repeat phrases like "I'm gonna get you!" Move your face closer and closer to your child's face. Kiss her on the forehead while saying "[Child's name] gets a kiss!"
- Pay attention to what the child seems to like to do while having her diaper changed. Find ways to respond to the child's sounds and movements to make diaper changing fun.
- Encourage the child to vocalize as much as you can. You want to have a conversation (of sorts) with the child.

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child get excited or bright-eyed?
- Does the child anticipate being kissed or touched?
- Does the child vocalize as part of playing the game?



## Take a look at more fun with diaper-changing games

### Talking Match

The diaper-changing table in Grace's classroom has a favorite mobile hanging from the ceiling. The infants in her care get to play with it while being changed. Grace places 6-month-old Helen so that she can easily reach and swipe at the mobile during diaper changing. Grace interjects into Helen's play the different sounds that the mobile seems to make. She repeats these sounds many times during almost every diaper changing routine. The more Helen hears the sounds, the more she tries to repeat or say them. Playing with the mobile has turned into a fun-filled talking match!



### "This Is Fun!"

Fourteen-month-old Keenan likes to have his diaper changed when his mother leans over him so that he can look at her face. Mom invented a Poopy Diaper Game that makes this not-so-fun activity a bit more enjoyable both for her and Keenan. The game includes a made-up song (Diaper change. Diaper change. Keenan needs a diaper change. Off with the old; on with the new. Keenan no longer smells pee-you!) Mom tickles Keenan's tummy at the end of each statement. Keenan has started smiling and vocalizing at his Mom to get her to play their diaper-changing game.

### "I See You!"

Nine-month-old Sammy has some motor delays, but his early interventionist Evan noticed how excited Sammy gets when interacting with people. Evan helped Sammy's mother develop a quick, simple game that uses his love of face-to-face contact to help build his motor skills. Sammy's mother engages him in a simple game of Peek-a-Boo while changing his diaper. She places a small towel over his face and says repeatedly "Where is Sammy? Where is Sammy?" Sammy pulls off the towel—first with help, then on his own—and his mother says "Peek-a-Boo! I see you!" She repeats this three or four times while changing Sammy's diaper. The game ends by blowing raspberries on his tummy, which has Sammy laughing out loud.





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# Infant Nursery Rhymes and Fingerplays

*Sound Awareness*

Games that include rhymes and other repetitions help infants become familiar with sounds and words. This practice guide includes ways you can use fingerplays and nursery rhymes to help infants become “talkers.”

## What is the practice?

Age-old and well-loved fingerplays and nursery rhymes provide infants many different kinds of opportunities to hear sounds and be part of fun and enjoyable activities. The activities in this practice guide include ideas for how to introduce simple fingerplays and nursery rhymes to an infant. It explains how to use them with a young child to encourage her to learn sounds and to become part of the storytelling.

## What does the practice look like?

Long before infants learn to say words, they use gestures and other movements to tell us what they want and what they enjoy. Infant fingerplays and simple nursery rhymes are especially enjoyable ways of adding sounds and words to movements in fun ways. Made-up fingerplays — as well as many fingerplays you can find on the Web by searching **infant fingerplays** — are likely to get the child into the game.



## How do you do the practice?

This practice is simple and straightforward. Find different kinds of movements and gestures the child enjoys and incorporate short, repetitive nursery rhymes into the movements and gestures.

- Start by identifying the movements and gestures the child makes in response to being touched. Does the child like to be tickled? Will she let you put her hands together like clapping? Does she like having raspberries blown on her tummy?
- Be sure the child is in a comfortable position. Lying on her back is often best when first using fingerplays and nursery rhymes. If she is a sitter, that position will work just as well.
- Fingerplays and nursery rhymes that involve body parts are generally the easiest and best to do. Play Pat-a-Cake by gently putting the child’s hands together and saying the nursery rhyme. This Little Piggy is a good game for infants because they get to see a parent touch their toes while hearing the nursery rhyme. A baby’s first fingerplays and nursery rhymes should be short and very repetitive.

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child try to make any movements when she hears the nursery rhyme?
- Does the child try to get you to play the game again?
- Does she make sounds more often while hearing the rhymes?

# Take a look at more rhymes and fingerplays

## *Tickled by Rhymes*

Five-month-old Mary loves to be tickled when playing games with her teacher, Britt. Britt uses tickling as the climax to nursery rhymes that she sings to Mary. One of Mary's favorites is "Jack and Jill." As soon as Mary hears the words, she smiles and vocalizes. Britt uses her fingers and pretends to be walking up Mary's legs. She continues "walking" up her chest and ends by tickling Mary's neck as she says, "... and Jill came tumbling after." Brett asks Mary if she wants to hear "Jack and Jill" again. Mary wiggles all over to tell her yes.



