

Play for Literacy

By Tammy Moore

Playing games is a great way to sneak in learning—and it's especially good for wiggly children who are in the process of developing their attention spans.

Research shows that play-based learning offers children a wide variety of opportunities to explore the world around them and receive and process rich sensory stimulation that ultimately promotes healthy brain development, according to ABC Life Literacy Canada.

If your son or daughter needs extra help with a particular academic skill, you can support them by choosing games that specifically address their learning needs. Board games, card games and word games encourage literacy and numeracy development and comprehension skills.

To increase numeracy skills, try playing card games such as Uno, Box Cars and One eyed Jacks or War-type games. One study found that kids who played numerical board games developed superior math skills compared to a control group of kids who didn't play the same games.

A linear board game (such as Chutes and Ladders) can lead to greater learning in knowledge of magnitude, counting, number identification and arithmetic than playing a circular board game.

To help a child with spelling, reading and comprehension skills, board games and word association games can provide hours of positive reinforcement. Some good choices are Jr. Scrabble, MadLibs, Boggle, Wheel of Fortune, and Word Concentration. To really amp up the reading skills, try to find games that require the reading of clues or directions to play.

Another smart idea is to look for games that combine numeracy and literacy skills, such as Monopoly, Monopoly Jr. or Life.

Not only are games fun, but they also help improve your family's reading, writing and mathematic skills—and your kids won't even know it.

Tammy Moore is a remedial teacher at the non-profit READ Society.