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(54) **CONFIGURABLE PLAYPEN DEVICE**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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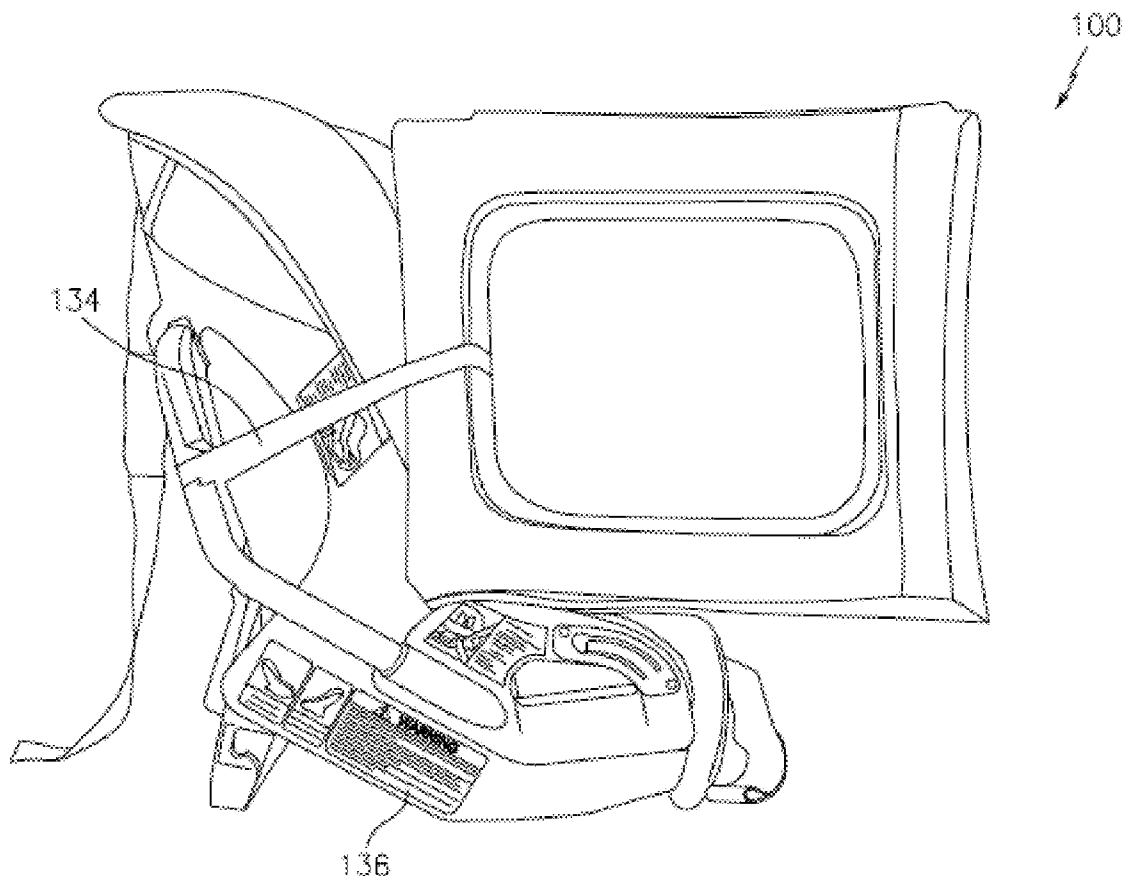
A playpen device is provided and includes a playpen base portion having a playpen base first side, a playpen base second side and a playpen base rear side. The playpen device includes a playpen back portion having a playpen back first side, a playpen back second side and a playpen back bottom side. The playpen device also includes two playpen side portions each having a playpen side rear side and a playpen side bottom side. The playpen base first side is connected with the playpen side bottom side of one of the two playpen side portions and the playpen base second side is connected with the playpen side bottom side of the other of the two playpen side portions. Also, the playpen base rear side is connected with the playpen back bottom side and the car seat playpen device is configurable between a first and second configuration.

