

Say What Just Happened

Yes, you copied what I did. Now can you tell me in words?



Ask your child to watch you perform an action such as touching your shoulders or hopping on one foot. Then encourage him to talk about what you just did.

Your child will learn to observe carefully and begin to use words to describe what he recently saw.

Watch what I'm going to do.





Why this is important

You are giving your child a chance to use his growing vocabulary to report events accurately. His narrative skills will improve as he practices describing an action in detail. Describing what he sees helps him remember the event and enables him to communicate what he knows to others. It prepares your child to be able to follow and understand a sequence of events in written material.

What you do

- Draw your child's attention to something you're doing. Then, after you have stopped doing it, ask, *What did I do?*
- Notice how his first response may be to imitate the action. It may take a number of trials before he understands that you are asking for a clear description rather than action.
- Respond to any short answer he offers: *Yes, I did jump. Now watch again. Can you see more?*
- Repeat the action and the question: *What did I do?* He may add to the description: *You hopped on one foot.*
- Keep your responses positive so that your child stays motivated during the game.
- Try combining two actions and asking your child to describe them.

Another Idea

Help him get ready for paying attention in school by using classroom materials in the game. Make an X on a sheet of paper and then fold the paper in half. Ask your child to recall the action. Repeat the motion until he can fully describe what you did.

Let's read together!

Hondo and Fabian
by Peter McCarty

Changing Things

What happened to the water when we put it in the freezer?

Fill an ice cube tray with water, freeze it, and talk about the changes with your child.

You can encourage your child's curiosity in changes that occur around her every day.





Why this is important

Freezing ice cubes with your child helps her become aware that objects can change and then return to their original state. Recognizing change is an important aspect of reasoning. Creating a change and then reversing it is one type of mathematical check.

What you do

- Begin by pointing out and naming *ice* and *water* to your child.
- Invite her to fill an empty ice cube tray with water. Ask her to add a raisin to each section of the tray. This will help her identify the water when it changes state.
- Put the tray in the freezer. Come back to the freezer after a nap, play, or errand.
- Remove the tray from the freezer and ask, *Where's our water? This doesn't look like water. What's this cold, cold stuff?*
- Talk with your child about the raisins frozen in the ice, using the words *change* and *same*.
- Add the ice cubes to a bowl of water, and encourage her to stir the water. Observe with her as the ice returns to water, and talk about the change.
- Limit your explanation of why the water changes. Your child will probably lose interest in a very scientific explanation.

Another idea

Try the game using a balloon. Ask your child what she thinks the balloon will look like after you blow it up. Other changeable objects that will work are open book/closed book, leaves scattered/leaves raked, and paper flat/paper formed into a tube.

Let's read together!

Rain
by Manya Stojic

Remembering Pictures

1. Look at the single picture.
2. Put it away.
3. Find it on the big page.



You found the one you saw earlier.

Show your child a cutout picture, put it away, and then encourage him to find it again on a page of pictures.

Your child's memory will expand as he increases his ability to recall what he has seen.





Why this is important

You can help with memory development by having your child look for a picture he has seen before. Systematic searching makes the task easier. The ability to recall visual memories of letter forms and symbols is especially important for reading, writing, and using computers.

What you do

- Find two identical copies of a catalog. Cut out pictures of a variety of items from one catalog such as a purse, lawn mower, and table.
- Mark the pages of the other catalog that feature the items you cut out.
- Sit on the floor with your child and give him one cutout to hold.
- Explain, *Here's something to take a good look at.*
- Put the picture out of sight when he gives it back to you.
- Open the uncut catalog to the page that contains the picture he just saw. Ask, *Can you point to the one you just saw?* If he cannot find it, close the catalog and show him the cutout again. Then return to the catalog.
- Congratulate him when he finds the picture, even if he needed help.

Ready to move on?

Make the game harder by showing him several cutouts at once, then put them all away, and have him find the pictures on different pages.

Let's read together!

There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly
by Simms Taback

Copy Each Other

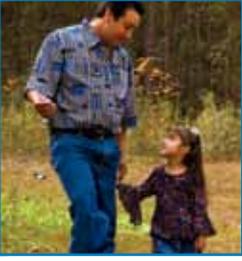
*I can, you
can, march.*

*March, march,
march!*



Play an imitation game with your child, saying your actions as you do them.

