

Things to Do While You're Waiting: Physical Activities



It's happening again! You're running errands with your children and suddenly you're stuck—in traffic, at the clinic, in the checkout line. Many parents find that playful learning activities can help keep children engaged when they have to wait.

Too much time in a car seat or stroller can make a child irritable. How can you help your child find a little freedom of movement in a confined space?

Snuggle Up!

Sometimes, hugging is the best physical activity. Invite your child to pretend you are puppies or other animals as you give each other lots of hugs.

Time to Play!

“Simon Says” and “Mother May I?” are timeless games that let children move in a small space. Fingerplays, clapping games, and songs get hands moving. Try old favorites like “Patty-cake,” “Miss Mary Mack,” or “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes.”


Let's Pretend!

If your child still has energy to burn, try some of these activities:

- **Flop your bodies like rag dolls.** Then be stiff like robots. Stretch your necks like giraffes, or be shy turtles pulling heads and limbs in toward your bodies. Pretend to dig holes or pour cereal. With very young children, decide together what to act out, then find different ways to do it. As your child learns the game, she can play a part while you guess what she is doing. Then switch roles.
- **Be athletes in the Finger Olympics.** Use hands and fingers to show skiing, skating, pole-vaulting, or other sports.
- **Play the mirror game.** This activity works when you can face each other. When your child is the leader, he can make any kind of motion suitable for the space—arm movements, funny faces, silly walks. Imitate his movements as if you were a mirror image. Trade places often!

Challenge Time!

Make up physical challenges for each other. Be sure your challenges fit the space and don't interfere with anyone else. For example: “Try standing on one foot while I count to 10.” “Can you touch your nose with your elbow?” “Can you lift the cereal box over your head 10 times?” “Which letters can we make with our fingers?”

 For related Web resources, see “Things to Do While You're Waiting: Physical Activities” at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



29 Children's Research Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469
Telephone: 217-333-1386 • Fax: 217-244-7732
Toll-free: 877-275-3227
Email: iel@illinois.edu
Internet: <http://illinoisearlylearning.org>

Illinois State
Board of Education