

Short Term Memory Games

On our 100th post, I asked readers if there were any questions they needed answered or tips they were looking for related to children, learning and teaching. One reader requested, *“One thing I would be interested in are games or activities for early primary school aged children that help improve short memory. Thanks PQ.”*

I have gathered together four game ideas (plus a few extra tips) for developing short-term memory skills, all suitable for the early primary years.

CONCENTRATION

A deck of children's matching picture cards easily becomes the classic favourite game of Concentration.

To play

Firstly, ensure your set of cards contains all matching pairs.

Shuffle and spread all cards out on a flat surface, face down.

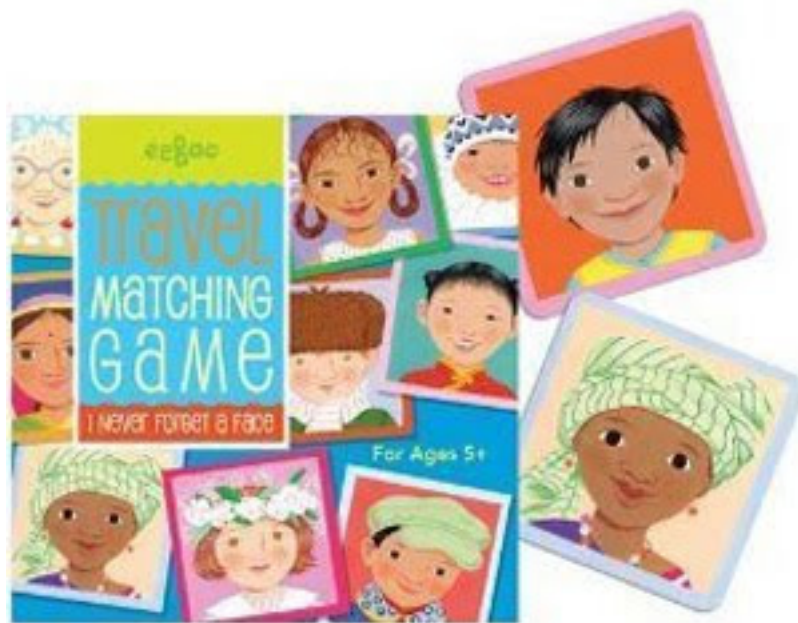
Players take it in turns to choose any two cards. Make a successful match and you get to take another turn. No match, the cards are turned back over.

Success in Concentration relies upon children remembering where they have seen each picture in previous turns.

The winner is the person who has matched the most pairs.

Variation

You can also play Concentration by mixing up and placing facedown the pieces to simple matching 2-piece puzzles, encouraging your child to find the two pieces that make up one puzzle. In the picture below, Immy is playing with a vehicle puzzle set. All eight pieces were placed facedown (4 complete vehicles) and she has found and is matching the two airplane pieces.



Travel Matching Game – I Never Forget a Face

BINGO

Similar to Concentration but instead of matching pairs, players take turns to select a card to match to a baseboard.

To play

Each player selects a base board. The matching cards are shuffled and spread out on a flat surface, face down.

Players take it in turns to select a card. If the card matches an image on the players board they have made a match and get to take another turn. No match, the card is placed back down.

The winner is the first person to match all of the images on their base board.



Thomas & Friends Station Stop Matching Game

WHAT'S MISSING?

To play

Place a number of household items onto a tray (the more items, the more challenging the game so for younger children start with just 3-4 items to begin with).

Tell your child to have a close look at the items on the

tray. Name them together (the more you discuss the items, the more likely your child is to remember them, so you could ask them what colour or shape each item is or what it is used for).

Cover the items with a tea towel. Ask your child to close their eyes and as they do so remove one item from under the cloth.

Ask them to open their eyes, remove the cloth and tell you What's Missing!

Variations

For older children, use more items and allow them to look at them for a full minute. Then cover them up and ask them to write a list or draw as many of the items that they can remember.

I WENT SHOPPING...

The aim of the game is to remember as many items players purchased at the shops as possible!

To play

The first player starts the game by saying, "I went shopping and bought a _____," identifying an item they would buy.

The second player continues, "I went shopping and bought a (names the first player's item) and a _____ (adding a new item to the list)."

Players continue taking turns to remember the items purchased in order as the list gets longer and longer.

Variations

This game can be adapted to many different scenarios, for example, "I went on holidays and packed..." or "I went to school and took ..."

You can also adapt the game for children familiar with letters of the alphabet by requiring players in turn to name an item that begins with each letter of the alphabet. Player 1=A, player 2=B, player 3=C, etc.

AIDING MEMORY

Children in kindergarten and the early years of primary school are often learning new, abstract concepts that require them to move and store information from their short term to long term memories. Learning to name and identify letters, numerals, phonic blends or sight words (when beginning reading) are four examples. For young children it can be extremely helpful to provide them with experiences that provide them with the opportunity to rehearse this information in fun, engaging ways (especially sensory or tactile experiences). These can include;

- Writing the letters or numbers in sand
- Forming the letters or numbers with playdough, pasta or wool
- Painting the letters, numbers or words
- Painting the letters, numbers or words outside with water
- Decorate the letters numbers or words by gluing on sequins and sparkles
- Making the words with letter tiles from Scrabble
- Jump, clap or stomp as you count or recite the words
- Print the letters, words or numbers onto index cards (two for each) and play Concentration

These types of experiences are particularly important for children who learn by doing rather than listening or observing as they are hands-on and physically involve them in the process of acquiring knowledge.