

# 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 Ages 3-5

#### Tip:

Emily writes her teacher during summer vacation that she thinks she sees a whale in her pond, and she loves whales very much. She asks for information on whales because she thinks this whale might be hurt. Her teacher, while giving her information in a series of letters, tells her again and again that there is no way a whale could live in her pond.

Ask your child:

- “How does Emily react to her teacher’s insistence that a whale couldn’t live in her pond?”
- “How does the teacher deal with Emily’s belief that she is seeing a whale?”

#### Skill:

To understand a disagreement among others, your child has to **put aside his or her own ideas and try to see the perspectives of others**, an **Executive Function** skill. When you help your child learn **how to deal with disagreement**, you are helping him or her become a better communicator.

#### Tip:

Emily uses letters to her teacher as a way of gaining more information about whales. Ask your child what else Emily does to find out about whales.

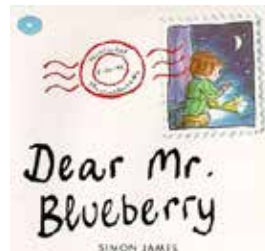
#### Skill:

One of the purposes of Communicating is to **find answers to questions** you might have. By asking your child questions and having conversations about books and characters, you are helping your child think about Communicating in new ways. These back and forth conversations are 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.

## Dear Mr. Blueberry

By Simon James

During vacation time, Emily and her teacher, Mr. Blueberry, write letters to each other about the whale that Emily sees in her small pond. It’s an engaging story with a charming blend of reality and fantasy.



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



Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need. [www.fbmarketplace.org](http://www.fbmarketplace.org).

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.

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### Suggestions for Promoting Communicating for Ages 3-5

#### Tip:

As you read *Dear Mr. Blueberry*, point out words that may be new to your child, like “migratory” or “shrimplike.” You can talk about what the words mean or look them up together.

#### Skill:

Using **rich and diverse language** promotes Communicating.

#### Tip:

You can ask your child to whom he or she would like to write a letter. Together, plan and write a letter.

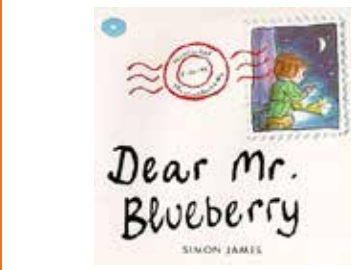
#### Skill:

Writing letters is fun and helps your child think about what he or she wants to say and thus, to **practice** the skill of Communicating.

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