



## Connecting Games to Play with Preschoolers

“The most important thing children need to thrive is to live in an environment of **relationships** that begins in their family but also extends out to include adults that are not family members in their child care centers and other programs.”

([http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory\\_of\\_change](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change))

To build relationships... Talk with children (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqJjnK4HVaw>)  
Play with children (Get down on the children’s level and follow their lead)  
Use Connecting Activities

### Mr. Wiggle and Mr. Waggle

For this story you need two thumbs.

This is Mr. Wiggle. He lives in a house. This is Mr. Waggle. He lives in a house, too. So open the doors (POP!), put them inside (POP!) and close the doors.

One day Mr. Wiggle decided to go visit Mr. Waggle. So he opened the door (POP!), and came outside (POP!) and he went up the hill and down the hill and up the hill and down the hill until he came to Mr. Waggle’s house.

He knocked on the door, “knock! knock! knock!” and called out softly, “Mr. Waggle!” but there was no answer so he knocked louder “knock! knock! knock!” and called out loudly, “Mr. Waggle!” but there was still no answer.

So he went back up the hill and down the hill and up the hill and down the hill up the hill and down the hill until he was back at his own house. He opened the door (POP!) and went inside (POP!) and closed the door (POP!).

Repeat with Mr. Waggle visiting Mr. Wiggle the next day.

The next day, have them both leave at the same time. They meet and greet at the top of the second hill then go to sleep when they get home.

(Source unknown)

### Balloon Blow

Sit around the table with a small group of children. Place a balloon in the center and have everyone blow through their straws to blow the object around the table.

### Balloon Keep Up

Have lots of balloons, and children work together to keep the balloons from touching the floor.

(Torbert & Schneider, pp. 51-53)

### “Pom-Pom Push”

- \* Sit across a table from your partner. Spread out your arms on the table to make the boundaries for the game.
- \* Have your partner blow through a straw to push the pom-pom to you.
- \* Then trade role, using your own straw.
- \* Take turns again and again.

(Adapted from Bailey, 2000 pp. 199-200)

## CONNECTING GAMES TO PLAY WITH PRESCHOOLERS

### Car and Driver

Stand behind a child with your hands on her shoulders. Direct the child to stop and start using only your hands. The child can take a turn "driving" with her hands on your waist.

(Torbert & Schneider, p. 71)

### Calvin Ball

Play a game of catch, using a bean bag or ball. Let the child make up rules for how to toss the ball.

### Rhyme Time

Take turns saying short sentences that end in rhyming words, pausing to let the child say the word.

### Hand Clapping Games

Partner with a child and make up a clapping pattern as you sing the songs.

#### A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea

A sailor went to sea, sea, sea  
To see what he could see, see, see.  
But all that he could see, see, see  
Was the bottom of the deep blue sea, sea, sea.

(On the last 3 words of each line, make the following motions)

Sea/see – salute  
Chop – chopping motion on arm  
Knee – pat knees  
Repeat with chop, chop, chop  
Knee, knee, knee  
Then sea, chop, knee (Use all 3 motions)

(<http://funclapping.com/>)

### Special Handshake

Create a special handshake with each of your children, and use it every day to greet them.

### Buddy Bob

Make a puppet out of a tennis ball by cutting a mouth and drawing on eyes. Interact with a child talking for Bob.

### Mirror, Mirror!

Take turns with a child copying each other's moves and facial

### Catch Game

Say one line as you toss the bean bag to a child. The child repeats it as he tosses it back to you.

Plainsies, (Just throw)  
Clapsies, (clap after throw)  
Roll the ball, (roll hands as if wheels after throw)  
Dilapsies. (touch shoulders after throw)  
Highsies, (toss bean bag high)  
Lowsies, (toss bean bag low)  
One hand, (toss bean bag one-handed)  
The other hand. (use the other hand)  
Touch my knee, (touch knee after throw)  
Touch my toe, (touch toe after throw)  
Touch my heel, (touch heel after throw)  
And under we go! (toss bean bag from under leg)

(Henry Goyette)

### Welcome Back Ritual

You've been gone and you've been missed.  
Where would you like your butterfly kiss?

(adapted from [www.consciousdiscipline.com](http://www.consciousdiscipline.com))

### Jack-in-the-Box

Jack-in-the-Box,  
Jack-in-the-Box  
Sit so still  
Will --- pop up?

**In a Cabin in the Woods**

In a cabin in the woods	(draw a square in the air with your fingers)
A little old man by the window stood	(make circles, like binoculars, with your hands and put up to your eyes)
Saw a rabbit hopping by	(two fingers walking in front of you in the air)
Knocking at his door	(do a knocking motion with one hand)
“Help me! Help me! Help!” he cried	(fling your hands in the air three times)
Before the hunter finds me	(put hand over forehead as if shielding the sun while looking back and forth)
Little rabbit come inside	(motion inviting someone to come to you)
Safely you may hide	(rock your arms like you’re rocking a baby)

Keep repeating the song, doing the hand motions but humming instead of singing a line. So the second time you sing the song, you don’t say “In a cabin by the woods”, you just hum it and make the hand gesture. The third time, you leave out both 1st and 2nd lines (humming only) do just the hand gesture, sing the rest. You keep going until there are no words, just humming and gestures. You can also speed up the tempo.

(adapted from <http://funclapping.com>)

**Connecting Games that Build Self- Regulation**

**Refocusing Games**

- **Clapping Exercise** – Use a series of claps with a certain pattern
- **Conducting an Orchestra** - Wave a conductor’s baton quickly or slowly and have children play instruments accordingly
- **Drum Beats** – Give directions for children to move a certain way when you beat the drum
- **Elephant Stampede** – Direct the children to mimic sounds of elephants close or far away

**Behavioral Regulation Games**

- **Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders** – Have children point to one body part when you name another
- **The Freeze Game** – Children dance and freeze into position when the music stops
- **Sleep, Sleep!** – Direct children to pretend to sleep then wake up as different animals

**Relaxation Games**

- **Sinking Activity** – Tell children to imagine that their bodies are very heavy and sinking to the floor, (guided relaxation)
- **Breathing Buddies** – Children take deep breaths, lying on their backs with a stuffed animal on their bellies

**Impulsivity Reduction Game**

- **Follow the Birdie** – Have children watch as a partner moves an object slowly across their line of vision

**Resources:**

Bailey, B.A. 2000. *I love you rituals*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Tominey & McClelland (2011). Red light, purple light: Findings from a randomized trial using circle time games to improve behavioral self-regulation in preschool. *Early Education and Development*, 22 (3).

Torbert, M. & Schneider, L.B. (1993) *Follow me too: A handbook of movement activities for three- to five-year-olds*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.