

After you read a story to your child ask, *What do you think happened next?*

Your child will practice using her imagination to think logically about the future.



Why this is important

By asking your child to talk about what happens after the end of the story, you are helping her establish a new or future idea based on previous events. Your child will have an opportunity to voice an idea about the next logical step in a story. Throughout life we wonder about the future and try to project our ideas into it. Stories, reading, and writing help us do this.

What you do

- Take a minute to reflect on a familiar story after reading it with your child. After *Jack and the Beanstalk*, for example, talk about the fact that Jack now has the treasures.
- Ask a question that will help her take the story a logical step forward: *What do you think Jack did the next morning?*
- Give her time to think and respond. If her answer does not contain much information, ask questions that may help her elaborate on her idea. Sometimes repeat her words to her so that she knows you are interested: *So he saw the giant again?* She may add more detail to her answer.
- Ask yes-or-no questions if she has trouble continuing the story: *Did he get up? Did he see something out his window?* She may feel more comfortable after you have discussed several stories.

Another idea

Provide crayons, markers, and paper for your child. Encourage her to illustrate what she thinks happened after the story ended. Record her words on her picture.

Sort Any Way You Like

Game 172

Offer your child colored shapes to sort any way she chooses and ask her to tell you about her groupings.

Your child may begin to see that things can be grouped in many different ways.



Why this is important

Sorting shapes without any direction from you encourages your child to think of many ways to group the shapes. This game gives her experience in considering several possible solutions, which is called divergent thinking. There are no correct answers in this game.

What you do

- Cut two big circles and two little circles from construction paper. Use three colors of construction paper so that you finish with four circles of each color.
- Spread out the 12 circles and say, *We can put these into groups in a lot of ways. Will you show me one way?*
- Observe quietly as your child groups the circles. When she is finished, comment on her work: *You worked very carefully with the circles. Tell me about this group.*
- Mix the shapes again and ask her to find a new way to group them. She will most likely group by color or size, but with practice she may begin to see more ways of grouping.
- Summarize at the end of each round, and talk about the way she chose to put the circles together: *Here are all the large blue circles and these are the little red and blue circles, and here are all the green circles together.*

Another idea

Expand the game by adding multi-colored wrapping paper, more sizes of circles, and other shapes, including 3-D objects.

Tell a very short story in the wrong order and invite your child to fix it.

Your child will increase her awareness of why some events must logically occur in a certain order.



Why this is important

Asking your child to fix a mixed-up story gives her practice in mentally arranging stories in logical order. Information does not always reach us in perfect order. For example, in writing a report, information must be gathered from various places and then organized in the most understandable sequence. Practicing organizing information now will help to prepare your child for sequencing complicated information later.

What you do

- Invite your child to listen to a story, but explain that the story might need sorting out: *I've made up some stories to tell. They've gotten a bit mixed up, but I think you can help me straighten them out.*
- Start with a very short story, and explain that it has two parts: *This is one part: In the afternoon Jim came home tired but happy. The other part is: In the morning Jim helped his father paint the house.*
- Ask your child which part of the story should be first and which should be last. Then ask her how she knew which part should be first.
- Move on to longer stories as she successfully practices this skill.

A few examples are:

Two parts: 1. A cat sat on a soft pillow. 2. Soon the cat was fast asleep.

Three parts: 1. Ed went fishing. 2. Ed fell in the water. 3. Ed sat in the sun to dry off.

Four parts: 1. Mary woke up. 2. Mary got dressed and ate breakfast. 3. Mary rode on the school bus. 4. Mary said "Good Morning" to her teacher.

Another idea

Make pictures illustrating each part of the story. Give them to your child to use in sequencing the story.

When your child faces a problem, offer two possible solutions and let him choose the best option.

Your child will gain experience in considering alternative paths of action.



Why this is important

Providing your child with two possible solutions to a problem encourages him to think about each one before making a choice. With enough practice, considering alternative actions will eventually become a habit for him. Weighing alternatives is a key step in solving problems. Later your child will be able to link this skill with others to solve problems successfully.

What you do

- Encourage your child to pause when he is dealing with a problem. During the pause, calmly and lovingly explain what is happening. For example, if his tower of blocks keeps falling over, say, *That tower keeps falling. It's made you so unhappy.*
- Talk quietly with your child about problem solving: *There are some things that you could do so that won't happen anymore. Let's talk about a couple of them.*
- Invite your child to consider two options for solving the problem: *You could build the next tower wider and stronger at the bottom, or you could decide to build something else – maybe a long train. Which of these ideas would be best for you?*
- Accept any decision he reaches after thinking about both alternatives. If he suggests a third alternative, congratulate him on his creative thinking.

Another idea

Use this process for helping two children solve a problem. When they argue, calmly sit with them, explain the situation, and suggest two courses of action that they can choose from.

Ask your child to name a picture as you slowly uncover it.

Your child will practice creating a whole image of the picture in her mind when only part of the image is visible.



Why this is important

Revealing a picture a little at a time encourages your child to mentally complete the picture. This is called visual closure. Often a person gets only a glimpse of a word or picture, for example, while riding in a car or bus. With good visual closure, a child will be able to read the word or understand the picture even when she can see only part of it.

What you do

- Begin with a familiar book that has large, clear pictures. Choose a book with pictures your child has named before.
- Insert a piece of construction paper so that the first picture is covered when the book is opened.
- Explain, *I'm going to hide some of these pictures from you. But I bet you'll be able to guess what they are. Here's a little peek.*
- Reveal part of the picture by slipping the cover paper part way down. Show as much of the picture as necessary for her to guess successfully.
- Compliment her achievement: *You're right! You named the picture without seeing all of it.*
- Go from page to page in the familiar book before moving on to a book with unfamiliar pictures.