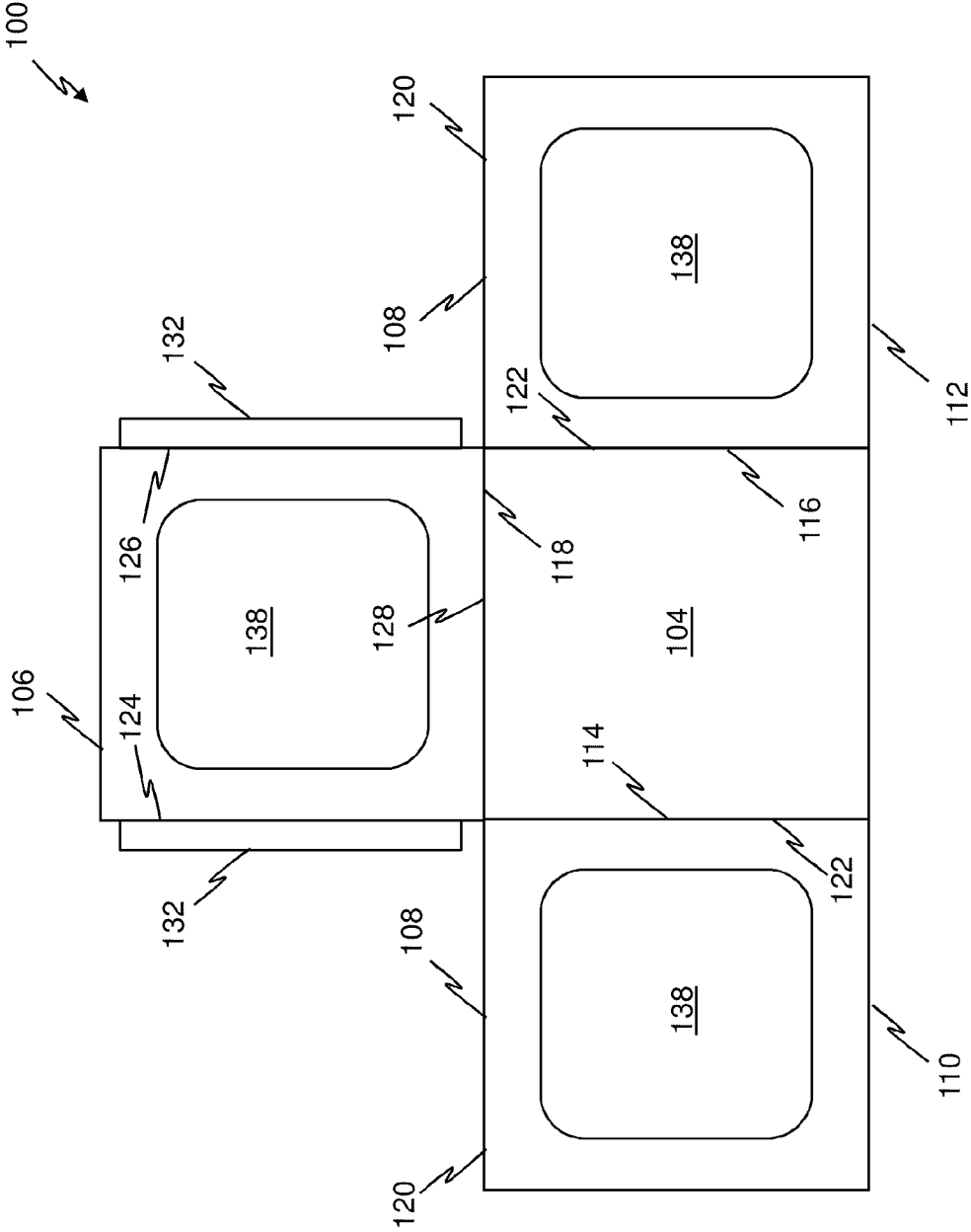
**Related U.S. Application Data**

(60) Provisional application No. 61/278,350, filed on Oct. 7, 2009.

