

Peek a Boo



Peekaboo, the favourite game of many families, encourages your baby to tune into their favourite thing to look at – a familiar face. You understand that even though something may be hidden, it still exists. Your young baby needs your help to make this exciting discovery!

How to do it:

This game can keep giving, ensuring a perfect balance of what a developing baby knows about the world, what they are able to control and what they are still surprised by. We as adults are often delighted by the child's laughter and so this repetition also invites us to enjoy endless rounds of the giggly game ourselves.

The Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget called this 'object permanence' and suggested that babies spent the first two years of their lives working it out. Before a child develops object permanence, that favourite face disappears and reappears instantly, making the first two years of life prime peek a boo time! This well-loved game supports babies to test and re-test a fundamental principle of existence: that things might remain nearby even when you can't see them.

Developing object permanence is an important milestone. It is a precursor to symbolic understanding (which a baby needs to develop language, pretend play, and exploration) and helps children work through separation anxiety. The challenging part about developing object permanence is that, when a baby realises that familiar people still exists even when they can't see them, he or she can get upset. This is what sometimes happens with separation anxiety.

Playing these games can help your baby as he or she moves through this very natural milestone. Object permanence games help babies understand that even though they can't see you, you will come back!

What can you do as parents and families to help teach your babies object permanence? **PLAY!**

Play Ideas

Play Peek-a-Boo! - Start with your hands, hide behind and pop out to say hello or peek a boo. Start with a soft voice and a smile and enjoy as over time, this becomes an anticipated game. Progress to hiding yourself away behind something else. For example, behind a small towel.

Play Hide-and-Seek with objects - Show your baby an object (a toy or something else that might be of interest) and when you are sure you have their attention, slowly hide the toy under a small towel or cloth. Question aloud where it has gone... and then reveal its whereabouts! You might say 'Peek a boo', you might count and reveal on three or you might make up your own rhyme! Eventually your baby will learn to remove the layer to find what's hiding. The possibilities for play between you and your baby are endless!

Play by adding a few more layers - You can hide your baby's toy behind a few layers of cloth (or cups, whatever you like) to make the game more challenging. Ask questions such as "where has it gone? Use words such to describe position, e.g. under, on top, behind etc.

Play it while you're out and about - Peek-a-Boo can be played anytime and anywhere. Play it on the bus, when in the line at the supermarket, or while you wait for dinner to cook!

Talk to your baby when you are out-of-sight - Talk to your baby from another room and then walk into your baby's view. Babies recognise parents' and familiar voices early in development, so use your voice to reassure your baby, supporting them to begin to understand that you are still there, even when out of sight.

