Show n Tell

Why Clapping is important for your child's development

There are all sorts of ways to connect with your child. One of the simplest and most effective ways to connect with children of all ages is through clapping together. Clapping is obviously extremely accessible—all you need are your hands and a little bit of time. Besides that, clapping supports growth in all areas of development.

Motor

Social-Emotional

Language

Cognitive

Motor

A motor skill is any motion that involves movement of muscles in our bodies. Clapping requires the muscles in the arms, wrists and hands to work together to produce a satisfying feeling and sound. Movements that encourage motor development will set the stage for later more-involved motor skills, like writing.

Language

Your child understands the words you are saying well before they are able to express themselves with words. The language your child understands is called “receptive language” and the language your child produces is called “expressive language”. When you clap with your child, and talk them through what you are doing together, you are helping to build their receptive language.

Social-Emotional

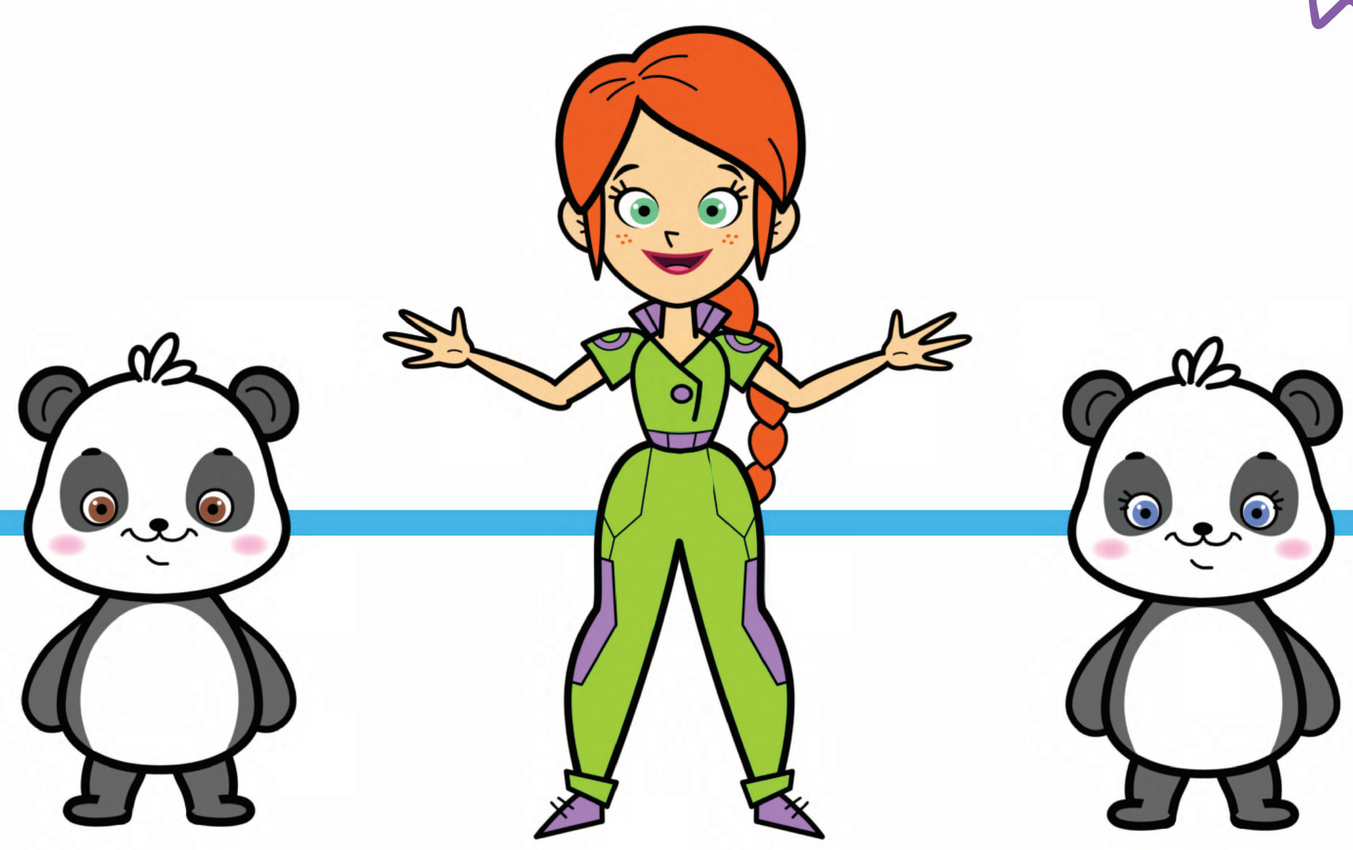
Clapping is often an activity that is done with others. It is an experience that caregivers share with children, or children share with one another. Clapping helps children learn to interact with others in a positive way. Clapping games, such as pat-a-cake, are an excellent way to engage and connect with your child. Playing, clapping and singing with your child are all ways to strengthen the bond you have with your child.

