

# MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

## Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF):

### Focus and Self Control

Children need this skill in order to achieve their **goals**, especially in a world that is filled with distractions and information overload. It involves **paying attention, remembering the rules, thinking flexibly** and **exercising self control**.

#### Suggestions for Promoting Focus and Self Control for Infants and Toddlers

#### TIP:

You can play the game as you read the book with your child. Like the game of “Simon Says,” your child is not supposed to follow the directions unless the book states: “Elmo says.”

#### SKILL:

Focus and Self Control includes **being able to remember rules**. It also includes the **ability to slow down your reaction** and **to pause and choose a response**. Playing games and reading books that require children **to remember and not go on automatic**, but to **exercise self control**, help to build **Executive Function** skills.

#### TIP:

Ask your child to try to remember what comes next in the story:

- “What comes after ‘walk like a cat?’ Yes, it is ‘swing a bat.’”

Showing the picture can give your child clues about the words in the book.

#### SKILL:

Developing Focus and Self Control takes **practice**. It is good to repeat this game and read the book again and again.

#### TIP:

In the preschool years, you can make the game more challenging by switching rules to the opposite. For example, if Elmo says: “Touch your nose,” ask your child instead to do the opposite and tap his or her toes.

#### SKILL:

Your child has to **exercise self control** when you change the rules, an **Executive Function** skill.

#### TIP:

Note that this book and game both involve children in a physical activity. As you read the book, have your child do the actions called for in the story.

#### SKILL:

Children learn Focus and Self Control by **being active—not by sitting still!**

## Elmo Says...

By Sarah Albee

The classic game “Simon Says” meets Sesame Street in this lively board book. Favorite characters instruct children to imitate their actions—but only when they hear the words “Elmo says!”



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](http://www.mindinthemaking.org).