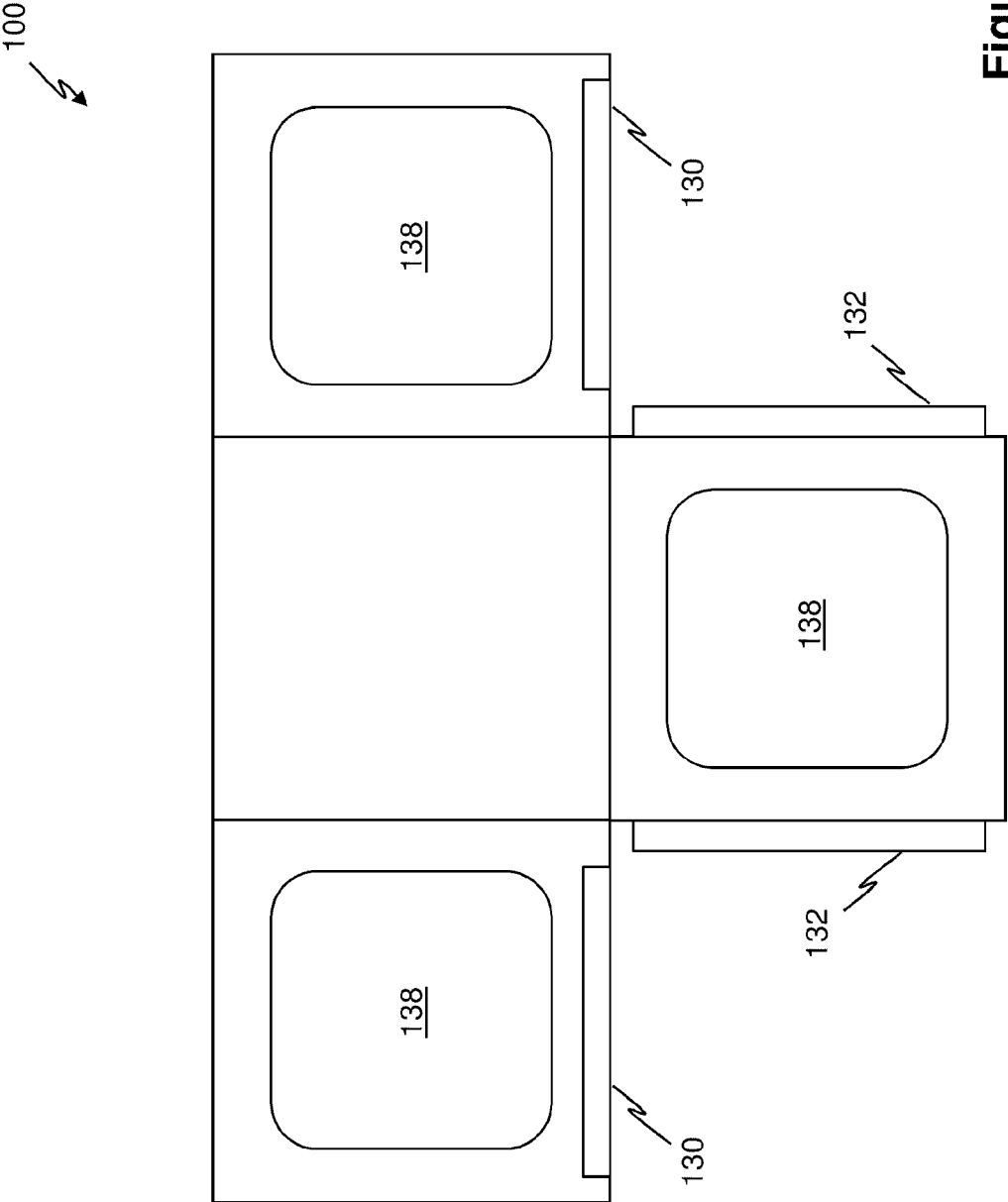
**Publication Classification**

(51) **Int. Cl. A47C 7/62 (2006.01)**



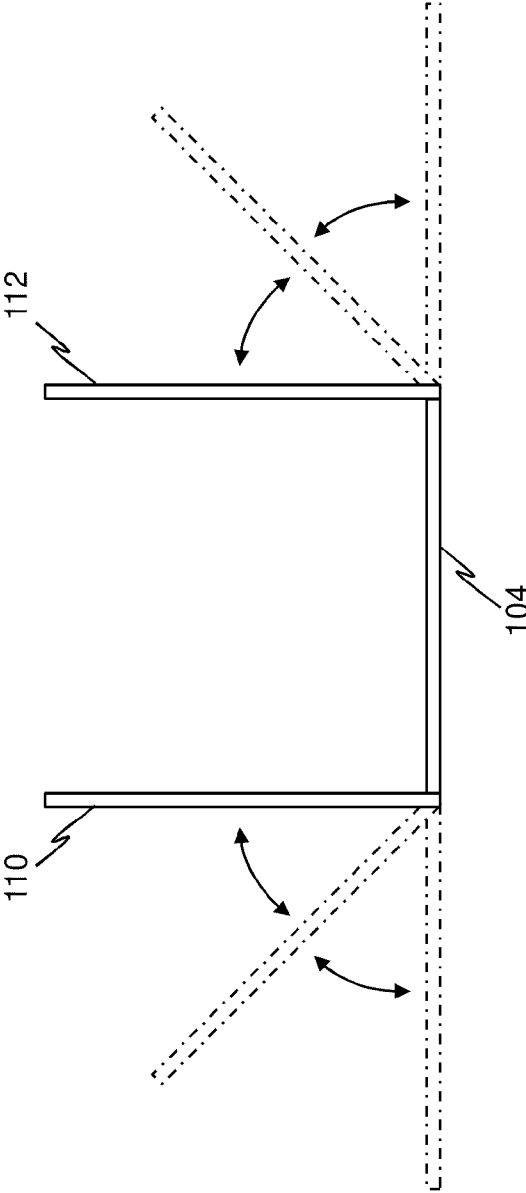


**Figure 1A**

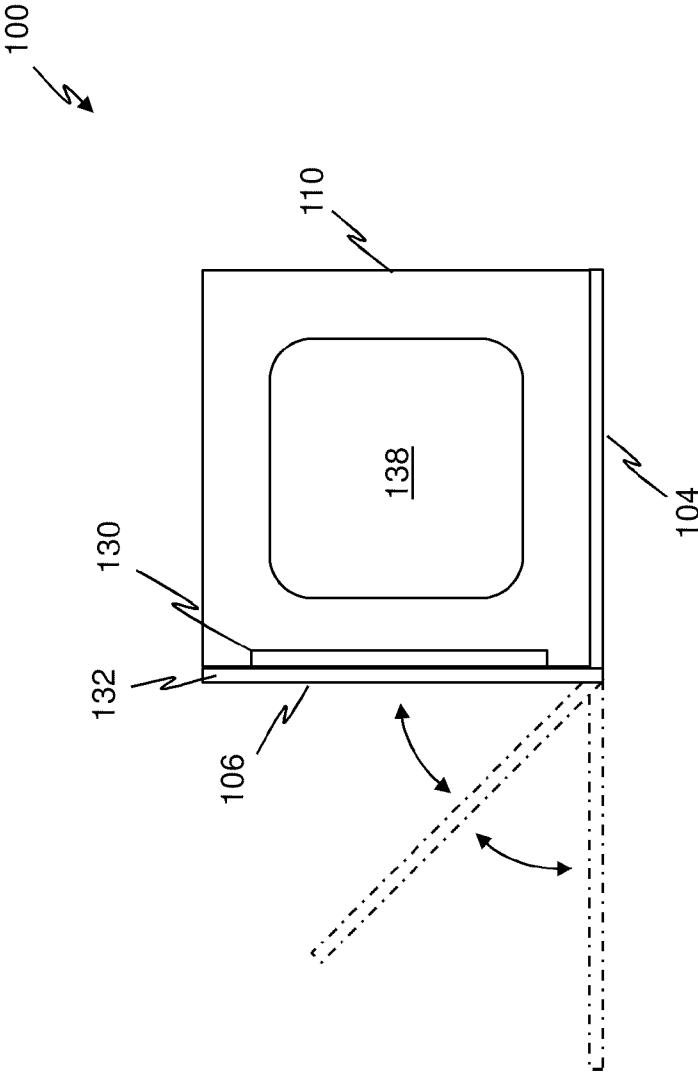