Your child will have an opportunity to say words that help her lead or follow.



Why this is important

Children like to try new ways to move, and they like to do what you do. You can make it fun to practice the following and leading skills that grow into cooperation. Knowing the names for her actions allows her to better explain what is happening. When she can describe what she is doing, she can take the leader's role in many games.

What you do

- Perform an action as you say or sing a verse.

I can, you can.

Hop, hop, hop.

- Use motions you have noticed your child learning, such as: hopping on one foot, skipping a step, jumping with both feet, etc.
- Use a single word to describe each action so that she can easily repeat the word. Try *nod, tap, clap, jump, bend, or march*. She will interpret the word by watching your actions.
- Change the game by inviting her to lead and choose the action.

Another idea

Encourage your child to play this game with a small group of friends. Everyone has a turn as the leader, and each child chooses the motion when she leads.

Let's read together!

Elizabeth's Doll
by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen

Saying All I See

*Two people
are riding in
that red car.*



Yes!

Invite your child to describe what she sees in a detailed picture.

This game gives her practice using her growing vocabulary.



Why this is important

Reporting is one of the basic ways language is used. Although your child will likely identify people and objects first, eventually she will include actions and details.

Reporting visible information correctly is a step toward some of the more difficult forms of thinking such as reasoning or evaluating.

What you do

- Find an interesting page in a magazine or children's book. The page should have a detailed picture or several pictures so that your child will find plenty to talk about.
- Ask your child to describe what is on the page. Give her time to look and think before answering.
- Listen for names of objects, descriptions of actions, and words that tell about details such as size and shape.
- Encourage your child to explore the picture further by asking simple questions such as: *What size is the gorilla? How many apples are there? Is there something outside the window? What's the little boy doing? Could you tell me more about the things at the bottom of the page?*

Ready to move on?

Change the game by finding pictures with increasing amounts of detail. Your child should find and label more objects and actions as she develops her vocabulary and attention to detail.

Let's read together!

The Wide Mouthed Frog
by Keith Faulkner

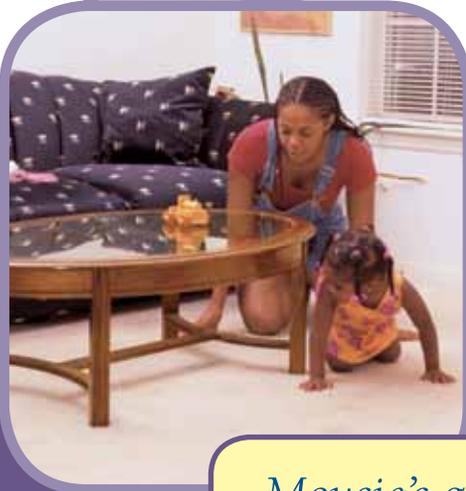
Remembering Things and Places



Watch where we put each thing.

Show your child two or three toys placed around the room, and then reposition them as she closes her eyes so that she can guess what changed in the room.

Your child will learn to organize her memory as she practices linking places and objects.



Mousie's gone!



Why this is important

We all need to remember where we put things so we can find them later. Memory is one of the tools we use in solving both simple and complex problems. Your child will learn to first link pairs of objects and places and then call them back from her memory.

What you do

- Put two or three familiar objects on the table and invite your child to name them.
- Ask her to look away, and then remove one of the objects. When she looks again, encourage her to tell you what is missing from the group.
- Move on to a more complex version of the game by asking her to help you find and name two common household objects, such as a ball and cup, or a toy truck and toy mouse.
- Put each item in a particular place, and say, *Let's put the truck right here on this table. Where shall we put the mouse? How about under the table!*
- Ask your child to review where each object is before closing her eyes or leaving the room while you change something.
- Remove one item and ask your child to return.
- Wait for her to discover what happened and tell it in her own way. She may say something like: *Mousie's not under the table anymore.* Give her positive feedback.

Ready to move on?

