

Games to Play at Home

Simon Says:

Simon Says is an excellent game for helping children learn to pay close attention to instructions, while also giving them a taste of leadership. In Simon Says, one asks another to do silly actions by saying “Simon says tap your head” or “Simon Says jump like monkeys.” You do the action—but only as long as the leader adds “Simon says” to their instructions. This develops listening skills and children love being the leader and trying to catch their grown up out!

Row Your Boat

Self-awareness is an important skill for children to develop as part of the learning process. When children are small, this can start with physical self-awareness. Knowing how to moderate one's body is a very useful skill that prepares them for later life. The game here is simple: sit with your child facing one another with knees bent up in front and holding hands. Instruct them to rock back and forth in time to the song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” They'll need to keep an eye on their own movements at all times. It works best to play this game with a CD or a song on YouTube, so you can incorporate a ‘freeze’ element by stopping music abruptly. This helps children focus on auditory cues and match their physical movements to them.

Hide and Seek

Hide and Seek is a great game for teaching problem solving. In order to stay hidden for the longest possible amount of time, children have to assess their options so they can pick the best possible hiding spot. This builds spatial awareness, because they must consider factors such as which hiding places will offer the most cover from the various vantage points. As they gain experience with the game, children will take an even more in-depth assessment approach, thinking about which spots are frequently used during free play and therefore most likely to be checked first.

Hopscotch

This classic patio game is perfect for developing critical thinking skills. Draw the hopscotch shape on the pavement or patio, then take turns tossing a rock underhand at the hopscotch shape. They must then navigate the hopscotch course while avoiding the square the rock has landed on. Since it's often difficult to avoid the square with the rock while hopping on one foot, kids will need to plan ahead to find the best “route” through the course.

Sleeping Lions

It's important for children to learn how to stay focused despite distractions. Sleeping Lions is a fun way to learn this important life skill. During this preschool game, encourage children to lie down and pretend to be asleep. Then walk near your child (without touching them, trying to convince them into reacting and opening their eyes. To stay ‘asleep’, children have to keep themselves focused on not moving a muscle - no matter how distracted they are. That's extremely hard for young children to do, and the focusing they practice during Sleeping Lions will help a child later on when they're trying to learn in busy environments.