

Especially for parents of preschoolers!

Wacky Word Games

Talking and Listening

A playful attitude makes gaining listening and language skills fun for preschoolers. Your young child will delight in the same wacky word games that have appealed to children for generations. You can also invent new ones together.

What is the practice?

Word games can take the form of songs, rhymes, and letter games. These games help your preschooler learn new words and listening skills. Children ages 3-5 who are exposed to a rich language and print environment have better language skills.

What does the practice look like?

Word games help your child describe and think about the world around him. There are many times every day when you can play word games about things that interest and engage your child. Point out things that you see while you are driving. Have your child describe how his lunch tastes. While waiting in line at the grocery store, ask your child what he sees that's green.

How do you do the practice?

Playing *I Spy*, *Simon Says*, and naming opposites are examples of word games that you can play with your preschooler. Most preschoolers love to play games. Playing word games is a great way to get your preschooler to talk about the world around him. Most preschoolers love to talk. So it can be easy to follow his interests and play word games with him.

- Play a game of *I Spy* in the car, a doctor's waiting room, or the check-out line at a store. Interest your child by "spying" things you know he likes. For example, "I spy something red and blue." "My new T-shirt!!" "Yes, you guessed it! Now, it's your turn."
- Play games such as *Mother, May I?* or *Simon Says* to help your child develop listening-comprehension skills. Give simple commands that can be done at home or anywhere. For example, "Stand on one foot," "Skip to the door," or "Clap your hands."
- Play an opposites game: Give your preschooler an easy word and ask him to name the opposite of that word.
- Play the *Hot and Cold* game. Choose a favorite toy of your child's to hide while he is in another room. Ask your child to come and try to find his toy. When he goes in the wrong direction, cross your arms, shiver, and say, "Brr, you're getting cold." When he goes in the right direction, fan your face and say, "You're getting warmer." Continue until your child finds the toy. Repeat, or try reversing the roles and having your child hide a toy for you to find.



How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your preschooler using new words?
- Does your child show more interest in playing word games?
- Does your child ask you to play listening comprehension games such as *Simon Says*?

Take a look at more wacky word games

On the Lookout

Three-year old Cody likes to play *I Spy* in the car with his mother. They play on the way to preschool every morning. Cody looks out the window and yells, "I spy something green, Mama!" Cody's mother asks "Is it that exit sign?" "No," says Cody with a pleased smile. "Is it the grass?" guesses his mother. "Yes!" says Cody. Cody's mother says, "I spy something that starts with an M. Can you guess what it is? Remember what sound the M makes? Mmm, mmm." Eagerly, Cody says, "Motorcycle!" "Yes, you guessed it, Cody, good job," replies his mother.



Listening for Simon

One afternoon, five-year-old Omar plays Simon Says with his father in the backyard. At Omar's request, his father is "Simon" and tells Omar, "Simon says jump up and down!" With a smile, Omar hops up and down enthusiastically. "Great!" says Dad. "Simon says, 'Quack like a duck.'" Giggling, Omar makes quacking sounds. "March in a circle fast!" commands his father. Laughing now, Omar stands still. "You aren't marching!" exclaims Dad. "That's 'cause you didn't say 'Simon says!'" yells Omar with glee. "That's right! What a great listener you are," says his father with pride. "Now let's see . . . Simon says, 'Run across the yard!'"

"You're Getting Warmer!"

Four-year-old Lakeisha has developmental delays. One day, as she gets ready to nap, her father picks up the stuffed bear that she sleeps with. He places it on a low shelf in her room within her sight and reach. "Lakeisha," he says, getting her attention, "it's time for your nap, but your bear is hiding! Let's see if you can find her." Lakeisha looks on her bed. "Oh, that's far from her. You're so far away that it's cold!" he says, pretending to shiver. Lakeisha smiles as she realizes the game. She takes a couple of steps and looks expectantly at her father. "Oh, I think you're a little warmer, now." Happily, she takes a few more steps. "Uh oh, now you're getting colder again!" Lakeisha turns around and goes the other direction. "Wow, now it's getting hot!" he says. Lakeisha keeps going toward the shelf. Suddenly, she sees the bear and with a happy cry takes it from the shelf. "You found her, Lakeisha! Great job!" says her father as he tucks her and her bear into bed.