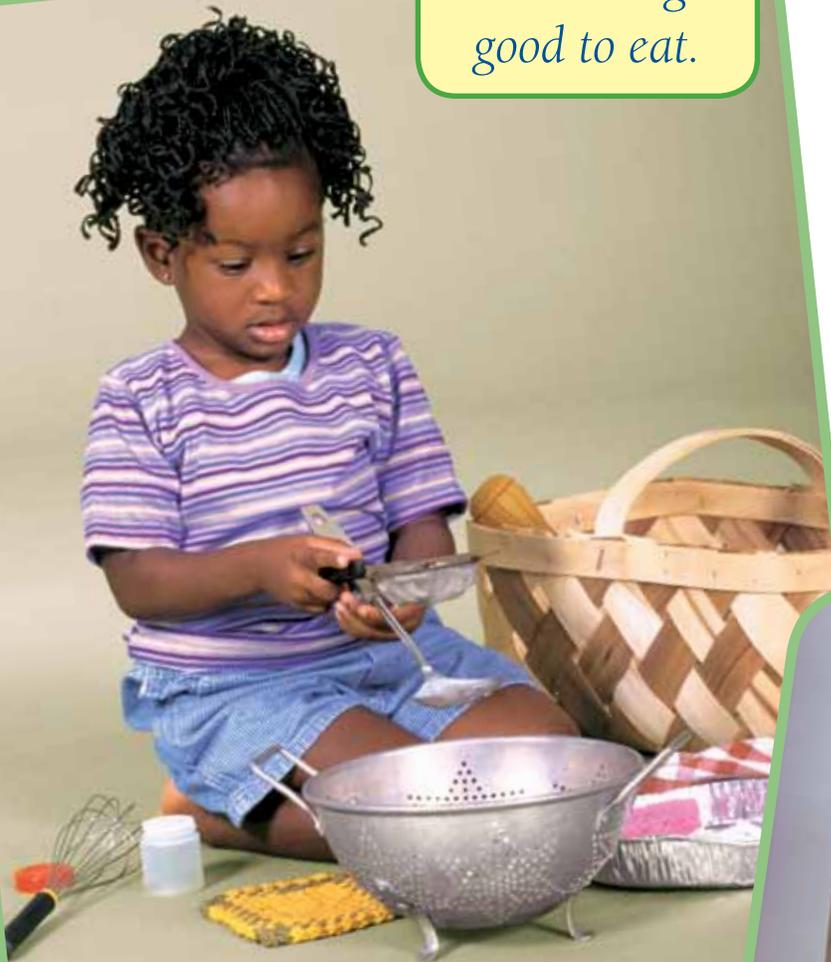
Slowly increase the difficulty of the game by adding one or two more items or by removing more than one item.

Let's read together!

Where Are You, Blue Kangaroo?
by Emma Chichester Clark

Props for Pretending

I'll cook something good to eat.



Chef

Stock a box with supplies that encourage your child to imagine herself in different roles.

Your child's thinking may expand as she dresses up to play various parts.



Doctor/Nurse



Why this is important

You can encourage your child to use pretending as a way of trying out situations she has not yet experienced. Pretending with props lets her practice future situations and make decisions as well as expand her creativity.

What you do

- Help your child collect and store the props she needs to play different roles. If possible, keep a separate box for each set of props.
- Store the boxes where she can get them out easily on her own.
- Try a few of these examples to get started:

A box with...

Dolls, cloths, baby bottle
Aprons, pans, spoons
Book bag, notepad, keys
Tools, measuring tape, safety goggles
Bandages, blanket, toy thermometer

To be a...

parent
cook
office worker
builder
doctor or nurse

- Limit the contents of each box so that your child is not overwhelmed.
- Add to or change the items in the box as you find more appropriate props.
- Help your child get started by asking: *Can you think of a person who would use these pans and spoons?*

Another idea

At cleanup time, ask your child to help put each item back in the appropriate box. She will need to think about what each object is used for in order to determine where it belongs.

Let's read together!