## *Happy Hands*

Eight-month-old Mack has "happy hands!" He reaches for and touches everything in view. With the help of his home visitor, Mack's father has turned reaching toward him into a game of Pat-a-Cake. His dad holds his hands out for Mack to grab at as he reaches toward him. His dad begins the game by saying the Pat-a-Cake rhyme while gently moving Mack's hands together in a clapping motion. When saying "roll it," his father wraps his arms around Mack's hands. When saying "pat it," he takes Mack's hands and touches his son's tummy. At the end of the nursery rhyme, when saying "Put it in the oven for Mack and me," he blows raspberries on Mack's tummy. Mack has started initiating games of Pat-a-Cake by grabbing anyone's hands and pushing them together!

## *This Little Piggy . . .*

Ten-month-old Mandy's visual impairment does not stop her from enjoying fingerplays. Her favorite game is This Little Piggy. Her teacher knows that all she has to do is mention the game, and Mandy gets excited. She starts kicking to 'say' that she wants to play the game. Her teacher has turned this well-liked nursery rhyme into a special game for Mandy. She grabs and wiggles each of Mandy's toes as she recites the nursery rhyme. When saying "wee, wee, wee, all the way home," she tickles the bottom of Mandy's feet. This starts the baby kicking and "talking," and the game begins again.





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# Nursery Rhymes for Play and Learning

*Sound Awareness*

## What is the practice?

Nursery rhymes that include repetitious sounds accompanied by adult hand movements often have tremendous child entertainment value! Rhymes can be used to provide infants opportunities to listen to and hear sounds that are similar and different.

## What does the practice look like?

Infant nursery rhymes are short, nonsensical poems that entertain the child and have long been used to introduce infants to the world of sounds. They encourage a child's active involvement in getting you to repeat the rhymes. Infant nursery rhymes inspire a child to try to do part of the hand movements himself and to make sounds and try to repeat words that he hears.

## How do you do the practice?

Here are a few nursery rhymes that any child will find fun and enjoyable. Pick a nursery rhyme that you think will capture the child's interest. Nursery rhymes are best played when you and the child are facing one another.

### Bumble Bee, Bumble Bee

Bumble bee, bumble bee,  
Straight from the farm. (Move your index finger in circles and "make it fly" toward your child.)  
Bumble bee, bumble bee, (Repeat the index finger movements)  
Flies under your arm. (Tickle the child under the arm while making a bee sound).

### Little Fishes

Little fishes in a brook.  
(Make hands move like fish.)  
Baby caught them with a hook.  
(Pretend to hook a fish on a fishing rod.)  
Fry them, fry them in a pan.  
(Pretend to make a frying motion.)  
Eat the fish as fast as you can.  
(Pretend to eat the "fish.")

### Rock a Bye Baby

Rock a bye baby on a tree top.  
(Cradle the baby in your arms.)  
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.  
(Rock the baby back and forth.)  
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall.  
(Gently put the baby on a sofa or bed.)  
And down will come baby, cradle and all.  
(Tickle or kiss the child after placing him down.)



## How do you know the practice worked?

- Is the child particularly attentive to the different hand movements?
- Does he anticipate the "punch line" in the nursery rhyme?
- Does he squeal and get excited as part of hearing the nursery rhyme?



# Take a look at more fun with nursery rhymes

## Your Turn/My Turn

Nine-month-old Chloe is sitting on the floor facing her caregiver, Greg. Greg asks Chloe if she wants to play Bumble Bee. Chloe immediately starts moving her hands and fingers in a back-and-forth motion. Bumble Bee is a nursery-rhyme game Greg has played with Chloe for many months. He knows her parents use it at home with her as well. Greg recites the words of the nursery rhyme while using his index fingers to simulate the movements of some bees. While reciting the last verse of the rhyme, he tickles Chloe under her arms while saying "Bzzzz!" Chloe smiles and laughs. Greg says, "It's Chloe's turn." Chloe tries to make bee movements and sounds as Greg recites the nursery rhyme. She tries to tickle Greg while saying something that sounds like a bee sound. The back-and-forth your-turn/my-turn game is played over and over.



