

ACTIVITIES THAT HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

ACTIVITY 1: THE FUNNY SENTENCE GAME!

This game can be played by two or more players. Make a few cards containing very simple, two-word sentences, such as “Jake dreams” or “Airplanes fly”. Your kids could help you with this. The first player picks a random card and adds a word to it to make it a three-word sentence: “Airplanes fly high”. The next player takes the card and adds another word to it. Example: “Big airplanes fly high.” The game proceeds until somebody forgets and duplicates an already written word.

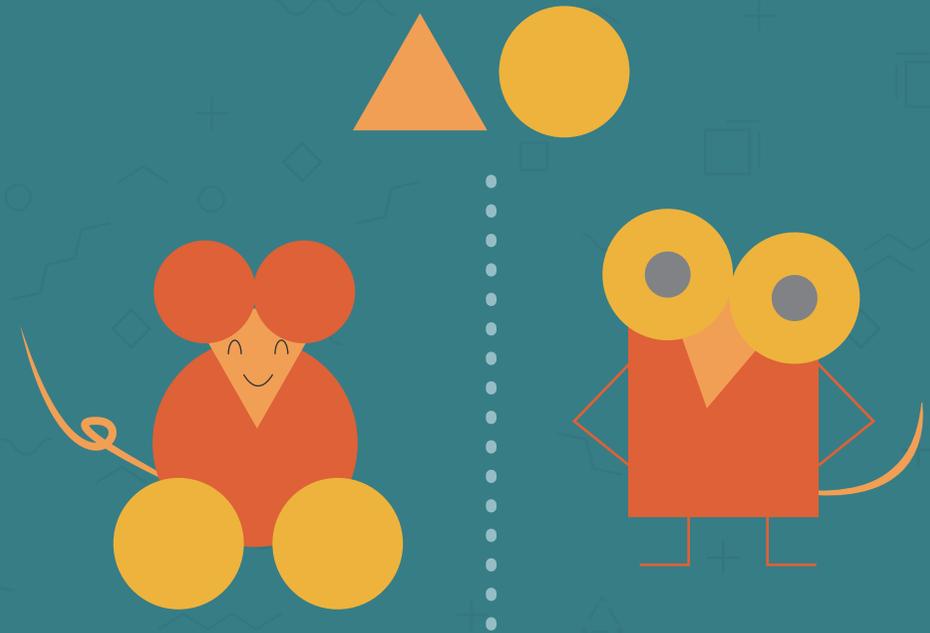


With this game, you practice auditory memory, staying focused, and working memory.



ACTIVITY 2: DRAWING!

This game helps with attention, formulating and following instructions, and graphic motor skills.



For this game you just need paper and pencils. It can be played by two players. One of the players draws a few shapes on the paper in whatever order. After the first player (you as a parent, or your student) finishes drawing, they have to describe what they've drawn to the second player, so that that person has enough information to draw an identical picture. The second player listens carefully and then starts drawing. The goal is to duplicate the original drawing as closely as possible. If you feel the task might be too difficult, the listener can ask two follow-up questions after the description is completed.

ACTIVITY 3: BUILD THE TALLEST TOWER!

This game is designed to help inspire your students to think outside the box when solving problems. Pick out any resources you have at hand – spaghetti, duct tape, marshmallows, pens, boxes... Keep the number of resources to 10. The purpose of the game is to build the tallest tower you can in 10 minutes. You can make it a family competition if you like. The idea is to give kids a task where they need to take all of the available resources into consideration, figure out what they want to do, and then build the tower.

This exercise helps students be more cognitively flexible in approaching new challenges!



ACTIVITY 4: STORYTELLING

There's a lot of material you could use for this activity - a movie you just watched, a game you just played, an event you just went to... Literally anything is the material for practicing storytelling. A good way to begin is to print out cards with suggestions to help everyone formulate a sequence for their stories.

1. WHO? 2. WHAT? 3. WHEN? 4. WHERE? 5. WHY?

Help the kids adapt these questions to the story they want to tell. If they're talking about Halloween, the questions could be reformulated like this:

1. When was Halloween?
2. What were you doing on Halloween?
3. Who did you spend Halloween with?
4. Where did you go on Halloween?
5. Why did you pick out that costume?

These questions, presented on cards, help kids navigate their way through telling a story (and writing essays, if you want to use them for that as well.)

This activity helps with staying focused on a topic, formulating thoughts, and sequencing.



ACTIVITY 5:

MAKE YOUR OWN BOARD GAME!

This is a project you could do together.

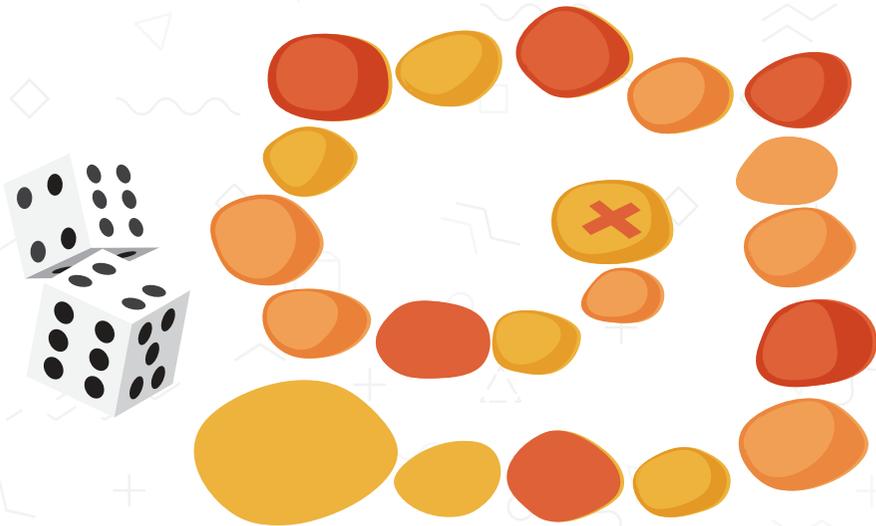
Your student must have had numerous chances to play board games.

They might be familiar with Life or Monopoly.

How about helping them create their own game?

What would the game be about? How many players can play the game? What does it mean to win it?

These are just some of the questions you can ask to inspire them to think creatively. To complete their board game, they would need to invest their time and energy.



They will be practicing focus, creative thinking, and formulating instructions.



Executive function does not just start developing in school. It develops throughout our lives.

So, if you want to work on executive functioning, it's a good idea to consider activities such as these that are, at first sight, not related to what a student is doing in school.

However, bear in mind that the same cognitive processes that help us put together a puzzle, help us solve a Math problem.

Believe it or not!

Welcome mistakes and new ideas! And use these activities to wake up the kid in yourself as well.

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