

How Do You Walk When...?

Game 181

Ask your child if he can express some feelings such as tired or rushed in the way he walks.

Your child will use his imagination to express through words and actions his ideas about feelings



Why this is important

When you give your child the opportunity to act out what he imagines, he will learn that exploring his imagination is acceptable behavior. Through imagining we work with, or manipulate, ideas instead of objects. Later, his imagination will carry him beyond his familiar world and allow him to think about places he's never been and solutions to problems that haven't happened yet.

What you do

- Walk in a silly way past your child. When he seems curious, tell him, *I'm walking like I'm dizzy.*
- Invite him to play a walking game. Explain that you will ask him about a new way to walk, and he will answer by walking that way.
- Ask the question the same way each time: *How do you walk when you are:*
 - lost?*
 - rushed?*
 - tired?*
 - very old?*
 - very young?*
 - excited?*
- Encourage him to close his eyes, think about how he might feel, and then walk that way.

Another idea

Invite your child to imagine animals walking in various ways. For example, a lost bird, a tired elephant, an old monkey, etc.

Draw several types of lines on paper for your child to cut.

His hand and finger skills will increase as he practices using scissors, and your child will feel good about his growing abilities.



Why this is important

Your child can improve his scissor skills in a safe and acceptable way. An available supply of attractive practice sheets can keep him motivated and working to control his cutting. Careful and precise use of the muscles in his hands will be required in many school, work, and life activities.

What you do

- Prepare a series of sheets of paper with lines that help him develop direction in his cutting.
- Make thick lines on thick paper such as construction paper or cut up grocery bags.
- Start with thick, straight lines on the paper. Eventually, make thin straight lines, and then try wavy lines.
- Demonstrate for your child how to cut along the thick, straight line.
- Invite him to practice cutting on whichever lines he feels most comfortable.
- Talk about the shapes he creates and use words such as *straight*, *curve*, and *corner*.
- Show him how the cut pieces can fit together again: *It fits back together. You made a puzzle!*
- Offer lots of encouragement as he practices.

Another idea

You can continue to challenge him by adding zigzag lines, wavy lines, circles, and more.

Three-Corner Catch

Game 183

Play an easy game of toss and catch with your child and a sibling.

The children will improve their throwing skills and find that it's fun to take turns and cooperate.



Why this is important

Tossing and catching is a universal children's game in all cultures. Although your child may miss the ball repeatedly at first, he will learn cooperation and turn taking as he practices tossing and catching the ball.

What you do

- Invite your child to join you in a game of catch.
- Toss a large, lightweight ball back and forth with him a few times.
- Suggest an expanded game: *Brett, let's ask Anita if she wants to toss and catch with us.*
- Introduce the new three-person game: *There are three of us. We can play three-corner catch. Each of us will be a corner.*
- Explain the rules: *Brett will throw to Anita, Anita will throw to me, and I will throw to Brett.* You can walk through the motions to help your child understand and remember the order.
- Encourage success during the game by offering encouragement: *Brett, you threw the ball so carefully to Anita. That helped her catch it.*
- Talk about your own actions as well: *I'll step a little closer to you, Brett. It will be easier for you to catch.*

Another idea

Change the game by adding more players, using a different size ball, or increasing the space between children.

Teach your child a phrase to make a clear request, such as *Will you please help me with...?* Encourage her to use the phrase when she wants you to assist her.

This teaches your child an age-appropriate method of enlisting help from others.



Why this is important

Your child has already learned to ask for help in very basic ways. Now she is ready to practice using language that enables her clearly to tell what she needs. Knowing when and how to ask for help becomes even more important as your child's tasks become more complex.

What you do

- Choose a phrase that will be easy for your child to use when she needs help, such as: *I need your help with...* or *Will you please help me...?*
- When you need her help, use the statement or question, yourself.
- Anticipate her need and prompt her: *Would you like some help? Tell me what you need help with.*
- Be sure to respond each time she attempts to use her new phrase to make a request. Model language for her if she needs help with telling you what she wants.

Another idea

With your child, role-play times when she might ask for assistance. For example, she can pretend to need help with getting dressed, taking a bath, playing a game, or riding a bike.

Use clothes your child has outgrown to start a discussion about his past.

Your child will have a chance to think fondly about earlier times and realize how much he has grown and learned.



Why this is important

Your child's old clothes or toys can serve as memory aids. Together you and your child can talk about his past. Each of us knows we have grown and changed when we compare the present to the past. Since children's early memories aren't usually strong, they need help in recognizing the tremendous growth they are undergoing.

What you do

- Begin by sharing your child's old clothes with him: *Let's look in this suitcase. I've kept some of your clothes in here that you've outgrown.*
- Spread the clothes out and together decide which are from the earliest time and which are more recent.
- Discuss each age the clothes represent: *See how the knees are worn in these overalls? You were crawling when you wore them.*
- Conclude with positive comments about his growth: *You've grown so much. I like the age you are now because we can do so many interesting things.*

Another idea

Use photos, toys, or artwork as another way to talk about his past.

Together make one or two rules that grant your child new privileges and establish a few limits.

By making and following rules, your child will begin to learn that independence is based on responsibility.



Why this is important

Your child can participate in making a few rules that enable her to be more independent. She will begin to think about what everyone needs in order to be independent. As she grows, she will decide on her own personal guidelines, such as how late to stay up before going to bed.