What Do People Do All Day?
by Richard Scarry

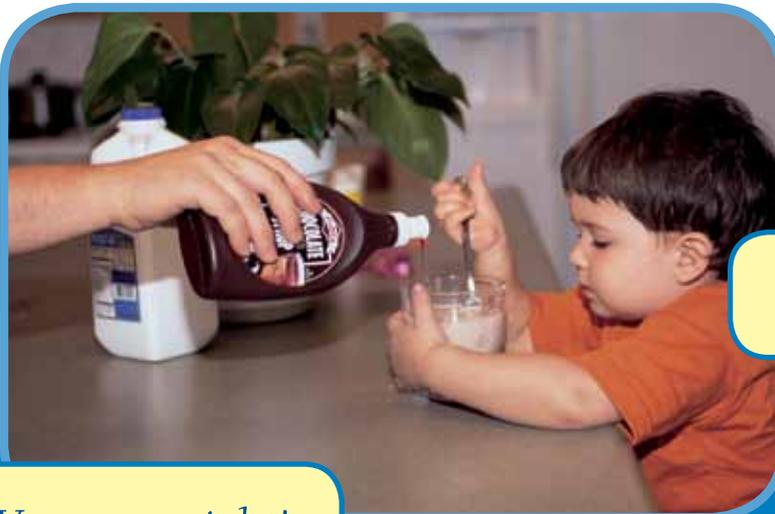
What Will Happen Next?



What will happen when I pour the syrup?

In the middle of a process, pause and ask your child, *What do you think will happen next?*

You will be giving your child a reason to purposely think ahead and to look for connections between events.



Chocolate milk.

You were right!



Why this is important

Thinking ahead about changes is a necessary step in scientific experimentation. Your child will learn to experiment with objects to determine if his predictions are correct. Predicting is an essential skill in adapting specific knowledge to your own needs. For example, a hammer that can drive nails can be predicted to also crack nutshells.

What you do

- Show your child a small empty box. Turn it over in your hand, and shake it for your child to see: *This is a quiet box. It doesn't make any noise when I shake it.* Hand it to your child to shake.
- Drop a marble into the box, and before shaking it say, *If I shake this box, what will happen next?*
- Wait for him to find words for what he believes will happen. After he makes his prediction, shake the box.
- Review the prediction with your child: *You thought it would make noise. And you were right!*
- Respond to an incorrect prediction after shaking the box by giving him a chance to make a second prediction.
- Describe what actually happened, rather than commenting negatively on the inaccurate predictions, if none of his predictions are accurate. *Putting something in the box makes it rattle when we shake it.*

Another idea

Think of other activities that your child can make predictions about: stirring chocolate into milk, sitting on a balloon, lowering an orange into a full cup of water, etc.

Let's read together!

If You Give a Pig a Pancake
by Laura Numeroff

Letters in My Name

Yes, and you traced it with your finger.

Teach your child the letters in his name by first saying them, then pointing them out in print, and finally tracing the shape of each letter with him.

Your child will eventually remember the letters and begin to understand that letters make words.

J.





Why this is important

The letters of your child's name provide a good beginning for learning letters. Your child will become aware of letters as symbols and recognize the sound and sight of the letters in his name. Learning to recognize the letters of his written name is part of early literacy.

What you do

- Make a point of saying and spelling your child's name together by saying: *Joey, J-O-E-Y. Can you come here, please?* He will begin to associate the letters with his name.
- Try getting his attention using only the letters once he becomes familiar with them. The next step will be helping him learn to recognize the letters.
- Point out one letter at a time until he can recognize all the letters of his name. Cereal boxes, magazines, signboards, toys, and labels provide good sources of big, colorful letters.
- Trace the letter with your finger when you see it and encourage your child to do the same.
- Use his knowledge of circles and lines when you're acquainting him with the letter: *An O is a circle. An E is four straight lines. A J is curved at the bottom.*
- Encourage him to remember any associations he makes, such as a *J* resembles a candy cane.