**Figure 1B**

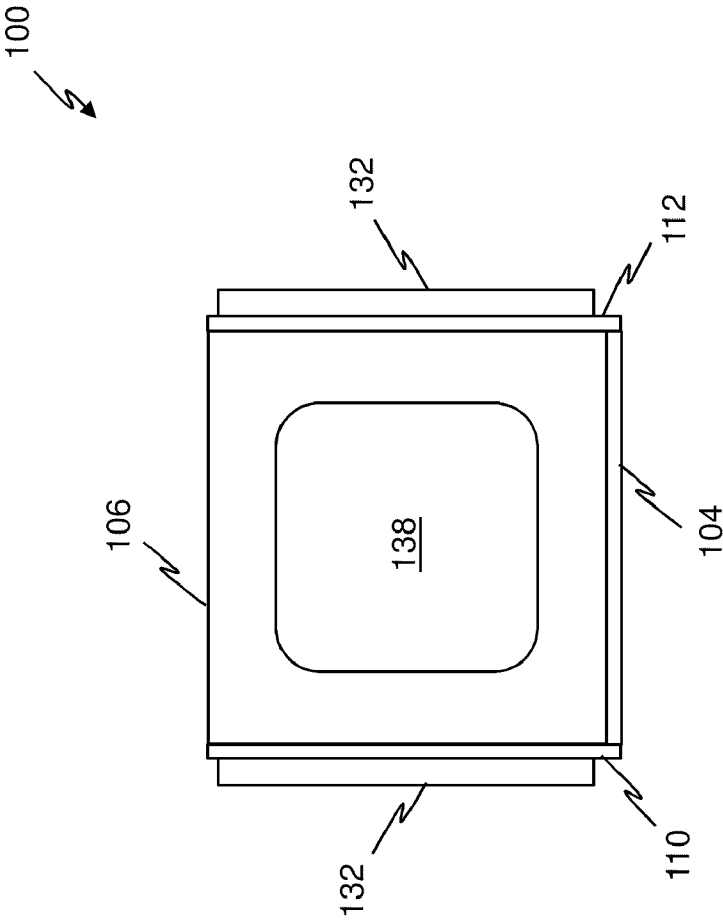
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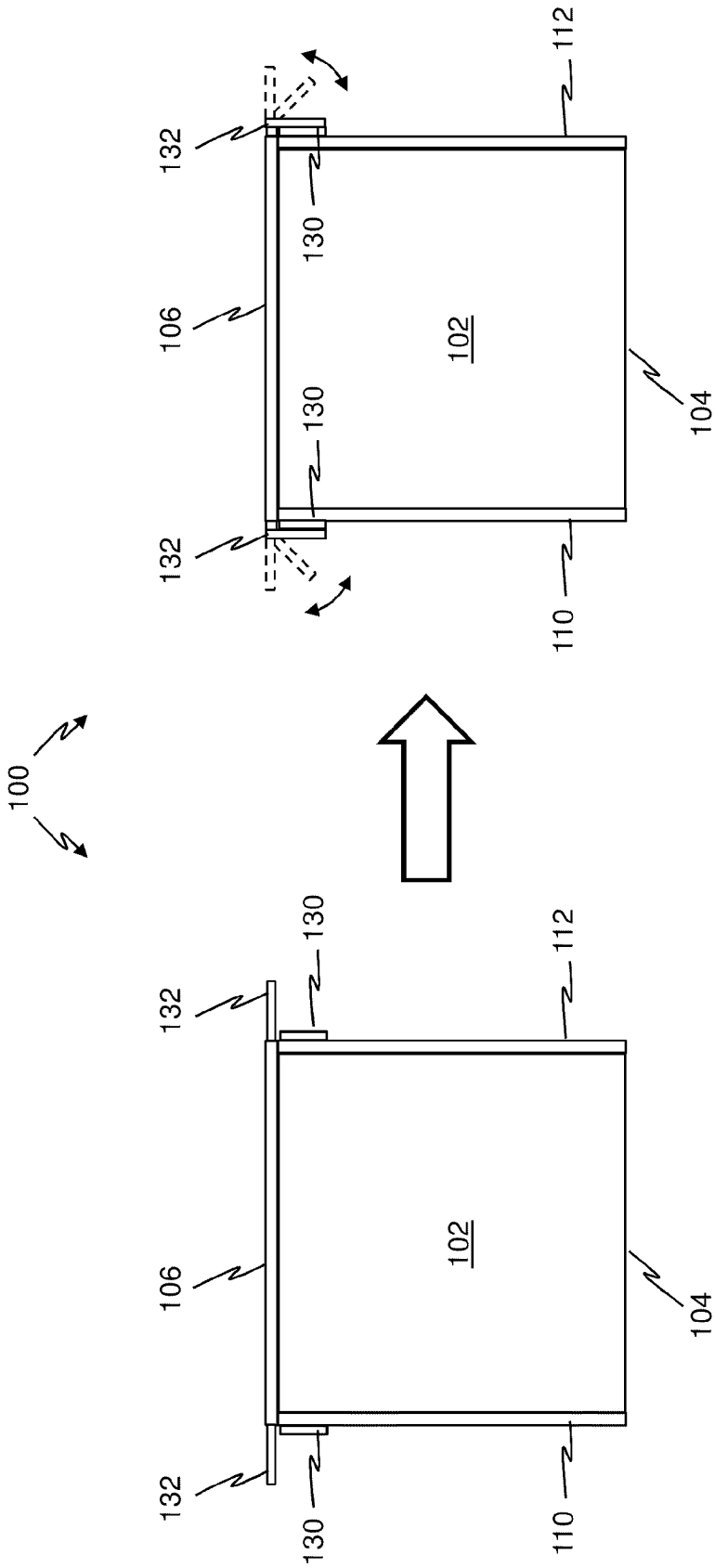
**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**

