

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF): Making Connections

Making Connections is at the heart of learning—**figuring out what's the same and what's different, and sorting these things into categories. Making unusual connections is at the core of creativity.** In a world where people can Google for information, it is the people who can see connections who are able to go beyond knowing information to **using this information well.**

Suggestions for Promoting Making Connections for Infants and Toddlers

TIP:

You can point to the moon and to the egg as you read the first page.

SKILL:

Studies show that children are more likely to learn words when you point to an object as well as say its name. Making Connections among words, pictures and objects promotes this **Executive Function** skill.

TIP:

You can count the number of pieces of fruit the hungry caterpillar ate each day, pointing to the fruit and counting on your fingers while you read. Invite your older child to point and count with you. This helps make connections among numbers, days and counting.

SKILL:

Making Connections involves **learning what symbols represent.**

TIP:

Ask your older child to think about the difference between the foods the caterpillar ate from Monday through Friday (all plain fruit) and on Saturday (mostly cooked food).

SKILL:

Making Connections involves **putting things into categories.**

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

By Eric Carle

This must-read book tells the story of one caterpillar's metamorphosis as he eats many foods, spins a cocoon and emerges as a butterfly. It's perfect for practicing counting and colors, and it's available in a bilingual board book edition.



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.

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.

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Suggestions for Promoting Making Connections for Infants and Toddlers



TIP:

You can ask your child:

- “Have you ever had a stomachache after eating lots of food?”

You can share a time when you had a stomachache, too.



SKILL:

Have this conversation in a way that promotes “**serve and return**”—you or your child does or says something (serves) and the other responds (returns), back and forth like a game of ball. Use this book to watch your child’s response to the words and pictures and build on what your child says and extend it.

Making Connections involves seeing the **similarities and differences between your own experiences and the experiences of others.** You can promote this kind of thinking by asking questions.



TIP:

At the end of the book, the caterpillar turns into a beautiful butterfly. You can have a discussion with your child about how things change when they grow—and point out examples from his or her everyday life. If your child is interested in finding out more, you can look up pictures of caterpillars and butterflies in books or on the Internet.



SKILL:

When you help children **look up information**, you are helping them deepen and extend their knowledge.

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