Another idea

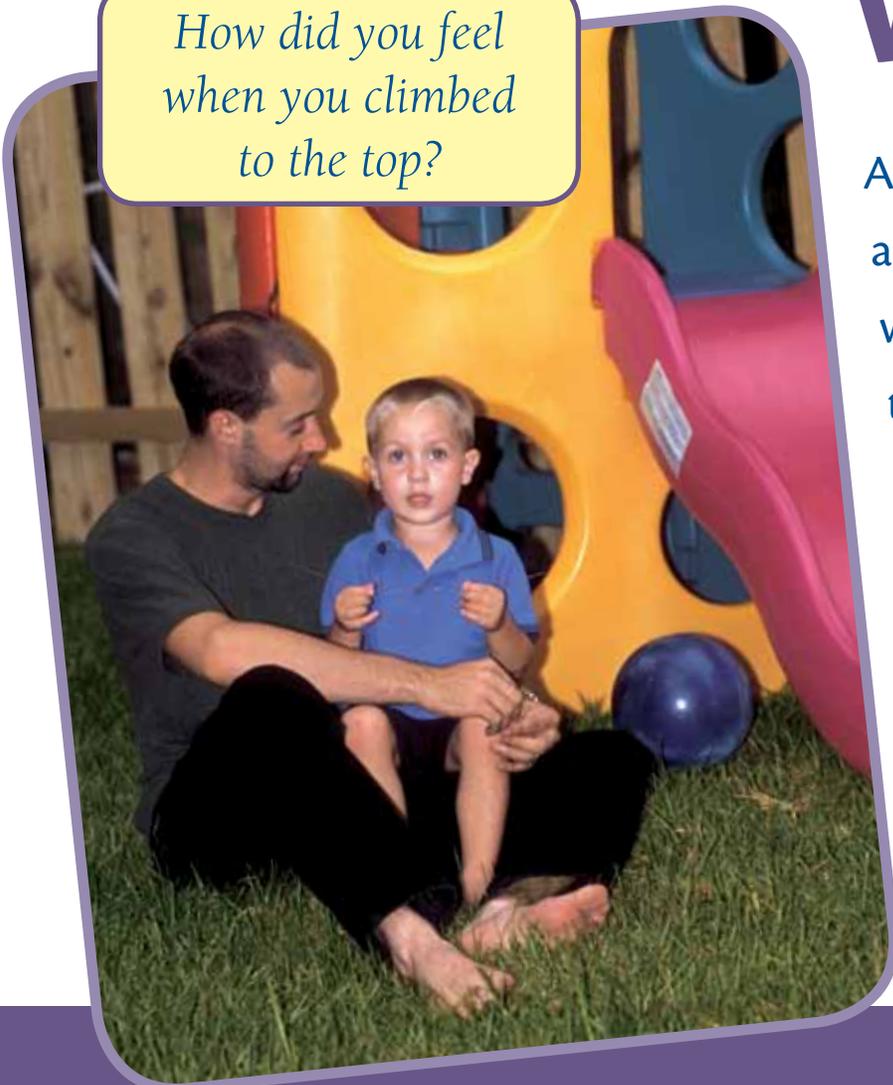
Use consistent language when he learns to write his letters. The same descriptions will help him remember the shape of each letter in his name. If his interest continues, help him recognize additional letters beyond those in his name.

Let's read together!

Matthew A.B.C.
by Peter Catalanotto

How Did You Feel When ...?

*How did you feel
when you climbed
to the top?*



After a game of physical activity, share a quiet moment with your child as you both think back on and talk about your feelings during the game.

Recalling feelings right after they have happened will help your child learn how to explain himself to others.



Why this is important

You can ask questions in a way that will help your child recall and tell about how he was feeling during an active play experience. When he hears the question immediately after the experience, he can put together the recent actions with the feelings he had at that time. Understanding his feelings helps him to make decisions about trying an activity again. The remembrance of a sensory feeling helps to recall the word for it.

What you do

- Sit quietly with your child after an active session of exciting play such as riding a bike or playing ball. Ask, *Can you tell me what was the hardest thing you just did?*
- Wait as your child recalls the experience. Respond to his answer by repeating it back to him and adding a question: *Pushing your feet was hard. But you did it anyway, didn't you?*
- Suggest a few choices if he cannot remember: *Was it steering? Was it catching the ball in time?*
- Ask him other questions to help him remember the feel of the experience: *What felt the easiest? The scariest? The best?* Give him choices and ideas if needed.

Another idea

As he becomes comfortable with this activity, wait longer before asking him to recall. Do you remember how it felt when the ball was coming to you?

Let's read together!

Feelings: A First Poem Book About Feelings
by Felicia Law