

# 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 Ages 3-5

#### Tip:

As each mouse, in turn, tries to find out what the strange Something is, ask your child:

- “What do YOU think the strange Something is? Why?”

Be sure to help your child look for clues in the pictures to help him or her think through answers to your questions.

#### Skill:

Asking questions and pursuing clues involves **looking carefully at details and making predictions from the information in the book and what your child already knows**, all aspects of Critical Thinking. This back and forth conversation you have 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:

There is so much information in the pictures and the words that you can explore with your child. For example, the mice who have already explored the strange Something all group together on the left and the returning mouse explains his or her findings only to those who haven't looked themselves. You can ask your child:

- “What colored mice have already explored the Something? What mice haven't?”
- “In this picture, how many mice still have to look?”
- “What day of the week will the next mouse go out to try to find the answer to what the strange Something is?”

## Seven Blind Mice

By Ed Young

One day, a strange Something appears by their pond. Each day, a different blind mouse runs to the pond to find out and report the findings to the other mice. They disagree, until finally one of the mice explores the whole Something and comes back to report the truth. This book is a visual delight and a page turner.



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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#### Skill:

In this conversation, you are helping your child pay attention to many details—color, number, days of the week, etc. **Paying careful attention to clues is important in finding answers to something you don't know.**

#### Tip:

At the end of the book, there is a Mouse Moral: “Knowing in part may make a fine tale, but wisdom comes from seeing the whole.” Ask your child:

- “What do you think the Mouse Moral means? Did you ever think you knew something, but it was only part of the answer?”

Share a time when you had a similar experience of thinking you knew something because you only had partial information.

#### Skill:

The Mouse Moral is a great description of Critical Thinking—of making sure that you are searching for **valid and accurate information by seeing the whole picture.** This process calls on **Executive Function** skills.

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