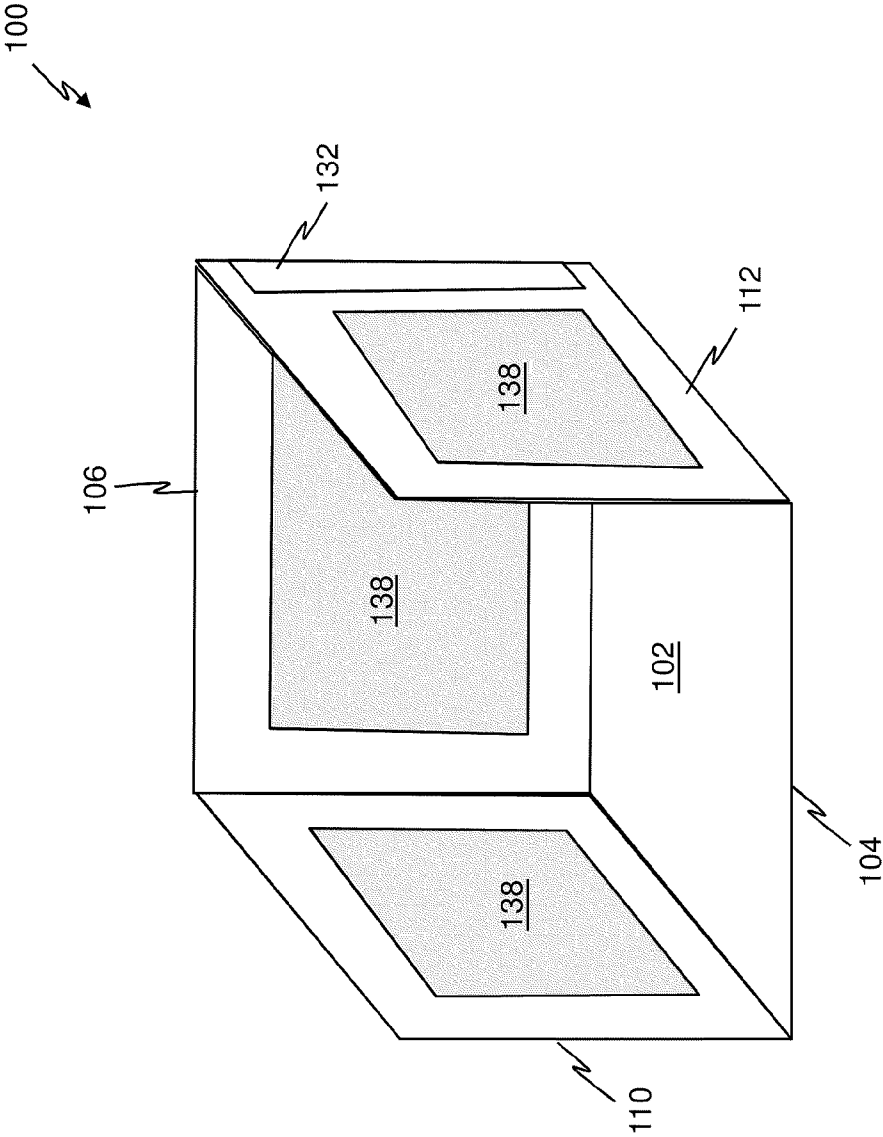


**Figure 4**



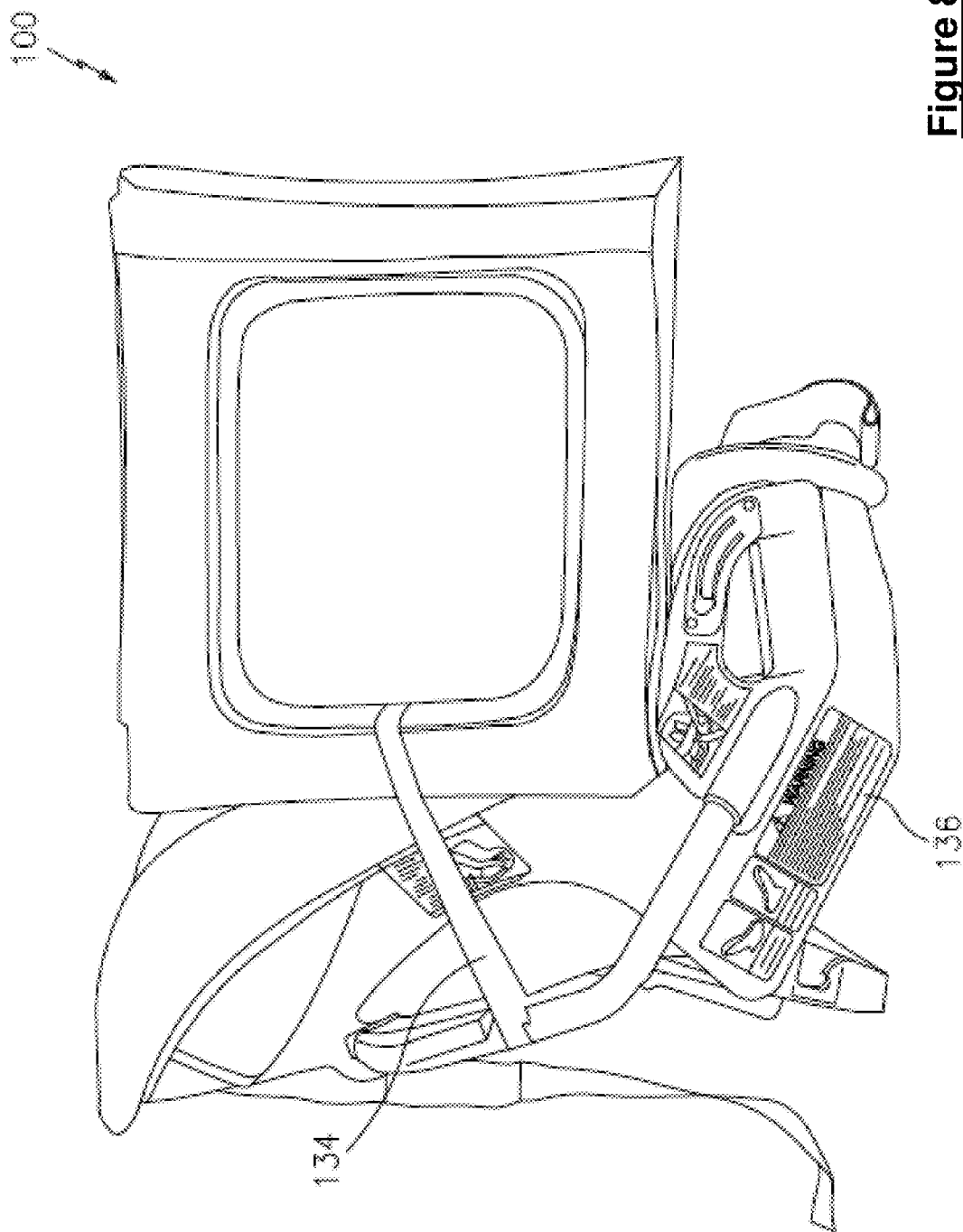
**Figure 6**

**Figure 5**

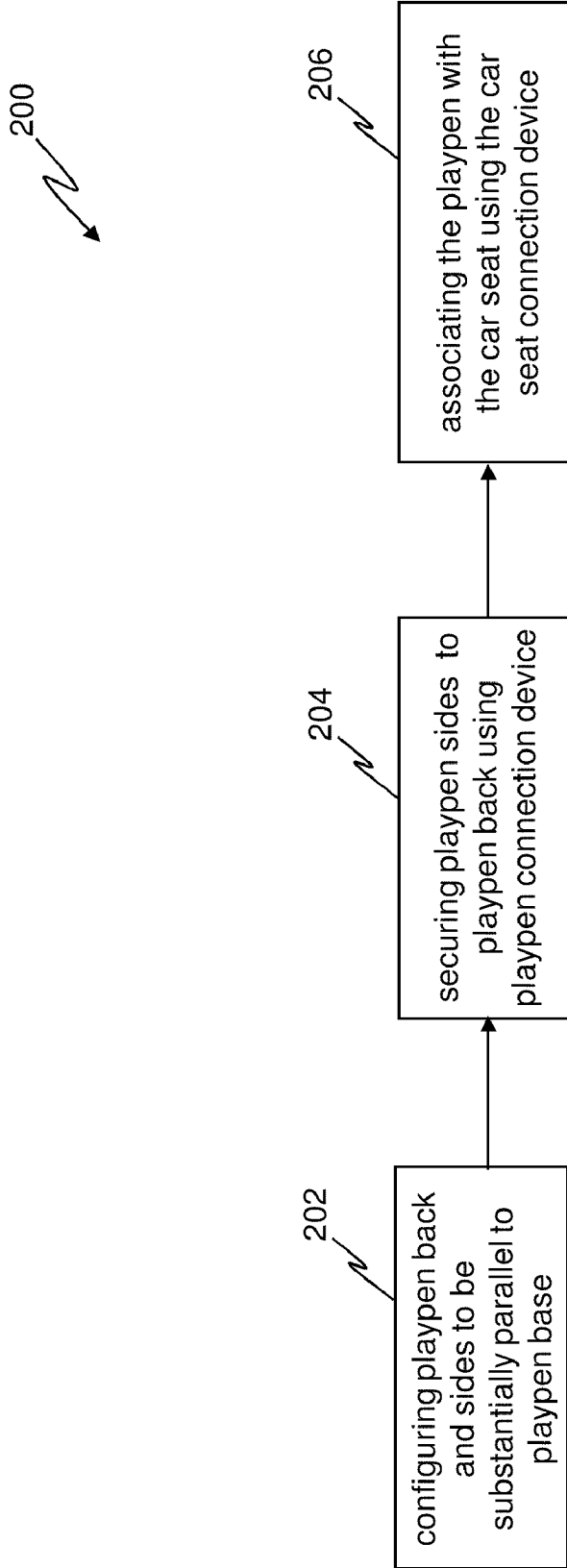


**Figure 7**





**Figure 8**



**Figure 9**

**CONFIGURABLE PLAYPEN DEVICE**

**RELATED APPLICATIONS**

**[0001]** This application claims benefit of priority of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/278,350 (Atty. Docket No. 6701.124077) filed Oct. 7, 2009, the contents of which are incorporated by reference herein its entirety.

**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

**[0002]** This invention relates generally to an article for use by children in a vehicle and more particularly to a playpen device for children for use in a vehicle.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**[0003]** In today’s fast paced environment, more and more families are spending a greater amount of time in their vehicles traveling from place to place. This is becoming even more true as the economic situation worsens, leaving families to take “staycations” to local or semi-local destinations that require driving, rather than trips that require air travel. One problem associated with trips that require driving (including non-staycation related driving), involves keeping the children, toddlers and infants busy or entertained during the drive time. Currently, there are a number of devices available to parents that keep toddlers and young children busy during these trips. For example, CD which play music, DVD players which play videos and handheld video games are just some of these devices.

**[0004]** Unfortunately, these devices can be expensive to purchase and purchasing the media for them can be even more expensive. For example, the cost of each movie DVD and music CD is typically in the \$15-\$20 range and the cost for each video game is typically in the \$40 dollar range. Furthermore, while these devices may keep children over the age of 4 or so busy and entertained, they do little for the younger children that are required to sit in a car seat. As such, for these younger children, parents typically have other types of games and toys, such as rattles, dolls, toy cars, etc, to keep the child busy and entertained. Unfortunately however, while some car seats have trays that can drinks and food stuff, such as cookies, these trays do not function well as play spaces. Accordingly, while the child is playing their toys may fall off or roll off of the tray onto the floor or seat. Additionally, this occurs with children who are not in a car seat. For example, they typically only have their lap area as a play space available to them.