Cognitive

Clapping requires our brains to send a signal to our hands, instructing them to move together. Sure—this seems second-nature to a grown-up, but this is tough work for a little one who is just figuring out how all the parts of their body work together. Young children learn through observation. When they watch you clap, they learn to clap, adding a new skill to their repertoire!

Clapping is also an important piece of communication.

It is often one of the first “signs” we teach our children. They understand early that clapping is associated with positive things, and enjoy applause from adoring caregivers. They also learn that clapping can be used to express their own delight. Additionally, clapping can be a listening skill, and listening is an important part of language development.



“Like a Panda”

“Like a Panda” has a simple and defined beat, as well as a catchy rhythm. This makes it an ideal song to explore clapping with children of all ages!

0 - 5 MO

- Gently bounce your baby in time to your favorite nursery rhymes or music. This motor movement will be a precursor to other motor movements, including clapping.
- Make sure to sing and talk with them while you do this. Did you know that your baby's favorite voice to hear is yours?

6 MO - 1 YR

- You can expect your baby to start clapping on their own between nine and twelve months. There are many things you can do to help support this skill.
- Sit your baby on your lap and help them clap by putting your hands over theirs and moving them together.
- Play music and help your baby move their hands together in time to the beat.
- Use language to express appropriate times for clapping, and help your baby to clap during those times. For example, after you help your baby get dressed, clap your hands and say 'Yay! Baby is all dressed!"

1 - 2 YRS

- Continue to help your baby clap in time to different types of music and different tempos, fast and slow.
- Your baby is now old enough to engage in simple clapping games, like Pat-A-Cake. Sing and clap together with your child. You may still need to put your hands over your child's as they clap and explore other motions.
- Explore other games and songs with your child, like "If You're Happy and You Know It" and "The Itsy Bitsy Spider"

2 - 3 YRS

· At this age, it is fun for kids to experiment with speed and volume. Encourage your child to clap very quickly and then encourage them to clap very slowly. Make sure to model how to do this so your child understands. It can still be helpful for you to put your hands over their hands as they are learning this concept. Experiment in the same way by clapping at different volumes.

· Help your child to learn body parts by encouraging them to clap, tap, or pat in different ways. Invite your child to pat their knees, or tap their shoulders. Make sure and do this along with your child while naming body parts out loud.

3 - 5 YRS

· Understanding word parts, or syllables, is an important part of learning to read. Support your child in learning this skill by clapping out the syllables in words. Start with their name and the move on to more novel words.

· Your child is ready to pair two motor movements together. Encourage them to clap to a beat and march to a beat at the same time.

· Add instruments. Make a drum from a coffee can or shaker from a plastic egg filled with a bit of rice. Now your child can clap and play to a beat.

· Echo clapping is a fun listening game. Start by clapping once. Then invite your child to echo what they've heard by clapping once. When they are ready, move on to more complicated patterns, including adding multiple claps and pauses.