

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

**Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF):
Communicating**

Communicating is much more than understanding language, speaking, reading and writing. It is the skill of **determining what you want to communicate** and **realizing how our communications will be understood by others**. It is the skill that teachers and employers feel is most lacking today.

Suggestions for Promoting Communicating for Infants and Toddlers

Tip:

As you read, *Bark, George*, ask your child:

- “Is George barking now? What animal does he sound like?”
- “How does George’s mother feel when her puppy doesn’t bark? What do the pictures tell you about her reaction?”

Share the answers with your child and point to what is happening in the pictures. As your child gets older, encourage him or her to come up with answers.

Talk about a time when you or your child didn’t understand something because the other person was speaking in a way that was foreign to you. Talk about what you did to understand that person.

Skill:

This conversation about misunderstandings will help your child understand how to **overcome barriers in how we communicate**. This back and forth interaction is what researchers call “**serve and return**.” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something (serves) and the other responds (returns). The importance of these everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.

Tip:

Act out this story with your child. Shake your head no, laugh or act surprised with each sound George makes.

Skill:

When you use different voices and facial expressions, you are showing your child **different ways to communicate**. **Pretending** calls on **Executive Function** skills, because you have to put aside your own reaction and “become” someone else.

Tip:

Talk about the end of the story when George doesn’t bark, but says “hello” to the people.

Skill:

This book shares the **joy and humor of communicating** in different ways!

Bark, George

By Jules Feiffer

In this very funny book, George’s mother asks her puppy to bark, but instead, he meows, quacks, oinks and moos. When she takes George to the vet to find out what is going on, the vet reaches deep inside of George and pulls out a cat, a duck, a pig and a cow.



High-quality books and educational resources from First Book supporting research-based Life Skills from *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky



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You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: **Serve and Return** and **Executive Function** skills.

Serve and Return, like a game of ball, involves a back and forth conversation between you and your child where you listen, then build on and extend what your child says or does to promote learning.

Executive Function skills are skills you use to manage your attention, your feelings, your thoughts and your behavior to reach your goals.

They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self control.

Find more about *Mind in the Making* at www.mindinthemaking.org.