



10 great People Games for playing with children with ASD

Adapted from the Hanen guidebook More Than Words®.

What are People Games?

People Games are simple, repetitive routines that require the involvement of at least two people in order to be fun (for example, 'Peekaboo' or 'tag'). People Games make playing with a parent easier for a child with ASD, and they're a great way to have fun together and to help your child learn to communicate.

Important tip: Play your game all the way through many times, and use the same main words and actions as you play. Once your child knows the game well, you can begin to pause at key moments in the game and WAIT for a response: when you wait, your child has a chance to join in by looking at you, touching you, smiling, doing an action, or even saying something. Remember to play the game all the way through many times before you start waiting!

Ideas for People Games

Part 1: These ideas for People Games are for children who are learning to play with parents and learning to communicate with eye contact, actions, sounds, or words... (For children who already play games and use words and sentences, see next section below)

Pillows:

Place them around the floor like stepping stones and help your child 'jump' from pillow to pillow. Say 'jump' right before you help them jump. After your child knows the game, get face to face with your child and begin to wait right before you help them jump. Give your child a chance to look at you, smile, make a sound, or even say 'jump'.

Laundry basket:

Pretend the basket is a boat and 'rock' it back and forth. Your child may even enjoy if you help them 'fall' out of the boat. After your child knows the game, get face to face with your child and begin to wait right before you rock or tip the boat. This will give your child a chance to look at you and ask for the game by touching you, starting the action, or even saying one of the words that he has heard you say over and over.

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Hat:

Put a hat on your head and use your head to 'bump' your child's tummy, feet or back. Keep your 'bump' gentle and playful and give him a chance to see your head coming closer. Talk about what you're doing while you're doing it: "Let's bump Abby's tummy." After your child knows the game, get face to face with your child and begin to wait right before you 'bump'. Give your child a chance to laugh, push your head, or show and/or tell you where he wants the 'bump'.

Boxes:

Place several boxes upside down around the room and hide a favourite item (or snack) under one of them. Help your child go to 'find' it, then hide it again! After your child knows the game, hide an item, get face to face with your child and begin to wait, holding the box down, right before your child lifts it. Give your child a chance to show or tell you to lift the box!

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Wheres mommy/daddy?:

This game will help your child learn that he can get the attention of others by calling out their names. Have your child sit with one parent on the sofa while the other one goes just outside of the room. The parent on the sofa will call out "Mommy!" (or the hiding parent's or sibling's name). Immediately, the 'hiding' person will jump up, run over and tickle or hug the child. Then, have the same adult go back and hide just outside the room again. After your child knows the game, wait a moment instead of immediately calling the person's name. Watch and listen for how your child might try to get your attention or the attention of the person hiding!

Part 2: These ideas are for People Games for children who can play games with their families and who speak using words and sentences.

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Pillows:

Place the pillows on the floor so that your child can jump from one pillow to the next as though the pillows were stepping stones. Show your child by pointing to where he should 'jump'. After your child knows the game, wait before pointing, giving him a chance to point or say where he wants to jump. Once your child knows the game, make it more interesting by adding some new vocabulary. For example, say something about jumping to the 'near' or 'far' pillow.



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Laundry Basket: Pretend the basket is a boat, but now add different actions to the boat: spin it, move it fast or slow, have a 'wave' (a blue towel) come and sweep past them, and end the game by dumping the child out into the 'water'. After your child knows the game, help them into the boat and then wait for them to tell you the actions they want. To add interest to the game, you may later offer a choice of favourite toys that could join them in the boat, or help them pretend to 'swim' to the sofa before a 'shark' gets them.

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Hat: Put a hat on your head and hide a favourite small item (any household object) under it. Help them guess what it could be (give hints: "it's for blowing your nose") and then let them pull the hat off your head to reveal the hidden object. After your child knows the game, wait and hold your head away so they can't immediately pull the hat off. Give them a chance to tell you that they are ready to see what's under the hat. This game could also be fun with a sock on your hand or a big mitten on your foot. Do something unexpected to add fun!

Boxes of people: Place several boxes upside down around the room and hide a picture of a favourite family member under one of the boxes. Tell the child that the boxes are houses and we need to knock on the door and ask if the person in the picture is home. Take your child to each box so he sees how you knock on each box and hears how you ask "Is Auntie Tina here?" before you lift the box. After your child knows the game, knock on the box, then wait and look expectantly at your child. He might ask for the person inside, look at you or tell you to ask. For extra fun, change the game by cutting a 'door' in the box and let them stick their arm inside to find the picture by touch. This would be a great game to practice before a family gathering with lots of relatives.

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Watch my eyes and find a surprise: This game will help your child learn that he can learn a lot about what's on your mind by looking at your face and especially your eyes. Begin the game by having your child close his eyes while you hide some treats or small toys in one room. Tell your child to open his eyes and ask him to find the hidden objects by looking at your eyes. Make sure you are right at your child's level so he can see your face as you look at him and then look at the hidden object. If your child has a lot of trouble finding the object, try pointing to it while you're looking at it.