**[0005]** This is undesirable for several reasons. Firstly, if the toy falls or rolls off the tray and lands on the floor, it can become dirty so that if the child puts the toy in their mouth that dirt now ends up in the child’s mouth. Secondly, if the toy falls or rolls off the tray and lands on the floor, the toy may become lost because the child may not be able to articulate where the toy landed. Thirdly, toys that fall or roll off the tray typically land out of reach of the child and must be retrieved and given back to the child. Thus, if only one adult is in the vehicle or if multiple passengers are in the vehicle and are in the front seat, the driver must pull over to allow the toy to be retrieved. In some cases, this may not possible or may require the driver to pull to the side of the road which can be dangerous.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

**[0006]** A playpen device is provided and includes a playpen base portion having a playpen base first side, a playpen base second side and a playpen base rear side, a playpen back portion having a playpen back first side, a playpen back

second side and a playpen back bottom side, and two playpen side portions, wherein each of the two playpen side portions includes a playpen side rear side and a playpen side bottom side. The playpen base first side is rotatably connected with the playpen side bottom side of one of the two playpen side portions and the playpen base second side is rotatably connected with the playpen side bottom side of the other of the two playpen side portions. Additionally, the playpen base rear side is rotatably connected with the playpen back bottom side, and the playpen device is configurable between a first configuration and a second configuration.

**[0007]** A playpen device is provided and includes a playpen base portion, a playpen back portion and two playpen side portions, wherein the playpen base portion is rotatably connected with the playpen back portion and the two playpen side portions, such that the playpen device is configurable between a first configuration and a second configuration.

**[0008]** A method for associating a playpen with a car seat is provided, wherein the play pen includes a playpen base portion, a playpen back portion and two playpen side portions. The method includes configuring the playpen back portion and the two playpen side portions to be substantially parallel to the playpen base portion, securing the two playpen side portions to the playpen back portion to form a playpen cavity and associating the car seat playpen to a car seat such that a child positioned within the car seat can access the playpen cavity.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

**[0009]** The foregoing and other features and advantages of the present invention will be more fully understood from the following detailed description of illustrative embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which like elements are numbered alike:

**[0010]** FIG. 1 is a top down view of the internal side of the playpen device in an unassembled configuration, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

**[0011]** FIG. 2 is a front view of the external side of the playpen device of FIG. 1, with the two playpen sides positioned perpendicular to the playpen base.

