When infants begin showing interest in their parents and other adults, the time is right to play social games. Social games are back-and-forth, your-turn/my-turn infant-adult play accompanied by short rhymes or songs that engage infants in playful interactions. The results of playing social games with your child are active child participation, lots of playful bouts of back-and-forth communication, and bunches of smiles and laughter. Enjoy!


- Begin by watching your child, paying special attention to things that appear interesting to her. What kinds of things make your child smile or coo? If she seems interested in looking at your face or hearing your voice, she may enjoy the game of “Peek-a-boo.”

- Peek-a-boo is played by covering the baby’s eyes with a soft cloth and asking “Where is _____?” Then remove the cloth and exclaim, “Peek-a-boo! I see you!” Notice your child’s response. She might coo, smile, make eye contact, kick her legs, or do something else that tells you she likes the game. Follow your child’s lead by continuing the game based on her response: Cover baby’s eyes and wait for her to do something to tell you she wants you to pull the cloth from her eyes. When the baby moves her eyes, try waiting a few seconds before lifting his arms again. If he moves his arms, coos, smiles, waves his hands, or does another behavior that you assume is telling him that he wants the game to continue, respond immediately by pulling the cloth from her eyes and saying “Peek-a-Boo. I see you!”

- “So Big” is another engaging social game. Gently stretch the baby’s arms above his head while saying, “How big is _____? SO BIG!” Then kiss or tickle his tummy or neck. Once you have played the game two or three times and know she likes it, try waiting a few seconds before lifting his arms again. If he moves his arms, coos, smiles, waves his hands, or uses another behavior that tells you he wants the game to continue, respond immediately by pulling the cloth from her eyes and saying “Peek-a-Boo. I see you!”

For more ideas, ask a home visitor, teacher, early interventionist, therapist, or another experienced parent. Click here to download a free booklet full of lap game ideas from Pierce County Library (Tacoma, WA).

A Quick Peek

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 to his son: “Where’s Andy? Where’s Andy?” Hearing his father’s voice, Andy starts cooing with excitement. As soon as Andy “calls” back, Dad pops his head from behind the blanket and says, “Peek-a-Boo! I see you!” Then 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.