



## R.O.C.K.™ in People Games: For Children with ASD or Social Communication Difficulties

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People games are fun, physical activities that you can play with your child to help build his interaction and communication skills. These games do not include toys because *you* are the part of the interaction that is fun! Some examples of people games are 'peekaboo', 'tickles' or swinging in a blanket.

People games are particularly helpful for children with autism and other social communication difficulties because they provide many opportunities to build some of the key interaction skills that these children often have difficulties with. These skills include:

- Connecting with others for social purposes
- Paying attention to others
- Copying what others do
- Taking a turn in an interaction
- Waiting for others to take a turn
- Using sounds, actions and words as part of the game

To make the most of people games to help your child learn, you can use a research-based strategy called R.O.C.K.™ The R.O.C.K. strategy helps you make the game structured and predictable, which creates many opportunities for your child to interact with you and take a turn to keep the game going.

R.O.C.K. stands for:

**Repeat** – Repeat what you say and do. You might have to play the game several times, using the same actions and words so that your child understands how the game works and what to expect.

**Opportunity** – This the turn that you want your child to take to keep the game going. Your child's opportunity depends on how he communicates now. What kind of



turn can you expect him to take? For example, could he make a sound? Move his body? Use a word?

**Cue** – This is what you do to let your child know that he should take his turn. The best kinds of cues are natural ones such as stopping after you have finished the game and waiting, looking expectant so your child gets the message that he should take a turn. But, if he doesn't take his turn, you will need to give him more help, such as showing him what to do (by doing it yourself) or physically helping him.

**Keep it going and keep it fun!** The goal of people games is to get your child to play with you in a back-and-forth interaction that lasts a long time. This means that *you* take a turn by playing part of the game, then your child takes a turn and this continues many times. Turn-taking in people games is an important step towards having real conversations. The best way to keep it going is to make the game fun for your child so he'll want to continue.

## R.O.C.K. During a Bouncing Game

Here is an example of how you can use R.O.C.K. in a game of bouncing your child on your knees.

**Repeat** – Sit face-to-face with your child as he sits on your lap. Bounce him up and down, using a fun little phrase like “Let’s *bounce, bounce, bounce!*” **Repeat** the same action with the same words again and again so your child knows what to expect.

**Opportunity** – Decide what your child’s **opportunity** might be in the bouncing game (do this before you play the game). What turn could he take to keep the game going? For example, you might expect him to let you know he wants you to bounce him again by bouncing his body up and down. Or, if he is starting to say words, he could say, “Buh!”

**Cue** – Now it’s time to **cue** your child so he knows it’s his turn. After bouncing him a number of times, stop and wait, looking expectant with an animated facial expression. This will encourage him to look at you and bounce up and down or make a sound to let you know he wants to be bounced again. If he doesn’t take his turn, give him a stronger cue. For example, raise your heels off the ground as if you are ready to bounce him and say, “Let’s bounce...” Then wait to see what happens. If he still doesn’t take his turn, pick up from where you paused, bouncing him and finishing the line (“*bounce, bounce, bounce!*”) to show him the game again.

**Keep the game going** – As soon as he sends you a message (with a sound, a movement, a word, or a smile) that he wants to keep playing, bounce him and repeat the same words. Once he can play the game with ease, change it up. Bounce fast (For example, “Let’s bounce fast!”) and then switch it up and bounce slowly (“Let’s bounce sloooooowly!”) Then ask him to choose, “Bounce fast or slow?” so he can choose which way he wants to be bounced. Or bounce him on your knees on a big bed and let him fall off gently onto the



bed as you say, “Onto the bed!” Once he gets used to this game, he may be able to tell you with actions or words he wants you to let him fall onto the bed.

## Other games

Here are some other ideas for people games that you might want to try. Remember to R.O.C.K during each of them to help build your child’s communication skills.

- Swinging in a blanket (you need two adults for this)
- Chase
- Lifting your child up in the air
- Flying him like an airplane and crashing him onto a bed or a couch
- Peekaboo
- Tickles

### ***Plan for People Play – Booklet 1 n the Make Play ROCK™ Series***

If you want to find out more about the benefits of people games, how to use R.O.C.K. and other strategies to help build your child’s communication skills, and how to help your child take his next step in a people game, take a look at *Plan for People Play*, Hanen’s newest resource.

*Plan For People Play* offers examples of two dozen people games you can play with your child based on his sensory preferences (*i.e.* what kinds of sensations he enjoys). Detailed examples, illustrations, and “Game Plan” templates make it easy for you to build your child’s social interaction skills while having fun with people games.

### **About The Hanen Centre**

*Founded in 1975, The Hanen Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization with a global reach. Its mission is to provide parents, caregivers, early childhood educators and speech-language pathologists with the knowledge and training they need to help young children develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills. This includes children who have or are at risk for language delays, those with developmental challenges such as autism, and those who are developing typically.*

For more information, please visit [www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org).

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