

A dark, blue-tinted photograph of a child sitting on a wooden floor, playing a board game. The child's hands are visible, moving pieces on a game board that features various geometric shapes like circles, triangles, and squares. The overall mood is focused and educational.

S|U|C|C|E|S|S
A|C|A|D|E|M|Y

Weekly Play Tips

Actionable Steps for Pre K & K Families

Play is a Workout for the Brain

Playing is more than just fun. It helps children learn how to control themselves, focus, and think in new ways. This guide gives you easy steps to help your child learn through play.

The 3 Pillars of Play



Self-Control

Stopping to think before acting.
This helps kids follow rules and
manage emotions.



Flexible Thinking

Finding new ways to solve
problems and easily switching
between tasks.



Working Memory

Holding information in mind to
use it, like remembering rules to
a game.

Game 1: I Spy

How to Play

One person secretly picks an object and says, "I spy with my little eye, something..." and gives a clue (like its color, shape or the letter it starts with).

Builds: Working Memory & Flexible Thinking

How to Coach

- ✓ **Start Easy:** Use simple, broad clues like "something red" before moving to letters.
- ✓ **Take Turns:** Let them be the "spyer." This builds turn-taking and focus.
- ✓ **Praise Effort:** When they're looking, say "I see you looking so hard! Great job!"



Game 2: Simon Says

How to Play

You are "Simon." Give commands like "Simon says touch your nose." If you give a command **without** saying "Simon says," players who do the action are out.

Builds: Self-Control

How to Coach

- ✓ **Be Simon First:** Do a practice round to ensure they know the rules.
- ✓ **Go Fast:** Speed up the commands to make it harder (and funnier!) to practice self-control.
- ✓ **Praise the **Effort** to Stop:** "Wow, you stopped yourself! That was great self-control!"



Game 3: Red Light, Green Light

How to Play

You are the "stoplight." When you turn your back and say "Green Light," your child runs towards you. When you turn around and say "Red Light," they must freeze.

Builds: Self-Control

How to Coach

- ✓ **Focus on Freezing:** The main goal is to practice stopping their body, a key self-control skill.
- ✓ **Add "Yellow Light":** Have them walk in slow motion for an extra challenge.
- ✓ **Switch Roles:** Let them be the stoplight. This builds turn-taking and rule-following.



Game 4: Freeze Dance

How to Play

Play music and dance! When the music suddenly stops (you press pause), everyone must freeze in place until the music starts again.

Builds: Self-Control

How to Coach

- ✓ **Make it Silly:** Freeze in funny poses. Laughter makes learning sticky.
- ✓ **Narrate the Skill:** "You are doing such a good job *waiting* for the music!"
- ✓ **Change the Tempo:** Use fast and slow songs to challenge their ability to adapt.



Game 5: Memory Match

How to Play

Place a set of matching cards face down. Take turns flipping over two cards at a time, trying to find a match. If it's a match, you keep it. If not, flip them back over.

Builds: Working Memory

How to Coach

- ✓ **Start Small:** Use only 3-4 pairs for a quick, successful win. Build up as they get better.
- ✓ **Talk Aloud:** "I'm turning this one... it's a star. I remember seeing a star over *here*."
- ✓ **It's Not About Winning:** Praise the *process* of remembering and taking turns.



Game 6: Collaborative Storytelling

How to Play

Start a story with one sentence, "Once upon a time, there was a..." Then, have your child add the next sentence, and you add the next, and so on.

Builds: Flexible Thinking & Working Memory

How to Coach

- ✓ **Ask "What if" Questions:** "What if the dragon was nice? What would happen next?"
- ✓ **Embrace Silly:** Let the story go in wild directions. This builds flexible thinking!
- ✓ **Act it Out:** Use different voices and body movements for characters to build flexible thinking.



Game 7: Puzzles

How to Play

Work together on a floor puzzle or simple jigsaw puzzle. Talk about the shapes and colors of the pieces as you go.

Builds: Flexible Thinking & Self-Control

How to Coach

- ✓ **Be a Helper, Not a Doer:** Let them find the piece and put it in. Resist doing it for them.
- ✓ **Offer Strategy:** "Let's find all the *edge* pieces first." "What color is this piece?"
- ✓ **Manage Frustration:** "This is tricky! Let's take a deep breath and try again."



You Are the Coach! Key Takeaways

- ★ **Focus on Effort, Not Winning:** Praise their self-control and flexible thinking. "You worked so hard to find that piece!"
- 💬 **Narrate the Skill:** Put a name to what they're doing. "Wow, you *waited* for your turn even when it was hard. That's called self-control!"
- 📈 **Start Simple:** Begin with easy rules and fewer pieces, then add challenges as they build confidence.
- ♥️ **Focus on the Lesson, Not the Score:** Use losing as a chance to practice grace and self-control. Celebrate when they handle frustration well.