**[0012]** FIG. 3 is a side view of the playpen device of FIG. 1, with the two playpen sides and playpen back positioned perpendicular to each other and the playpen base to form the playpen cavity.

**[0013]** FIG. 4 is a front view of the playpen device of FIG. 1, with the two playpen sides and playpen back positioned perpendicular to each other and the playpen base showing the playpen cavity and the connection devices disassociated.

**[0014]** FIG. 5 is a top down view of the playpen device of FIG. 1, with the two playpen sides and playpen back positioned perpendicular to each other and the playpen base showing the connection devices disassociated.

**[0015]** FIG. 6 is a top down view of the playpen device of FIG. 1, with the two playpen sides and playpen back positioned perpendicular to each other and the playpen base showing the connection devices associated together.

**[0016]** FIG. 7 is a front isometric view of the playpen device of FIG. 1, with the two playpen sides and playpen back positioned perpendicular to each other and the playpen base showing the connection devices associated to form the playpen cavity.

**[0017]** FIG. 8 is a side view of the playpen device of FIG. 1 associated with a car seat in accordance with the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 9 is a block diagram illustrating a method for associating the playpen device of FIG. 1 with a car seat, in accordance with the present invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] As disclosed herein with regards to an exemplary embodiment, a playpen device is provided for use with or without a car seat to provide a play space for a child in a car, where the playpen device creates a partially enclosed space defining a playing surface that allows a young child to play with toys within the partially enclosed space without having those toys be susceptible to falling off of the playing surface or their lap. As disclosed herein, the playpen device is easily configurable between a first configuration (i.e. an assembled configuration) and a second configuration (i.e. a disassembled configuration). When in the disassembled configuration, the playpen device folds up and is portable and stowable and when in the assembled configuration the playpen device is usable by a child.

[0020] Referring to FIG. 1A, FIG. 1B and FIG. 2, one embodiment of a playpen device 100 which includes a playpen cavity 102 is shown and includes a playpen base 104, a playpen back 106 and two playpen sides 108, where the two playpen sides 108 include a first playpen side 110 and a second playpen side 112. The playpen base 104 includes a playpen base first side 114, a playpen base second side 116 and a playpen base rear side 118. Each of the two playpen sides 108 includes a playpen side rear side 120 and a playpen side bottom side 122, wherein each of the playpen side rear sides 120 includes a playpen side connection device 130. Furthermore, the playpen back 106 includes a playpen back first side 124, a playpen back second side 126 and a playpen back bottom side 128. In accordance with an embodiment of the invention, the playpen base rear side 118 is rotatably connected to the playpen back bottom side 128 and each of the playpen back first side 124 and the playpen back second side 126 includes a playpen back connection device 132. Additionally, the playpen base first side 114 is rotatably connected to the playpen side bottom side 122 of the first playpen side 110 and the playpen base second side 116 is rotatably connected to the playpen side bottom side 122 of the second playpen side 112.

[0021] Referring to FIGS. 2-6, the playpen device 100 may be configured by positioning each of the two playpen sides 108 to be perpendicular (in the same direction) to the playpen base 104. The playpen back 106 is positioned to be perpendicular (in the same direction as the playpen sides 108) to both the playpen base 104 and each of the playpen sides 108 to form a substantially square or rectangular playpen cavity 102. It should be appreciated that in this configuration one of the playpen side connection devices 130 will be located proximal to one of the playpen back connection devices 132 and the other of the playpen side connection devices 130 will be located proximal to the other of the playpen back connection devices 132. The playpen side connection devices 130 and their proximally located playpen back connection devices 132 are associated such that the playpen back 106 and two playpen sides 108 are securely connected to form playpen cavity 102. FIG. 7 illustrates the playpen device 100 fully assembled and ready to be used on the lap of child or associated with a car seat.

[0022] In accordance with the invention, the playpen base 104 is constructed from a rigid or semi-rigid material to provide a stable platform for holding toys and other articles. Additionally, each of the playpen back 106 and playpen sides 108 include an open portion 138 that is covered with a transparent or semi-transparent material, such as a clear (or tinted)

plastic material or a netting material to allow viewing of the playpen cavity 102 from the side or rear of the playpen device 100. If tinted, the plastic material can act as a sun shade.

[0023] Referring again to FIG. 7 the playpen device 100 may include at least one connection device 134 for securely associating the playpen device 100 with a car seat 136. If being used without a car seat 136, the playpen device 100 may be associated with the child via the connection device 134 being associated with the seat, seat belt or other anchor (such as the child themselves). As shown, once the playpen device 100 has been assembled and a child is positioned within the car seat 136, the playpen device 100 is positioned to rest on the lap of the child or on the side handles of the car seat 136 such that the playpen cavity 102 is immediately positioned out front of the child. FIG. 8 illustrates the playpen device 100 fully assembled and associated with the car seat 136 (If being used without the car seat 136, the playpen device 100 may be associated directly with the child, the seat belt or other anchor). The connection device 134 is connected to one of the playpen sides 108, wrapped around the back of the car seat 136 and connected to the other of the playpen sides 108. This securely anchors the playpen device 100 to the car seat 136 to allow the child to play with their toys within the playpen cavity 102. Furthermore, it is contemplated that at least one of the playpen back 106 and/or the playpen sides 108 may include a pocket for holding toys and other items.

[0024] Referring to FIG. 9, a method 200 for associating the playpen device 100 with a car seat 136, wherein the playpen device 100 includes a playpen base portion 104, a playpen back portion 106 and two playpen side portions 108. The method 200 includes configuring the playpen back portion 106 and the two playpen side portions 108 to be substantially parallel to the playpen base portion 104, as shown in operational block 202. The method 200 further includes securing the two playpen side portions 108 to the playpen back portion 106 using the playpen back connection device 132 to form the playpen cavity 102, as shown in operational block 204. Furthermore, the method 200 includes associating the playpen device 100 to the car seat 136 via the car seat connection device 134 such that a child positioned within the car seat 136 can access the playpen cavity 102, as shown in operational block 206.

