

# The Sound of Feelings

## A LANGUAGE GAME

Do you know what it looks like when someone is happy? And what does a sad person look like? We automatically use our *eyes* to recognise feelings.

But can you tell whether someone is happy or sad without looking at them? Can you recognise someone's feelings with your *ears*?



These language games will help you find out whether you can use just your *ears* to recognise someone's feelings.

Do you want to know more before you start playing the games? Go straight to The Science on the next page!

Variants on these games can be suitable for children aged 3-12 years. Please use the suggestions here as inspiration and make adjustments for your family.

## THE GAMES

We suggest you start each game with big contrasts between feelings (sad versus happy; angry versus sleepy), before moving to more subtle contrasts (sad versus sleepy).

The games go from low-tech to high-tech and the high-tech games may be more suitable for older children.

### 1. SINGING FEELINGS

2 or more players; in person

- Choose a song and a feeling together
- Sing the song together in this feeling.
- Are you all singing in the same way?
- Try a couple more!
- Which feelings are easy to sing and recognise?
- Which ones are more difficult?

### 2. GUESSING FEELINGS

2 or more players; in person

- Choose a feeling and don't tell the others!
- Hide your face behind your hands and say your favourite nursery rhyme in this feeling.
- Can the others guess the feeling you chose?
- Which feelings are easier/more difficult to guess?

### 3. FEELINGS ON THE PHONE

2 or more players; phone call

- Call a friend/family member.
- If you have video: Turn it off, or hide your face with a special effect
- Choose a feeling and act it out in your favourite nursery rhyme.
- Can they guess the feeling you chose?
- Switch turns!
- Which feelings are easier/ more difficult to guess?



## THE SCIENCE

Why do our feelings change our voices? Because our feelings change our bodies and our bodies influence our voices.

Feelings differ from each other in many ways. Some feelings are positive (such as “happy” and “calm”). Other feelings are negative (such as “angry” and “sad”). When you experience a positive feeling, you tend to smile (a little). When you experience a negative feeling, you tend to frown (a little). Smiles and frowns can be heard in someone’s voice: a smiled [sssss] therefore sounds a bit higher than a frowned [sssss].

Feelings also differ from each other in how active they are. Some feelings are very active (such as “happy” and “angry”). Other feelings are a little passive (such as “sleepy” or “sad”). People with active feelings want to move and therefore speak fast. People with passive feelings want to be still and therefore speak slower.

As listeners, we are sensitive to all these subtle differences between voices, which help us recognise how someone feels just with our ears.

## CAN YOU SHARE THE FUN?

The Child Language Lab would love to hear or see examples of your family playing one of these games. Or you can share a feeling that we have to guess! Can you record it and share on the Child Language Lab Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/CLLMQ](http://www.facebook.com/CLLMQ)

You can see examples of Child Language Lab members having a go at these games on Facebook too!

## MEET THE TEAM!

This game was developed by [Titia Benders](#), one of the Deputy Directors of the Child Language Lab, whose research includes [the expression of feelings \(and other things\) in infant-directed speech](#). [Isabel O’Keeffe](#), the lab coordinator, helped make the text a bit more child-friendly. [Michaela Cha](#), a third-year student in the [Bachelor of Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences](#) who completes an internship in the lab, chose the pictures. They hope you enjoy the result.

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*The Child Language Lab studies the process of child language acquisition. Our goal is to understand the nature of language development in children in order to inform theories of language acquisition and more targeted language therapies, providing an evidence base for health and education policy.*

**POPULATIONS:** *Our research group studies language development in infants, monolingual and bilingual children, children with hearing loss and children with language delay.*

**TOPICS:** *We focus primarily on issues at the phonetics/phonology/morphology interface, including the acquisition of grammatical morphology and language processing more generally.*

**METHODS:** *We do our research with specifically designed tasks to gather behavioural and neurological evidence of children's developing language abilities in both comprehension and production. Our methods include: behavioural speech perception and production tasks, eye-tracking, EEG/MEG (KIT-Macquarie Brain Research (MEG) Laboratory), various standardised tests of language, working memory, cognition and executive function*

#### **MAIN RESEARCH AREAS:**

- **Hearing loss:** *What are the challenges faced by children with hearing loss when it comes to language, communication and listening effort?*
- **Bilingualism:** *How do bilingual or second language learners acquire language? What are their unique strengths and challenges in language processing?*
- **Production/speech planning:** *What are the factors that determine how children produce sounds, words, morphemes, prosody and sentences, and how does this change over time?*
- **Perception/comprehension/processing:** *When are children able to recognize sounds, words and morphemes, and predict what's coming next in the sentence?*

#### **FIND OUT MORE:**

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