

Games Galore

Everyone knows games are fun. But did you know they can boost your child's learning in school? Games help your youngster read and spell better, follow directions, practice math skills, and a whole lot more. Use these ideas to turn any time into game time!

Waiting games

While you and your child sit in the doctor's office or wait at a restaurant, play quick games like these. Your youngster will practice word and math skills—and the time will fly by!

Rhyme Spy

Work on rhyming skills with this version of I Spy. One player secretly chooses an object. She says, "Look up, look down, look all around. I see something that rhymes with _____," filling in the blank with a word that rhymes with the item. (For a bike, she might say "hike.") The correct guesser gets to pick the next mystery object.

Paper-Clip Math



Tuck a small box of paper clips in your purse or pocket, and play this estimating and measuring game. Ask your youngster to find an item (magazine, sneaker, menu) and estimate how many paper-clips long it is.

Then, she can link paper clips into a chain and measure the object. If her estimate is within one paper clip, she scores a point. Next, it's your turn to estimate and measure an item. The first person to score five points wins.

Tried-and-true games

Here are favorite games that will build your child's skills in every subject. Look for them at discount stores or yard sales, or ask relatives and neighbors for games their children have outgrown.

Reading: Brain Quest, Trivial Pursuit, Great States

Writing: Mad Libs, Balderdash, Scattergories

Math: Yahtzee, Dominoes, Payday, Monopoly, Rummikub

Spelling: Scrabble, Boggle, Bananagrams

Reasoning: Battleship, Mastermind, Clue, Checkers, Chess



Active games

Get your youngster moving with these games that will give his body *and* his brain a workout.

Kicking Countdown

Here's a fun way to practice subtraction. Set up a course by arranging nine objects (lawn chair, bucket, wagon) in your yard or at a park. Each player starts with 100 points. Take turns standing a few yards away from the first "goal" and kicking a ball gently toward it. Count the kicks it takes to make the ball touch the target, and subtract that number from your score. Repeat for the rest of the goals. The winner is the player with the highest score (the fewest kicks).

Spell-It Ball

Your child can work on spelling with this fast-paced contest. To play, call out a word with two letters (of). He has to dribble a basketball and say one letter of the word on each bounce (o-f). Then, he passes you the ball and calls out a three-letter word (w-h-y) for you to spell. On the next turn, give him a four-letter word (m-o-v-e). Keep calling words, making them one letter longer each time, until one of you can't think of a new word.



Bedtime games

Try quiet games like these to help your child unwind at the end of the day.

Under My Pillow

When you tuck your youngster in, spend a few minutes working on her alphabet and memory skills. One of you starts by saying: "Tonight I'm sleeping with an _____ under my pillow," filling in the blank with something that starts with A (apple). The other person repeats the sentence, adding an item that begins with B: "Tonight I'm sleeping with an apple and a bear under my pillow." Continue adding an object that begins with each letter, until one of you can't remember all the words. Each night, see how far you can get in the alphabet.

Take Your Pick

In this game, players make up silly or real questions that offer a choice. On your turn, you might ask your child, "Take your pick: eat a bug or kiss a pig?" or "Take your pick: vacation in the mountains or at the beach?" Your youngster answers and explains her choice. Then, she gets to ask you a question. She'll build thinking skills while the two of you enjoy a funny or an interesting conversation.

Anytime games

Play games at home or away with these ideas. All you need is paper and pencils and a deck of cards.



Connections

Build creativity and vocabulary with this word game. Together, write a dozen nouns on slips of paper, one noun per slip, and place them in a pile. (Note: A noun is a person, place, or thing.) To play, take turns drawing two slips and trying to link them in six steps or less. Players will have to think of the first word's traits and how they could eventually connect to the second word. For instance, if your words are *cactus* and *ice cream*, you might connect them in four steps: 1. A *cactus* is found in the *desert*. 2. A *desert* is *hot*. 3. *Hot* is the opposite of *cold*. 4. *Ice cream* is *cold*. Score a point for each step (up to six). Return the slips to the pile after each turn. The lowest score after five rounds wins.



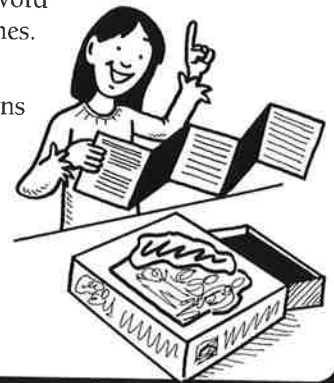
Combinations

With this game, your youngster will practice addition. The object is to find combinations of cards that equal the number you roll on a pair of dice. First, remove the face cards and jokers from a deck of cards. Then, shuffle the cards, deal eight to each player, and place the rest facedown in a pile. (Note: Aces count as 1.) Players take turns rolling two dice and finding cards in their hands that add up to the number rolled. For example, if you roll a 9, you could lay down an 8 and one ace, a 7 and two aces, a 6 and a 3, or a 5 and a 4. If you can't make a move, draw a card from the pile, and your turn is over. The winner is the first player to use all his cards.

Tips for game night

Bring your family together to play games regularly, and you'll create memories as your youngster builds skills. Use these steps to start a weekly game night.

1. Let family members take turns choosing games so everyone gets a chance to play a favorite.
2. Keep things interesting by playing different kinds of games each week. *Examples:* word games, board games, card games.
3. Put your child in charge. It can be her job to read directions and teach everyone the rules. She can also serve as scorekeeper or banker.
4. Swap games regularly with other families. You'll always have something new to play at no cost.



Recipes for Success

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