

MOVING TO THRIVE

MOVING MORE AS A FAMILY

Playing games is a great way for parents to bond with their child! It also provides opportunities for parents to develop their child's thinking, organizational, motor, language, and social skills as these skill sets are an essential aspect of most games. When active games are selected, parents can also promote their child's physical health.

The following tips are suggestions for helping you get the most out of playing games with your child:



Choose carefully & Think about safety issues

Games come in a variety of styles, and it is important to select games that are appropriate for your child's age, development, and skill level. Choose games that your child enjoys. Let your child be a part of the decision-making process when selecting games to play. Also, think about safety issues, such as if there are small parts that are not suitable for younger children.

Be flexible

Situations might arise where modifications need to be made in order to play a particular game with your child. For example, if it rains when you are hoping to set up an obstacle course outside, set one up inside. Or, if your child really wants to play a particular board game that may be too advanced, change the rules, so the two of you can play.

Mix it up

Play a variety of games with your child. By playing different games, you will provide more opportunities to enhance your child's skills and abilities. Do not hesitate to switch to a new game if your child's interest appears to be waning.

Check for understanding

All games have some type of rules or procedures that need to be followed. As you explain those rules or procedures to your child, take a few minutes to make sure he or she understands them. You could also provide a quick demonstration of the rules or procedures to help your child understand what he or she is supposed to be doing in the game. Try not to start the game until you are confident your child understands how the game works. Checking for understanding can make the game more enjoyable because you are helping to prevent confusion or frustration.

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Be a role model

Games are a great way to teach children about valuable social skills, such as being part of a team, taking turns, following directions, regulating emotions, and losing gracefully. As you interact with your child during the game, make sure you are demonstrating these skills. Children learn a lot from observation, so parents should model appropriate, pro-social behaviors for their child.



Look for teachable moments

In addition to being a positive role model, take note of your child's behavior, and discuss it with him or her. Children will struggle with teamwork, turn-taking, following directions, regulating emotions, and losing gracefully, and they can benefit from a loving and supportive conversation about these behaviors. Try to ask questions that help your child process his or her behaviors and arrive at his or her own conclusions rather than simply telling them what to do or believe.

Be intentional

Make time to play with your child. Keep in mind, you do not have to block out hours of your schedule to play a game with your child. Sometimes, all you need is 10 or 15 minutes. But without intentionality, it is unlikely that game play will occur. Remember that not all game play needs to be structured. For example, if you notice that your child is playing with Legos, take a few minutes and join in. Remember to let your child lead the play activity.



Have fun

The most important part of any game is having fun. While it is true that most games will inevitably have a winner and a loser, this aspect of game play should be de-emphasized as it can promote emotions and behaviors that detract from the fun. If you notice that your child is focused on competition, gently remind him or her that it is just a game, and it is more important to have fun than to win. You could

also try praising your child's effort to help take the focus off of performance. If your child becomes too fixated on winning and repeatedly displays inappropriate behavior, take a time out from the game to give your child a chance to calm down and refocus.