## Gone Fishin'

Six-month-old Ethan is sitting in his bouncy chair while his mom is making him some lunch. His home visitor, Louisa, teaches Ethan's big sister, Andi, to entertain Ethan with Little Fishes. "Does Ethan want to hear Little Fishes?" Andi asks. Louisa encourages Ethan's mom and sister to do nursery rhymes with him regularly. Ethan smiles and starts slapping his seat's tray. Louisa starts the nursery rhyme and puts her hands around Ethan's to make a back-and-forth motion to simulate a fish swimming. Andi and Mom join in with the words. When Louisa says "Ethan caught them with a hook" she pretends to catch a fish, which Ethan tries to imitate. Soon she comes to the last verse of the nursery rhyme. Both she and Ethan pretend to eat the fish by putting their hands up to their mouths and making "eating" sounds.

## Do It Again!

Ten-month-old Ananda has limited mobility and has difficulties making the kinds of physical movements that are part of nursery rhymes. Ananda's early interventionist has helped Ananda's mom find a way for Ananda to participate in nursery rhyme play. They have collected a number of stuffed animals that recite nursery rhymes when they are touched or squeezed. Mom shows Ananda one of the animals that Ananda has learned to "activate" to hear the nursery rhyme. As the nursery rhyme is playing, Mom makes the movements associated with the nursery rhyme for Ananda. Mom waits for Ananda to "tell her" she wants to hear the nursery rhyme again by vocalizing or trying to reach for the stuffed animal.



*Especially for practitioners working with infants!*

# Everyday Infant Fingerplays

*Sound Awareness*

Baby games that combine simple, rhyming phrases and interesting movements help infants become familiar with the meanings of sounds and words.

## What is the practice?

Simple, repetitious fingerplays introduce infants to the world of rhymes. Use these delightful games to provide infants opportunities to listen, hear, and master the sounds in words.

## What does the practice look like?

Fingerplays include short rhyming phrases together with movements of the hands or arms to mimic the fingerplay "story." The best infant fingerplays are ones that are short and repetitious and are about things that are likely to capture the child's interests.



## How do you do the practice?

Here are some fingerplays that will surely delight your young child. Search the Internet using the term **infant fingerplays** for more ideas. Select ones that you think your child will especially like. Experiment with two or three fingerplays until you find one that excites your little one.

### **Baby's Eyes**

Blue-eyed babies (Point to your eye).  
Brown-eyed, too. (Point to your other eye).  
Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake (Clap your hands).  
I see you. (Cover your eyes and uncover).

### **Fe Fi Fo Fum**

Fe fi fo fum (Touch each finger with thumb—one finger per syllable).  
See my fingers (Hold up four fingers).  
See my thumb (Hold up thumb).  
Fe fi fo fum (Touch each finger with thumb again).  
Good-bye fingers (Close fingers toward palm).  
Good-bye thumb (Close thumb under fingers).

### **Baby's Fingers**

These are Baby's fingers. (Touch the baby's fingers).  
These are Baby's toes. (Touch the baby's toes).  
This is Baby's tummy button. (Touch the baby's stomach).  
Round and round it goes! (Gently circle belly button).

### **Beehive**

Here is the beehive, where are the bees?  
(Clench your fist).  
Hidden away where nobody sees. (Pretend to look inside your fist).  
Open it up and out they fly. (Open fist and bring out fingers quickly one by one).  
One, two, three, four, five, buzzzz. (Tickle your child's neck while saying "buzz").

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child look and listen intently?
- Does she get excited during the fingerplay?
- Does the child try to do any of the fingerplay movements?



## Take a look at more infant fingerplays

### *"I See You!"*

Six-month-old Sophia looks like she is going to be a really good listener. Whenever her home visitor does her favorite fingerplay, Sophia becomes bright-eyed, giggles, and laughs. Sophia hangs onto every word out of her home visitor's mouth. Baby's Eyes is a fingerplay that Sophia's mom has changed to make it her special rhyme. While reciting the nursery rhyme, she first points to Sophia's right eye, then her left eye. Mom helps her clap her hands together. Next she covers Sophia's face with a towel. Mom says "I see you" when Sophia removes the cloth from her face. The baby has started putting the cloth on her own face to get her mom to repeat the game.



### *"What's the Buzz?"*

Nine-month-old Christopher and his caregiver, Melina, are taking a break at the end of the day. They are having fun playing together. Melina knows that Chris especially likes hearing Beehive. She shows him a bumble bee pull toy, which is her way of saying it is time for the fingerplay. Chris lets her know he wants to play by getting excited and trying to make a buzzing sound. Melina responds by reciting the words to the fingerplay and making all the hand movements. She finishes by having the toy bee nibble on Chris' neck. She repeatedly says, "Buzz, buzz, the bee is going to get you!"

