

## Playing Pairs Games with your child

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A simple set of materials with multiple applications! These ideas are not in a definite order although some are obviously easier than others. Don't work on too many games at once. Get one established, leave a few days and then try a different one. And remember – learning theory says we have to revise things at very close intervals to start with to establish solid learning. Gradually increase the intervals. NB Start simply; aim for 100% success; keep sessions short; give lots of praise.

- **ATTENTION** Game chosen must match the child's attention span. If mouthing and throwing are still behaviours which occur, keep things very simple - the game might just involve showing 3-5 cards and you say **look!** - **car** (or whatever) in a bright, medium-loud voice. Then put them away for another day.
- **SENSORY OVERLOAD** A few children are overloaded by too much coming in and can't tolerate a lot all at once - keep to a minimum the amount of stimulation: not too many cards on view at once, not too much verbal comment, a plain tabletop and few distractions around. If you are using signing, simple signs can be done with one hand as you hold up the picture to face the child: then picture and sign are both visible.

**After the above are taken into consideration, build up your repertoire of games and gradually increase the length and complexity.**

### 1. **VISUAL PICTURE MATCHING**

Once you have the child interested in the cards, select a few pairs and demonstrate pairing them up. Put down one of each pair, not too close together. Take one of the others and show how you 'compare' it to the ones you have down. Say *no...no...YES!* Sound very pleased when you have a match. For 100% success, start by giving the last card of your little set to the child so there is only one place left for it to go. Gradually increase this choice. The next day you might use two of the previous pairs and one new pair.

### 2. **VERBAL COMPREHENSION : PICTURE PAIRS**

Put down 2 or 3 cards in front of him – a little apart from each other. You hold your matching cards (out of sight), pick one and say e.g. **find the car** See if he finds the right one. If he does, show your card and give lots of praise for the match. If not, show your card and say it again. Repeat with a small selection until the word is enough for him to find the right one. If the going is hard give clues like eye-pointing to the correct choice. Keep working with 2 cards only until he is confident.

### 3. **LOOK & RECALL**

Put out his cards (2 or 3 to start with) and cover them with a sheet of paper. Show one of yours (+- say the name of it) and then hide it. Uncover his and see if can remember. Bring out yours to compare and give lots of praise if he's right - or another go if wrong.

**4. WHERE DID I PUT IT?**

Put out 2 (and then more) of his - perhaps one at each side of the table. Say **look! - car**, and then turn it over and say **gone**. Do this for each card. Then show one of yours and say **where's your car?** You can also put 3 in a line left-right (for the child) and do the same. If he finds 2 of the 3 correctly, you could ask **what's this one?** before you show the last card and see if he can answer.

**5. REMEMBER 2**

Make a line of 4 in front of him, and choose 2 of yours to match which you put face down. Hold out one hand as you say **I want ... car** (and open your other hand) **and cat**. If you can manage it, always make hand 1 on the child's left so he works left- right. The task is to remember in order, and not to start before you name the second card. Children nearly always recall the last-named thing so emphasise you want the first hand picture first by not taking the other one. (You can open the first hand to show you want the one you named with that hand, wait for the picture, and then hold your other hand out for the second card.) Obviously give lots of encouragement and repeat **car and cat** if necessary. Show your own cards to prove if he was right or not. **Uhoh** or **oops!** points up an error without being too negative!

**6. PICTURE TO OBJECT MATCHING**

Find a few things around the house which match your pictures and play finding the object from a box to match the picture you hold up - or hold up and then hide.

**7. FEELIE MATCHING**

When you have established Game 6 put the objects in a cloth bag with an elasticated top (so no peeking!) and target finding-by-feel to match the card (and/or name). Start with 2 extremely different objects first e.g. ball and pencil, or spoon and teddy. Work up to finer discrimination e.g. spoon and fork. If necessary start with only 1 object in the bag - or help him find the things with the child's hand inside and you feeling the outside of the bag. Always strive to get 100% success to start with!

**8. FIGURE-GROUND PERCEPTION**

On a plain table most cards stand out well. If you put his pair cards around the room you can vary how easy it is to see them by choosing different backgrounds. An orange card shows up well against a white wall but against an orange carpet it would be harder to spot. Again give clues like finger or eye pointing until the game is well- established.

**9. PART-WHOLE RECOGNITION**

The eye tends to complete a picture or shape so we recognise things even if we only see a little bit. But this skill is one we learn and improve at. If you show your picture emerging very slowly from behind a plain book, how soon can he recognise it and find the matching card? Make the picture come out from different edges of the book so he sees a different bit first.

**10. SPEECH GAMES**

You can post cards he can name and elicit phrases like **bye-bye car**. Or make toys play the matching game so teddy might have the **car** and dolly might have the **cat**. Then you can talk about what they have by modelling one sentence.

E.g. Adult      **teddy's got the car**      look or point at dolly and then the child.

If no response start to feed in

**dolly's ...**

Child **got cat**

Adult **good – dolly's got the cat** be careful not to change the normal rhythm - just feed back the full sentence.

Adult **here you are teddy - another car** (give matching card) Child

**here y'are dolly**

Adult **good - another cat** Adult

**teddy's got two cars** Child

**two cats**

**Adult good – dolly's got two cats**

Of course the child may not come back with any of the intended phrases – don't worry, just fill in yourself and try again another day; it is probably not wise to demand word-for-word echoing but you can occasionally invite some copying e.g. **can you say it? two cats** Accept any quality of pronunciation to start with. It is very discouraging and confusing if the child makes an effort and you then say that wasn't quite right (because he said *tar/car*).

#### 11. CLOZE (SENTENCE COMPLETION)

Use 1 set of cards and put out just a few. See if the child can choose the right one if you say e.g.

**I'm going to drive my ...** (fill in **car** yourself if he doesn't respond)

**I need a drink. Where's my ...** and so on. If necessary give extra help to start with by cutting down the number of cards, miming what you are talking about etc.

#### 12. COMPREHENSION FOR DESCRIPTION

Similar to Game 11. You can hold your card and give clues like **this is something you drive** and see if he can pick out the car.

#### 13. SCRAPBOOK

When your child can name some of the cards, you can look for other pictures of the same item in magazines etc. and have a sorting game. Have perhaps 3 cards and a pile of pictures and he can sort **all the cars here... all the cats here**. Then you can have a sticking game putting them in a scrapbook. This will provide material for counting, talking about the differences (**can you find the yellow car/ where's the cat sleeping**), using words like **big/baby/blue/full/wet** etc. (whatever fits the pictures you have found). If you or friends have anything in the house that comes from a catalogue (e.g. Argos, Habitat or IKEA) you may be able to elicit **Mary's chair/ Daddy's clock** because the child knows who owns the pictured item.

#### 14. STORY

Much later on you may be able to use your cards to make a story. As you take one off the pile you use the word. So your child can join in, you could do the links at first. Turn over a card (e.g. **car**) and say

**One day Mum went out in the ...**(look at child for **car**) Turn over next card (**cat**) and say

On the fence she saw a nice white ... etc.