

Games for Siblings

Since laughter releases oxytocin into the bloodstream, siblings who laugh together are bonding. On the other hand, it's easy for an older child to accidentally (or even intentionally) hurt a younger child. In general, it's best to keep games more gentle if your children are mismatched in age or strength. Here are a few ideas for games for different-age siblings.

- **Silly Dancing.** Put on music and dance together in silly ways. Practice giving everyone their own space or bubble while still coaxing each other into laughter. If one of your children is a baby or toddler, you may want to hold them and dance them around.
- **Pile of Pups.** “Put the children on the bed and let them lie, roll, and bounce all over you and each other, while they pretend to be puppies. They always laugh and get some snuggles in with Mom and even with each other. My four-year-old holds back a bit to keep the one-year-old safe.”—Coralee, mother of four year old and one year old.
- **Ventriloquist.** Be the voice for a baby who can't talk yet, and have him say all kinds of funny things to his siblings to get them laughing. Be sure that he also says tender, grateful, and admiring things.
- **Chase.** “I play a game where I hold our baby and we chase her big sisters until we catch them for a cuddle. The baby starts giggling in anticipation and always smiles at her sisters, which in turn gets her sisters giggling as well. The big girls know they have to be very gentle with the baby.”—Jessica, mother of three-year-old twins and a three month old.
- **Touchdown.** Pretend the baby is a football and run her around your other children into the end zone.
- **Pile Up.** “My three children pile one at a time on top of Daddy and Mommy. The person on top is usually laughing because of the thrill of balancing and wobbling,

and everyone in the middle gets their laughter squeezed right out. Plus the kids get to feel powerful in squashing their parents.”—Courtney, mother of seven, five, and three year olds.

- **Blind Bear.** “Our kids love it when we crawl around on our hands and knees with our eyes closed and try to catch the kids as they run all around. The big ones help the little ones.”—Shannon, mother of ten, eight, five, and two year olds.
- **Mouse in the House.** “I pretend I’m busy in the kitchen while my kids stand right outside of the kitchen and they make scratching sounds on the wall. I keep wondering aloud what I’m hearing until I start running after them down the hall. They giggle crazily outside the kitchen in anticipation of when I’ll take off after them, then throw themselves on their bed while I smother them with hugs and kisses, saying, ‘I caught the mice!’ I remember playing this with my mom growing up and it’s now my kids’ favorite game!”—Barbara, mother of two.

Non-physical games

- Make up funny song lyrics in the car.
- Rhyme with silly words.
- Trade roles at the dinner table so that each family member acts as someone else (kids’ portrayals of adults can be hilarious).
- Sternly proclaim, “*No smiling, no laughing!*” and keep admonishing the kids to stop smiling and laughing as they erupt in giggles.
- Communicate with crazy animal sounds, silly rhymes, funny faces, and voices.