What you do

- Begin by letting your child know that new rules will allow her to do a few tasks on her own.
- Choose a task, such as going outside alone, and talk about what rules would make that option appropriate.
- Ask your child questions that help her think about acting responsibly and safely. For example: Can she tell you before she goes out? Can she play in a space near the house? Can you stay near the window to watch her play? If it is not safe for your child to play outside alone, choose another task, such as answering the telephone. Can she say *hello* and listen to learn who is calling?
- Discuss the possibilities and then establish a rule. It should clearly state the conditions under which the activity can take place.
- Use the rule a few times and then address any problems that arise. Change the rule as needed so that it benefits you and your child.
- Tell her you are proud of her responsible behavior.

Another idea

Many situations can work for this activity such as when and how she can prepare a snack for herself, make her bed when she wakes up, or put her dirty clothes into a laundry hamper.

Offer your child simple recipe cards so he can tell you or someone in your family how to prepare food.

Your child's confidence will grow as he shows that he can follow the recipe cards and give directions.



Why this is important

Following a recipe gives your child practice with a sequence of directions. Learning to take a more directive and responsible role can lead to new kinds of partnerships. Changing one's role in a familiar situation is a first step for taking on the risk of a new role in a new situation. Studying the pictures and text on cards gives practice in early literacy.

What you do

- Build on the activity from *LearningGames* 167, "First, Next, Last," of making a simple recipe together by letting him direct the action the next time you make it.
- Explain that he will be the one who directs this activity.
- Offer your child the cards that were made for the previous recipe activity.
- Prepare the hot water and then ask for the next step: *Now, what do I do first? What did you and Daddy do first when you made the gelatin dessert? Do the cards tell you?*
- Help him, if needed, by reviewing the drawings: *What do I need to put the dessert in?*
- Ask for each step as you move through the activity. Review all the steps after the recipe is made.
- Talk about how much help he provided: *I'm so happy you're getting big enough to help by telling me what comes next. It's fun to have you as my partner.*
- Try the game again at a later time, and notice how much he can do from memory without relying on the cards.

Another idea

Think of other activities that could be carried out using cards, such as making a peanut butter sandwich or folding paper to make a greeting card. Each activity should have no more than three steps until your child becomes skilled at following directions.

Color and Number Cards

Game 188

Let your child and a sibling follow directions that contain color and number words and sometimes have more than one step.

Your child will have more experiences with precise directions, like these, in school and in life.



Why this is important

By now, your 4-year-old child recognizes most color words and some number words and probably uses some of them in daily conversation. However, he will need practice to understand these words when they are included in a set of school-like directions. Practice in quickly identifying numbers and letters on paper prepares your child to later learn to read.

What you do

- Invite your child and a sibling to play a game with you. Tell the children they will need to listen carefully and remember their colors and numbers.
- Give each child a set of small cards to spread out on the table. Each card should have a color or number printed on it. Start with just three colors and the numbers one through five.
- Ask questions that encourage them to recognize colors and numbers. A few examples are:

Put your finger on the number two.

Pick up the red card.

Put one, two, and three in a row.

Hand me two colors.

Can you touch red? Three? Blue? One?

- Offer enthusiastic encouragement during the game: *Good listening! You followed all three parts of that direction!*

Another idea

Change the game by adding more colors and numbers. You can also add letter cards to make the game more challenging.

Choose quiet times to ask your child questions that encourage her to use her imagination.

This gives your child the opportunity to think creatively by freely choosing and combining ideas in interesting ways.



Why this is important

Playing this pretend game with your child encourages her to imagine something without any props. Imagining is a way of experiencing something without physical participation. This is a creative way of thinking.

What you do

- Hold your child her on your lap and rock her, or just be close to her as you do during other quiet times.
- Recall a character or situation from a story that you recently read together.
- Ask questions that encourage your child to extend the story: *How did the bear feel when he was on the ice floe? If you had been there, how would you have felt?*
- Offer her an imaginary scenario for her to think about: *If you were going to visit Red Fox, what would you pack in your bag? If you had an invitation to a dinosaur's birthday, what present would you take?*
- Use her experiences to guide your questions. Consider meaningful books, television shows, or recent events that could help her have ideas.

Another idea

Write down her imaginative stories so that you can enjoy them together later.

Wondering What Caused It

Game 190

Ask your child questions about the world around him that will lead him to think about why things happen.

As your child begins to link cause and effect, he will think about explanations for changes that he sees.



Why this is important

Your questions can guide your child to think about cause and effect. Asking questions can encourage him to look at ordinary events more closely. The problems we attempt to solve get harder as we grow, but the method of thinking back to what happened before continues to be an effective way to try to understand and solve them.

What you do

- Observe your child's curiosity about events in his day. Almost any daily occurrence can be used for this game. A few examples are water freezing, a broken toy, and leaves falling from the trees.
- Guide him in wondering about cause and effect. Start by saying, *We're going to do some detective work to find out what caused that!*
- Ask questions that help him recount what just happened: *Now let's see. You were painting with two jars of color. What were the colors? Yes, that's right. Red and yellow. Now you have orange paint in the middle. Where do you think it came from?*
- Offer a different idea if his explanation is inaccurate. Do not correct his theory, but simply offer another view.
- Encourage any effort to figure out the cause of the mystery. Your child should feel comfortable exploring all possibilities that he thinks of.

Another idea

Encourage your child to be a detective in discovering what caused something to happen. Give him a notebook, a pencil, and a magnifying glass to use in his investigation.