

Games to Support Executive Function Skills

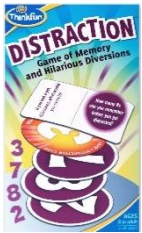
While there are an ample number of apps and computer programs aimed at improving and supporting executive function skills, board games are a great way to “unplug” our children and work on a variety of skills. Board games require children to engage with others using social and communication skills. They also require children to follow the directions of the game, take turns, plan, problem solve, prioritize, and emotionally cope with different situations and scenarios that arise through the course of the game.



Max: with this board game, players have to work together to save the bird, mouse and chipmunk from Max, the tomcat. A roll of the dice equals different moves and determines how the animals move on in the game. Some rolls involve the players having to decide together how to split up the moves. The players also have to determine how and when to use the four allowed “cat treats” that move Max back to start. This game requires cooperation, compromise, planning, strategy, and flexible thinking as players have to deal with whatever situation a roll of the dice throws their way.



Blokus: blokus reminds many of the video game or app, Tetris. Blokus requires players to use block pieces in an effort to get as many of their pieces on the board as possible. It has specific rules regarding where pieces can and cannot touch requiring spatial thinking, planning and planning ahead, focused attention, and prioritization regarding what pieces a player should play first in order to get as many blocks on the board as possible. It also involves taking turns and dealing with the unexpected as other players may block you from a path or move you had planned. There is a 2 player version of this game or a version that allows up to 4 players. There are also other versions of Blokus involving Trignons, Blokus 3D, and Giant Blokus.



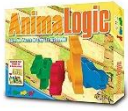
Distraction: This game involves players taking turns drawing number cards in an effort to remember a sequence of digits, however; if a distraction card is drawn, the player must answer a silly question before giving their sequence of digits. This game helps students work on taking turns, recall, working memory, distractibility, and flexible thinking.



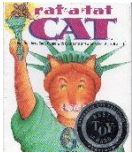
Swish: helps challenge spatial reasoning skills, focus/attention, processing speed, working memory and impulse control. This game consists of a deck of 60 clear cards with circles and hoops of various colors in different positions on the cards. Children look at an array of up to 12 cards to find matches or “swishes” the thing is, the children can move, maneuver and flip the cards to make the “swish.” The objective of the game is to create as many swishes as possible.



Qwirkle: This game has been described as a cross between dominoes and scrabble. Players place tiles to create sequences, the more in a sequence, the more points. If they get 6 tiles in a sequence, that is referred to as a “qwirkle.” Students must utilize visual perception skills through shape, color and pattern recognition as well as strategic thinking skills to try and create a longer sequence to earn more points. Calculation of different points also allows for practice of math computation skills.



Animal Logic: This game requires the players to move lions, giraffes, camels and hippos across a bridge, however; the animals are only allowed to cross in a certain order. Children have to solve the puzzle pattern to help the animals cross the bridge. There are 60 different puzzles and 5 levels of difficulty which allows for players of all ages. This game helps students practice and develop planning, organization/sequencing skills, prioritization, problem solving and flexible thinking skills.



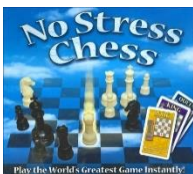
Rat-a-Tat-Cat: is a card game involving strategy, computation skills, as well as memory skills. Players are given four cards and the objective of the game is to end with the fewest points, however; players cannot look at the card they have face down in front of them, unless they draw a “peek” card. When a player, through drawing cards and exchanging cards feels they might have the fewest points, the shout Rat-a-Tat-Cat. Then the players turn over their cards, calculate their total and determine the winner. This game requires players to remember numbers, perform basic addition skills, prioritize which cards to keep and which to discard and work on impulse control to not call Rat-a-Tat-Cat without analyzing the total of their cards. They must also work on flexible thinking as there are other cards such as power cards that allow players to switch cards with another player.



Mind Trap - this game is great for students who like work problems, puzzles or riddles. All of the cards contain tricky questions and riddles similar to brain teasers. Children work individually or in teams to solve the questions or riddles to move through the board. The winner is the individual or the team that collects 10 cards by answering the brain teasers correctly. Students can work on finding hidden clues, logic and reasoning skills, cooperation, problem solving, prioritizing information, and focusing on important details through this game. This particular game is recommended for children 12 and up.



Blink: is touted to help students work on processing speed, visual processing, working memory social engagement, taking turns and coping with the unexpected. Players race (who can match the fastest) to play cards from their hands on one of two discard piles. Players must match cards with at least one characteristic, color, number, and/or shape. The first to play all the cards from their hand wins.



No Stress Chess/Chess: While classic chess is known as a strategy based game, for many children, learning the game can be difficult. No Stress Chess teaches students HOW to play chess by having the players draw cards that tell them which piece to move then it is up to the player to determine where the piece should be moved. This process allows student to learn the component of chess along with the logic and strategic skills to play classic chess. Chess can help students work on taking turns, problem solving, planning ahead, and prioritizing. There are three levels of difficulty with No Stress Chess and the board can be turned over for players to play classic chess when ready!



Forbidden Island: The object of Forbidden Island is for players to work together as a team to capture the four treasures and escape the island before it sinks. Island cards are arranged in a grid and pawns are moved from tile to tile. Each player chooses an Adventurer card which gives the player specific skills and powers during game play. Some of these include, a pilot, explorer, messenger, navigator and engineer. During a player’s turn, each player first performs 3 actions, which may include moving, “shoring up” a tile against flooding, capturing a treasure or passing a treasure card to another player. Players draw cards from two decks: the treasure cards and the

flood cards. This game works on flexible thinking, working with others, taking turns, and strategic planning.

References:

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- <http://www.whatdowedoallday.com/2015/05/family-games-that-improve-executive-functioning.html>