

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:

The Runaway Bunny can be read on many different levels. With a young child, you can tell the story in your own words, pointing out how the Mother Rabbit has to keep problem solving—figuring out ways to find her runaway bunny.

Skill:

We use Critical Thinking in **problem solving**, which calls on **Executive Function** skills.

Tip:

You can ask questions, such as about how much the Mother Rabbit cares and about imagination:

- “Why do you think the Mother Rabbit will do anything to find her bunny?”
- “Can rabbits really fly? How do you know?”

Skill:

The back and forth conversation you have with your child 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.

With older children, Critical Thinking can be promoted by **encouraging them to be curious and think about what they think and believe.**

You can ask questions that promote Critical Thinking about the rabbit’s decisions and actions.

Tip:

Ask your child to find the bunny in all of the color pictures, such as in the flowers. For those children who know the author Margaret Wise Brown’s book, *Goodnight Moon*, ask if they recognize the cow jumping over the moon drawing in the room with the fireplace.

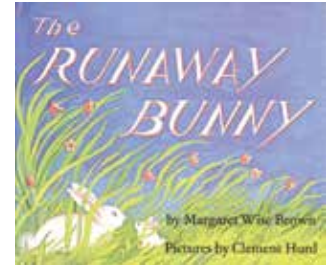
Skill:

Critical Thinking involves being **observant.**

The Runaway Bunny

By Margaret Wise Brown

In this reassuring classic, a loving mother tells her little bunny that no matter where he goes, she will always find him again. Children relate to the little bunny’s desire for independence and enjoy the story’s pattern of cause and effect.



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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.