



## Be a team

- ⇒ Try a fun family nickname
- ⇒ If you have a partner, keep that team mentality as a couple
- ⇒ Come up with a special name only *you* call your child

## Be an improv comedian

- ⇒ Shoot for “yes, and...” instead of “no” or “but.”
- ⇒ Accept creative, wacky ideas (as long as they are safe)
- ⇒ Don’t be afraid to get silly

## Be a safe big critter

- ⇒ Get in some rough and tumble play or safe physical touch whenever possible
- ⇒ Let your cub see your warm gaze with some friendly eye contact
- ⇒ Never *force* play – depending on your child’s history, some physical contact and unpredictability may be uncomfortable

## Be flexible

- ⇒ Keep reading your child’s cues
- ⇒ Take a break with a drink of water, counting, breathing or a quick walk as needed

## A few minutes to play...

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- **Peek-a-boo** – use hands, towel, blanket, behind a door. Good for increasing felt safety!
- **So strong!** – Sit face-to-face (child can be on lap) and guide child to use hands (or fingertips, nose, elbows) to gently push you down while you comment on her strength.
- **Back and forth** – Child runs, hops, somersaults between 2 safe adults with encouragement and happy greetings from each adult. Can be good welcome home ritual in the evening.
- **Love mark** – Offer a marker or 2 and let your child draw on your hand (or shoulder, etc). You can then draw on them with the same marker and remind them that they you have a little piece of each other all day, even if you're separated.
- **Buttons** – Gently press nose, ear, toe and make a noise with each location
- **Cotton ball races** – Use straws to blow your cotton ball across the table – or sit on opposite sides and try to blow one cotton ball off the other person's side of the table.
- **Pop cheeks** – Fill cheeks with air and guide child's hands to push gently on cheeks and pop the air out. Reverse roles.
- **Sticker face** – Take turns putting a sticker on your face for the other person to peel off.
- **Lotion pass** – Put lotion on your nose, pass to child's cheek, back to your forehead then to child's belly or arm for you to rub in.
- **Secret handshake** – Great for all ages and another good way to ease transitions.
- **Pillow Tower** – Have your child stand on a pillow. Cheer for them keeping their balance (with assistance if needed). Next, have them step off and you will add another pillow and another and another! If safe, allow the child to topple on top of you.
- **Drum Copy** – Use a drum, plastic bowl, table top to tap a tune, then the child copies you. You can trade off with the child. Helpful on multiple levels for getting in sync with each other. Can also be a game while waiting in a restaurant.
- **Lotion Spots** – Put a dab of lotion on your finger, have the child close eyes and put the lotion on one spot and tap around to "fake" them out. Before they open their eyes, they guess where the lotion is on their body.
- **Mirror** – One of you is the person, the other is the mirror mimicking the person's actions. Make funny faces, wave hands, point to my eyes then heart then your child to say "I love you."
- **Thumb wrestling or thumb grab** – Great games for waiting rooms!
- **Trace me!** – Take turns tracing each other's hands, feet or even whole bodies. Use paper and crayons or sidewalk chalk or whipped cream – get creative!
- **Bubble challenge** – Chew gum and see who can blow the bigger bubble.
- **Balloons** – So many fun ways to play with balloons! Keep them in the air, pass back and forth, see how many you can work together to keep up at once, etc.

