

The Family That Plays Together

Why can't kids pay attention? We've talked a lot of serious talk on the subject matter. But the time for being serious is over—it's time for fun!

Let's play some games that are fun and develop concentration skills! Before we get started on the games there are two basic rules to remember:

1. Make it fun
2. Be patient.

Never Mind Working, Let's Play

The following games are both educational and fun—and can be played in five steps or less! There is no better way to teach kids to pay attention than to play a fun game that requires concentration.

Turn the car radio down—even if the Flattened Squashes are playing their best song.

SEEING GAMES

I Spy

For younger children, the old "I Spy With My Little Eye" is a great game.

1. Simply select anything in the car or room and say, "I spy with my little eye, something that is green."
2. Now the kids take turns guessing.
3. You can only answer their questions with a Yes or No.
4. Adjust the difficulty to meet the age of the child.

Twenty Questions

1. Think of something simple and give one clue—"I'm thinking about a thing (song, person, animal)."
2. Then the kids get to ask 20 questions to which you can only answer 'Yes' or 'No'. It is great practice for them to word questions this way and even better practice for them to take all the replies and deduce the answer.

The Leaf Game

1. This game works best in autumn but it will work at any time of the year.
2. Gather up a handful of maple leaves and give one leaf to each child.
3. Tell them to study the leaf carefully then mix them all up.
4. Now, challenge each child to pick out his or her own leaf from the pile. You can also use apples, pears, grapes, and so on. It is a great focusing game that encourages kids to really focus on the details.

The Cereal Game

1. This game works the same as the leaf game, but is played indoors, usually during breakfast.
2. Take a dozen corn or bran flakes from the box and give one to your child to study for 20 seconds.
3. Put it back into the pile and ask them to try to find it again. (Don't do this after they have poured milk on the cereal!)

The Face Game

1. Sit in pairs and focus intently on each other's faces.
2. Look at the shapes and marks. Look at the color of the eyes. Close your eyes and try to "see" the face in your mind.
3. Then turn everybody back to back and have them describe the other's face.
4. This can be a lot of fun, and you may discover that you have a big nose!

LISTENING GAMES

The House is Haunted

1. Turn off all the lights, TVs and radios and listen to your house.
2. Each kid gets to name one sound from the house—the fridge, the clock, the tap dripping.
3. Try the same game outside in the backyard or the park. Listen for birds, leaves rustling in the wind, cars passing, insects buzzing.

The Satellite Dish Game

1. Turn off all the lights and turn on your satellite dish (in case you don't know, it's right on top of your head!)
2. Listen for sounds outside the house.
3. Go around the circle and each child gets to identify one.
4. Then tune your satellite to the inside and listen to sounds inside the house. Keep the lights off.
5. It's fun and teaches kids to attend and focus their hearing. You can even make your own satellite dishes using tin foil!

The Talker Game

1. For older kids, have two people face each other. One is the talker and one the listener.
2. The talker talks about something interesting while the listener listens carefully for one minute. After a minute, the listener gets "bored" and starts to move around, sigh, look at his watch, read a book, and so on. All the while the talker must keep talking. It is hard to concentrate on your talking when no one is listening! Switch roles. After the game, each player must answer these questions:
 - How did you feel when she was listening carefully to you?
 - How do you know if someone is listening to you?
 - How did you feel when he stopped listening to you?
 - How do you know when someone is not really listening to you?
 - How can you tell if you are a good listener or not?

The Noise Game

Here is one that will have everybody rolling on the floor. You will need at least four players for this game.

1. Player One starts to talk about something that interests him.
2. Player Two waits a moment then starts to repeat everything that Player One says.
3. Player Three now repeats what Player Two is saying and so on until everybody is talking.

CONCENTRATION GAMES

Show Me / Tell Me

1. Show 5 or 6 objects
2. Now call out the names of the objects
3. Ask the child to point to them in the order in which you called.
4. Increase the difficulty from 3 to 6 items when you can. Try switching from objects to numbers.

Play it again, Sam

1. Clap out rhythms with your fingers, hands or an object and ask your child to repeat the same rhythm.
2. Perform a series of tasks, such as stamping your feet, clapping, opening the door, etc and ask for the sequence to be repeated.
3. Show a series of pictures from books or magazines and ask for a recall of the order in which they were presented.
4. Give a series of difficult, but often silly, instructions (e.g.: hop backwards, sit on the table, open the door, dial the telephone with your nose, etc.). The kids will then try to perform them in order.
5. Say, in sequence, a series of words that have the same sounds in them or that have a common theme (e.g. far/jar/car or name as many birds as you can).

OTHER GAMES

There are lots of games that will develop attention, listening and hearing skills. Chess and Checkers are two terrific ways to challenge impulsive behavior and force concentration. Card games, such as PIT, help develop concentration and attention skills. As much as possible, try to choose games that challenge memory, attention, concentration, or that develop listening skills.

There are many games, and each can be a joy while providing you and your child real quality time. You can have fun with your kids while you are being a good parent! You can have fun while doing something that you are expected to do anyway! Just remember that the object of the entire exercise is focus and attention.

DEVELOPING ATTENTION SKILLS
+ PLAYING FUN GAMES TOGETHER

QUALITY FAMILY TIME!