Another idea

Change the game by moving the cover paper in different directions. Sometimes you may uncover from the bottom or side of the picture. You can also use three smaller cover papers and invite your child to remove one paper at a time to guess the picture underneath.

Talk about feelings and invite your child to show them with his face and body.

The actions of this game will help your child understand, demonstrate, and talk about his own feelings.



Why this is important

By calling your child's attention to emotional expressions and by teaching him the names of emotions, you help your child identify his feelings and those of other people. As he learns new ways of expressing his feelings, he will begin to understand that certain ways of showing feelings can help him manage them. He can recognize and express his feelings in a comfortable, accepting atmosphere.

What you do

- Practice expressing feelings with your child while you talk about the names of the feelings.
- Begin with a familiar feeling. For example: *Show me how it feels to be happy.*
- Respond to his actions: *That certainly is a happy dance. It shows me you really feel fine.*
- Show how you look when you feel happy. Talk about times when both of you were happy and reenact the way you showed your happiness.
- Keep the game simple. Talk about each basic feeling as you express it together with facial expressions, other movements, and speech.

Another idea

Play the game another day with various emotions, such as anger, sorrow, excitement, fear, disappointment, annoyance, and so on. Talk about a time when your child felt a particular emotion and about how he and other people show that feeling.

Over a period of days, teach your child a skill that involves several steps.

Your child may notice her own progress. She will see that difficult skills are learned over time.



Why this is important

This activity lets your child see that she can now do tasks she could not do before. Learning to see her own progress in a series of steps helps your child set and reach realistic goals.

What you do

- Choose a task that can be broken into short, manageable steps. A few examples are: tying shoes, fastening a seatbelt, setting the table, and simple sewing.
- Gather your supplies. For example, for sewing, you need large cloth squares, thread, yarn, sewing needles with large eyes, and scissors.
- Invite your child to sit with you as you help her with the process and the words.
- Show and say each step: *First, I unwind some thread from the spool and cut it with the scissors. I thread it through the needle and knot the two ends together.* Encourage her to repeat the steps.
- Show the next steps: Sticking the needle in and out of the cloth; using all of the thread; cutting the needle loose.
- Help your child finish. Offer positive remarks for each step she does all on her own.
- Clean up together. Discuss what she did by herself: *Do you remember the steps you did by yourself?*

Another idea

Repeat the task at another time. Review the steps: *Can you remember if you threaded the needle? No? Maybe you can practice that today.* Take pictures of your child working, and make a book with her. She can tell you what she did by herself at each step. You can write her words under the pictures.

Put a supply of art materials in an easy-to-reach place so your child can create art projects whenever she chooses.

Practice in getting, using, and returning materials will help your child become more responsible.



Why this is important

Growing up involves increasing levels of independence in many tasks. Although your child may initially come to you with questions, she is learning to work by herself and without interruptions. Independent use of art materials helps prepare her for responsible use of other materials.

What you do

- Begin by planning an art area with your child. A few questions to consider might be:

Can we create a storage place where she will be able to reach a small stack of paper and boxes of pens, pencils, and crayons?

During what part of the day may the art area be used freely?

Is there a trash can nearby?

Who will help to hang up the finished work?

- Set up the art area with appropriate supplies. Discuss guidelines with your child.
- Make sure you remain available if needed, but otherwise encourage her to work independently.

Another idea

Add art supplies to the art area as your child becomes more responsible with materials. You can include scissors, scrap paper, paste, and paints in addition to crayons and pencils.

Invite your child to participate in sending a letter to a relative or friend.

Your child will think about people who are far away and have a reason for wanting to learn to read and write.



Why this is important

Your child can feel connected to his extended family and friends through letter writing. As he practices reading and writing, he also learns the process of sending and receiving mail. Your child will gain a sense of confidence and connection by understanding that his family is larger than the family members he sees everyday.

What you do

- Use special family times such as birthdays, national, secular, or religious holidays, or personal achievements to help your child become aware of family members who live in other places.
- Help your child send a letter that could include a picture he draws, a photo, or a card you buy together.
- Show him how to put the card in the envelope, and allow him to attach the stamp.
- Talk about the three items that must go on the envelope before mailing: *This is the address where we want the card to be delivered. That's where Aunt Jane lives. This return address tells that you are the person sending the card. The stamp pays for all of the work that it takes to deliver the letter.*
- Explain the next steps in the process as you go together to mail the card. You might place it in your own mailbox together.
- Talk each day about where the card might be on its journey.
- Inform the recipient about the activity and ask her if she would please reply to your child.

Another idea

You can also use e-mail with your child as a way to communicate with family at a distance. Talk about the steps involved in sending and receiving e-mail.

Create a treasure hunt for things that have two characteristics, such as being round and being a container.

Your child will need to think carefully in order to classify things in more complex ways.



Why this is important

Your child will practice creating groups that are based on more than one characteristic. Playing this game gives him practice in thinking carefully and systematically about the features of various objects. As people organize information in most everyday situations, it is usually necessary for them to consider more than one aspect of an object.

What you do

- Invite your child to join you on a treasure hunt around the house. For example, say, *Let's look for some double treasures. The things we find must be red, and they must be toys.*
- Check each object he finds by reviewing the characteristics: *This is a toy, and this part is red, so it's a double treasure!*
- Talk about items your child includes but that do not fit the criteria: *That's a fun toy, but it isn't red, so it's not a double treasure. Let's keep looking until we find something that is both red and a toy.*
- At the end of the game, look over all of the objects that he collected.

Another idea

Keep the game interesting by changing the characteristics by which you choose double treasures. You might look for objects that are blue and something to wear, smooth and round, or canned and a vegetable. You can also use a book or magazine to look for pictures of double treasures.