[0025] It should be appreciated that the connection device 134 may be an adjustable strap that connects (via snap, hook, clip, etc.) to the playpen sides 108. Alternatively, the connection device 134 may include one strap connected to one of the playpen sides 108 and another strap connected to the other of the playpen sides 108, where each of the straps are configured to associate with each other behind the car seat 136, the child or the seat belt. Still yet another alternative may include a connection device 134 constructed of a resilient elastic strap, that upon positioning the playpen device 100, is stretched over the top of the car seat 136 to be around the back of the car seat 136. If no car seat 136 is being used, then the playpen device 100 may be attached to the seat belt, the child, the head rest or some other suitable anchor means. Additionally, although the playpen sides 108 and the playpen back 106 are described as each having a playpen side connection device 130 and a playpen back connection device 132, respectively, it should be appreciated that the playpen back 106 and playpen sides 108 may be securely associated together via any method or device suitable to the desired end purpose, such as a Velcro® connection, a zipper, a snap, a hook, a latch, a clip, etc. . . .

[0026] Additionally, it is contemplated that the playpen base 104, playpen sides 108 and/or playpen back 106 may be adjustable for use with various sized car seats and/or for

increasing/decreasing the size of the playpen cavity **102**. One way this adjustability may be accomplished may involve slidable and/or attachable (via snaps, Velcro®, straps, zippers, etc.) extensions. As briefly discussed above, this would allow the playpen device **100** to be used with or without a car seat. For example, a child who does not use a car seat could use the playpen device **100** as a play space on his/her lap.

[0027] While the invention has been described with reference to an exemplary embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes, omissions and/or additions may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the invention without departing from the scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the invention not be limited to the particular embodiment disclosed as the best mode contemplated for carrying out this invention, but that the invention will include all embodiments falling within the scope of the appended claims. Moreover, unless specifically stated any use of the terms first, second, etc. do not denote any order or importance, but rather the terms first, second, etc. are used to distinguish one element from another.

What is claimed is:

- 1. A playpen device, comprising:
  - a playpen base portion having a playpen base first side, a playpen base second side and a playpen base rear side;
  - a playpen back portion having a playpen back first side, a playpen back second side and a playpen back bottom side; and
  - two playpen side portions, wherein each of said two playpen side portions includes a playpen side rear side and a playpen side bottom side,
 wherein said playpen base first side is rotatably connected with said playpen side bottom side of one of said two playpen side portions and said playpen base second side is rotatably connected with said playpen side bottom side of the other of said two playpen side portions, and wherein said playpen base rear side is rotatably connected with said playpen back bottom side, and wherein the car seat playpen device is configurable between a first configuration and a second configuration.
- 2. The playpen device of claim **1**, wherein when configured in said first configuration, said playpen back portion and said two playpen side portions are positioned substantially perpendicular to said playpen base portion.
- 3. The playpen device of claim **2**, wherein said playpen back portion is removably connected to said two playpen side portions via a connection device to form a playpen cavity.
- 4. The playpen device of claim **3**, wherein said connection device is at least one of a Velcro® Device, a snap, a clip or a strap.
- 5. The playpen device of claim **1**, further comprising a car seat anchor device to securely associate the car seat playpen to a car seat.
- 6. The playpen device of claim **5**, wherein said car set anchor device is at least one adjustable strap which is connected to at least one of the playpen device or the car seat via a Velcro® interface, a snap, a hook or a clip.
- 7. The playpen device of claim **1**, wherein when configured in said second configuration, said playpen back portion and said two playpen side portions are positioned substantially parallel to said playpen base portion.

**8.** The playpen device of claim **1**, wherein said two playpen side portions includes a first playpen side and a second playpen side.

**9.** The playpen device of claim **8**, wherein at least one of said playpen back portion, said first playpen side and said second playpen side includes an opening covered by at least one of a substantially transparent portion or a netting portion.

**10.** A playpen device, comprising:

- a playpen base portion, a playpen back portion and two playpen side portions,
- wherein said playpen base portion is rotatably connected with said playpen back portion and said two playpen side portions, such that the car seat playpen device is configurable between a first configuration and a second configuration.

**11.** The playpen device of claim **11**, wherein when configured in said first configuration, said playpen back portion and said two playpen side portions are positioned substantially perpendicular to said playpen base portion.

**12.** The playpen device of claim **11**, wherein said playpen back portion is removably connected to said two playpen side portions via a connection device to form a playpen cavity.

**13.** The playpen device of claim **12**, wherein said connection device is at least one of a Velcro® Device, a snap, a clip or a strap.

**14.** The playpen device of claim **10**, further comprising a car seat anchor device to securely associate the car seat playpen to a car seat.

**15.** The playpen device of claim **14**, wherein said car set anchor device is at least one adjustable strap which is connected to at least one of the playpen device or the car seat via a Velcro® interface, a snap, a hook or a clip.

**16.** The playpen device of claim **10**, wherein when configured in said second configuration, said playpen back portion and said two playpen side portions are positioned substantially parallel to said playpen base portion.

**17.** The playpen device of claim **10**, wherein said two playpen side portions includes a first playpen side and a second playpen side.

**18.** The playpen device of claim **17**, wherein at least one of said playpen back portion, said first playpen side and said second playpen side includes an opening covered by at least one of a substantially transparent portion or a netting portion.

**19.** The playpen device of claim **10**, further comprising a pocket portion on at least one of said two playpen side portions or said playpen back portion.

**20.** A method for associating a playpen with a car seat, wherein the play pen includes a playpen base portion, a playpen back portion and two playpen side portions, the method comprising:

- configuring the playpen back portion and the two playpen side portions to be substantially parallel to the playpen base portion;
- securing the two playpen side portions to the playpen back portion to form a playpen cavity; and
- associating the playpen to a car seat such that a child positioned within said car seat can access said playpen cavity.

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