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!”

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.

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.’”

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!