

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF): Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is the ongoing search for **valid and reliable knowledge to guide beliefs, decisions and actions.**

Suggestions for Promoting Critical Thinking for Infants and Toddlers

Tip:

This story invites children to figure out what things go together or to categorize, such as hats go on heads. The clues to figure out where things go are in both the drawings and the word “oops.” When the turkey puts the clothes on the wrong way, you can ask your child:

- “Where should the hat go?”

With a very young child, you can answer the question yourself; with an older child, he or she can answer. If your child wants to have fun and play with where the clothing should go, that’s fine. You can say:

- “Hats should go on heads, but you can put them in other places for fun.”

Skill:

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 back and forth everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.

Tip:

You can ask your child:

- “What happens when the turkey puts the coat on his face?”
- “Will the turkey be able to see, to walk, to keep his tail feathers warm?”

Skill:

Critical Thinking promotes the search for **valid and reliable knowledge.**

Tip:

Once your child knows the rhythm of the story, ask your child to search for answers with you. Show the picture and ask: “Where should the ‘oops’ go?” Then you can point to picture of the turkey as a source of information.

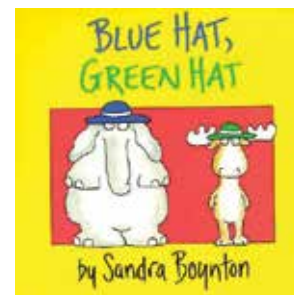
Skill:

In order to **think critically**, children need to be **observant.** This story invites children to figure out where things go or to **categorize** them, which calls on **Executive Function** skills.

Blue Hat, Green Hat

By Sandra Boynton

Most of the animals are wearing clothes the proper way, but—oops! —the turkey cannot figure out where his clothes should go. Toddlers adore this fresh and funny introduction to colors, clothes and very silly mistakes.



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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.