### *Signs + Tickles = FUN!*

Eleven-month-old Eli is not able to hear. His early interventionist helped his mom find an interesting way to play fingerplays with him. She uses sign language together with the words of fingerplays. This helps Eli make the connection between the signs, words, and movements. Eli especially likes These Are Baby's Fingers. He enjoys getting to see the signs and having his body parts tickled while playing the game. He especially likes seeing the sign for round and round. It tells him he is about to have his tummy tickled. Eli has started to make attempts at using sign language to have his mother repeat the fingerplay.





*Especially for practitioners working with infants!*

# Infant Nursery Rhymes

*Sound Awareness*

This practice guide includes nursery rhymes that are likely to be especially engaging and entertaining to infants and young children. Repeating nursery rhymes is one way you can help infants learn about sounds, words, and simple stories.

## What is the practice?

Saying nursery rhymes is a way of using simple, repetitive poems with a young child. They can be especially fun and enjoyable adult-child activities. Rhyming games help infants pay attention to sounds, become familiar with words, and have opportunities to “ask for more.”

## What does the practice look like?

The best nursery rhymes are ones that include some type of movement or some type of touching. The movement or touching helps the child learn the connection between different sounds and words and different things that happen as part of hearing a nursery rhyme. Imagine a mother reciting the words of the rhyme “Baby’s Name” while tickling and touching her daughter. The daughter listens to every sound and watches every movement. You can see why nursery rhymes are so much fun!



## How do you do the practice?

Nursery rhymes are not only fun and enjoyable; they serve an important purpose. They are the context for interactive play episodes that help children be active partners in doing and saying the nursery rhyme. Try different rhymes with a child to find ones that he especially enjoys.

### Baby’s Name

What is your name? (Point to the child).  
I just want to know. (Point to yourself).  
Your name is \_\_\_\_\_. (Say the infant’s name.)  
Hello, hello, hello! (Wave to the child).

### Dancing Fingers

Fingers are up, (Wiggle the fingers, pointing up)  
Fingers are down. (Wiggle the fingers, pointing down).  
Fingers are dancing, (Make the fingers appear to dance)  
All over town. (Run dancing fingers on the child’s tummy).

### Blow Me A Kiss

Tell me you love me, (Cross your heart)  
And blow me a kiss. (Blow the child a kiss).  
Aim good and straight (Gently place the child’s hand on his or her mouth)  
So you don’t miss. (Pretend to catch the kiss).

### Make Baby Smile

I can make baby smile. (Gently touch the child’s mouth).  
By tickling her toes. (Tickle the child’s feet).  
I can make baby smile. (Gently touch the child’s mouth).  
By kissing her on the nose! (Kiss the child on his or her nose).

### Blow Wind Blow

See the trees move  
To and fro  
(Move you arm back and forth)  
See the trees move  
Blow wind, blow.  
(Gently blow on child’s tummy or face).

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child try to make any of the nursery rhyme movements?
- Does the child show signs that he knows what is about to happen?
- Does the child make sounds and vocalize while playing the games?

## Take a look at more nursery-rhyme activities

### Let's Play Again

Four-month-old Charlene is lying stretched out on her back on her mother's legs looking up at her. This is a position Charlene's home visitor recommended as a good one for this kind of game. Her mother says, "Can you smile for me? I can make Charlene smile by tickling her toes. I can make Charlene smile by kissing her nose!" Charlene has learned to lift her leg to have her toes tickled. She starts to blink her eyes in anticipation of having her nose kissed. Her mom asks, "Do you want to play again?" Charlene squeals and gets excited to tell her mom to "do it again!"



### Sing-Along Time

Ten-month-old Daphne is in her highchair while her caregiver, Sue, fixes her something to eat. Sue and Daphne have turned this everyday routine into a kind of sing-along. Sue says, "It's time to eat (pointing to her mouth while making the sign for eat). You're in your seat (pointing to Daphne highchair). Let's fill your tummy (pats her stomach), With something yummy! (hugs herself and smiles)." Daphne tries to continue the game by putting her hand up to her mouth. Sue repeats the made-up nursery rhyme, but this time Daphne touches Sue's mouth and then hers. The more they play, the more excited Daphne gets, showing delight in playing the game.

### Dancing Fingers

Nine-month-old Suzette is not able to lift her hands or arms because of a rare muscular condition. With the help of her early interventionist, her mother has figured out how to entertain her daughter with nursery rhymes. She plays Dancing Fingers with Suzette by holding her daughter's arm up in the air and using her fingers to move Suzette's fingers. Suzette shows she enjoys this game by paying close attention to her mother's face. She even tries to get her mother to continue the game by vocalizing to her mom and by getting excited. Mom recites the nursery rhyme again. Suzette's early interventionist notices that Suzette is trying as hard as she can to move her fingers on her own.

