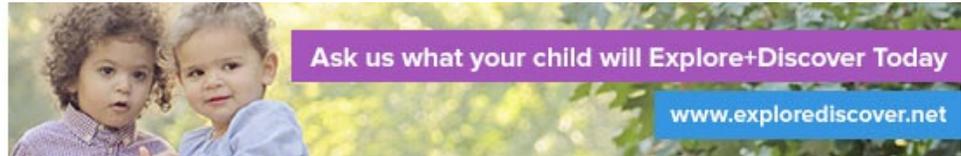


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The Explore + Discover Education Blog



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Clapping With Babies: A Joyful Sound

Renee Bock, Educational Director; Explore + Discover Early Learning Center

Clapping with babies is so natural that it's like breathing. In fact, we hardly realize we're doing it and we never consider why it might be important. But clapping is one of the most ancient forms of human communication. And now we clap with our babies for so many reasons—to share joy, pride, and mostly to accompany songs and hand rhymes. Parents around the world clap with their babies, and they've been doing it throughout the history of humankind. Why do we do it and how does it benefit our babies?

Clapping Brings Us Together—When we clap our mood shifts and we are available for fun with our kids. We have our child's full attention, make eye contact and we are responsive to what the child needs. Fast? Slow? Do it again? We are a team!

Clapping Introduces Rhythm—Alongside our heartbeat, clapping provides a rhythmic, soothing, often exciting introduction to rhythm. Our bodies create sound that doesn't involve the voice or an instrument. We show our child what the body can do. Feel the rhythm.

Clapping Creates Routines and Traditions—Babies benefit from predictable repeated behaviors. When we get into the habit of clapping together, singing and doing handgames, the baby knows what to expect and can begin to participate. Babies will know when you pause, slow down and speed up. Many families pass on traditional hand games. My grandma and Mom recited Patchy Patchy Kichelach in Yiddish to me and then, years later, to my three sons. My sons undoubtedly will teach it to their children and on and on.

Clapping Builds Vocabulary—When we sing and clap songs for babies, they master new words over time. A baby who hears the rhyme Pat A Cake Pat A Cake Bakers Man, for example, will hear the word cake over and over again and even though they can't say the word or use it early on, they'll access the word more easily when they're ready. The clapping is an accompaniment that helps reinforce content and build memory.

Clapping Is A Skill—Clapping represents a culmination of many skills together and the development of the brain as well. When babies come into the world they can't use their hands with intention. Over time, they realize they have hands, build strength to hold objects, pass objects between hands, develop visual skills to track items as they move, and bring hands together on demand. It takes a long time for all the pieces to come together. When you clap you

model the skill and that's how babies learn.

As a mom and teacher, I have continually been amazed at the hand development of babies and particularly how learning to clap becomes a profound achievement. When you sing and clap with babies you give them so much. Here are some great resources for expanding your clapping routines and remember to laugh, love, and spread the joy together.

Two classic Pete Seeger clapping songs you can check out on YouTube:

Clap, Clap, Clap Your Hands https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TQCDcc93_hs

Let Everyone Clap Hands Like This <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8qIEv86hfw>

Other ideas can be found at:

<http://funclapping.com/Cup.php>

<http://bredandagnes.hubpages.com/hub/Activities-and-Games-to-play-with-your-baby-to-encourage-Speech-and-Language-Development>

<http://www.mamalisa.com/blog/lap-rhymes-to-play-with-babies/>

<http://klmpeace.wordpress.com/rhymes-for-baby-and-toddler-storytimes/>

Renee Bock is a dedicated early childhood educator, who is currently the Educational Director at [Explore + Discover](#), a social learning center in Manhattan. Renee has more than a decade of experience in the field and holds a Master's in Early Childhood Education from Bank Street College in New York. In her present position, she is helping [Explore+Discover](#) open its first New York City center, which is focused on children from 3 months to two years old. She can be reached at Renee@K3Learn.com.