Working with Babies

Code of Conduct for Oxford BabyLab

Please remember we are researchers, not professional carers. Although we are happy to play and engage with other people’s children, our role is not one of basic care. Bearing this in mind, here are some do’s and don’ts:

1. Ensure parent and child remain together in the same room.

2. Avoid being alone in a closed room with a child.
   - If Mum is just popping down the corridor to the loo, offer to accompany her (with baby).
   - If you are looking after an additional sibling outside the BabyLab, stay in the kid-safe open area, where others can find you easily. Do not take a child into a closed-off room, including your office. Don’t worry about noise – we are used to occasional disturbances.

3. Never leave a child unattended
   - If Mum brings other siblings with her, find another ethically approved researcher who can keep an eye on them for a while.
   - If Mum suggests a very young infant will be ok sleeping in a buggy, try to find another ethically approved researcher who can accompany them in the open area.

4. Avoid taking infants into the Control Room of the BabyLab
   - There are many potential hazards and distractions.

5. The yuck stuff
   - We have a changing mat & nappy disposal bags available for changes.
   - We have baby-wipes available for messes (including coloured pens).
   - As researchers, not carers, we don’t do nappy changes.
   - Similarly, for potty training children, accompany Mum to the loo, but let her take care of the toilet routine.

6. Informed consent
   - Clearly describe experimental methodology on the day (as well as in advance), including any potential risks or upsets.
   - Make sure Mum is aware it is ok to stop at any time, for any reason.
• Make sure that the parent of the infant signs the consent form before starting the experiment.

7. Confidentiality

• All records containing names and personal details (addresses etc.) must be kept in secure locations and on password protected PCs.

• All records of individual babies’ performances should be anonymised before being discussed or presented to people outside the immediate research group.

• We need explicit permission from a parent for use of images of them or their babies.

8. Responsible Researchers

• All BabyLab researchers go through face-to-face interviews, before acceptance into the group.

• All BabyLab researchers undergo police background checks.

• All BabyLab researchers must sign their agreement to these working practices, before they may supervise or work directly with infants.

• All BabyLab researchers must read the necessary professional guidelines listed in the Protocol for their research.

Oxford BabyLab
Draft Guidelines: 19/03/2008
Reapproved: 21/11/2013

Signature of Investigator Collecting Data

Print name

Date
Thank you for expressing an interest in current research at the Oxford BabyLab. The question we aim to investigate is:

**How do infants understand the meanings of words they know?**

For adults, it's well established that links between the meanings of words make it easier for us to understand what is being said to us. If someone has just said the word *doctor*, for example, we can respond very easily to a word like *nurse*.

For one thing, our brain is getting us ready for words that might be related to healthcare and medicine. It's also getting us ready for words which often turn up just after *doctor* – as in the phrase *doctors and nurses*.

We don't yet know whether children start to make connections like these when they learn new words, or whether the connections develop much later. My aim is to start investigating simple words like *cat* and *dog*, and to see which connections infants are sensitive to.

During the study, your baby will sit on your lap in our specially designed BabyLab booth, where pictures are displayed on a screen. They will see two photographs of familiar things, and be asked to identify one, simply by looking. Cameras will record their eye movements, to help us understand patterns of looking, and of understanding. The whole testing session should only take about 5 minutes.

This study will form an important part of my doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford. It will help us to understand better the process of word learning, as well as how (and when) babies start to understand the world in an adult-like way.

Advancement of knowledge of infant cognition would not be possible without the interest and participation of parents like you. I thank you again for your interest, and I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,

<Insert Researchers’ Name>

Oxford BabyLab

Department of Psychology, University of Oxford

<Insert Researchers’ email address>
IMAGE RELEASE AGREEMENT

In the course of our studies, we collect visual recordings of you and your child. In our standard procedure, all recordings will be stored confidentially, and will only be accessible to ethically approved researchers. From time to time, it is useful for our work if selected images can be presented to scientific audiences, and to the general public. For example, it is helpful to show images of children enjoying our studies to parents thinking of participating. It is also helpful to show other scientists what our playroom looks like, and how children react to our tasks. For this reason, we would like permission to use recordings of you and your child. We will never sell the rights to these images, and we will never use your child’s real name along with their image.

Parent / Guardian

I allow the Oxford BabyLab to use images of my child recorded during this visit for the following purposes:

- a) Scientific training  
  - Yes / No
- b) Scientific illustration/demonstration  
  - Yes / No
- c) BabyLab publicity (website, newsletters etc.)  
  - Yes / No

In addition, I am happy if my own face is visible in the recording:  
- Yes / No

Parent/Guardian

Signature: _________________________________________ Date: ___________

Parent/Guardian

Printed Name: _________________________________________

Further Details:

a) **Scientific training** occurs when staff, students and academic visitors to the Department of Experimental Psychology observe a video of your child, in order to learn our scientific methods. Scientific training is supervised by an ethically approved BabyLab researcher, and the trainee does not gain rights to use the recordings outside training.

b) **Scientific illustration** is the use of still or video images to illustrate our methods to a scientific audience. This use includes printed publication in academic journal articles, printed display on posters, and still or moving display in oral presentations at national and international scientific conferences, and during academic visits to scientific institutions. Some of the resulting documents will be accessible online. Distribution rights will only be transferred to reputable academic publications, for single use, in a relevant research article.

c) **BabyLab publicity (website, newsletters etc.)** includes the use of recorded images for BabyLab publicity in domains which are accessible to the general public. These uses include (but are not exclusive to) use on the BabyLab website, in BabyLab newsletters distributed to participating parents, and on recruitment materials which will be available in local Hospitals, health care centres, nurseries and play groups.

If you have any concerns or complaints you wish to raise, you can contact the Director of the Oxford BabyLab, Prof. Kim Plunkett (e-mail: kim.plunkett@psy.ox.ac.uk; telephone: (01865) 271384; or in writing to the above address).