

Framework: Games

Children develop cognition, language, and communication through interaction in partner and group games. They begin with simple games in childhood and progress to more complex play in adult social situations.

Rules, Turn-taking, Communication, Competition, Teamwork, Sportsmanship, Types, Participant/Observer:

- Mastering the rules of a game is critical when playing with others. We often learn the rules through trial and error and observation. There can be some mild frustration in the process. Not following rules in a game once you have demonstrated that you know them can be construed as purposeful and may be labeled "cheating" by an opponent.

- Turn-taking is part of many games. The sequence must be learned and then followed during the game. Playing out of turn or taking too long to complete a turn will disrupt the game.

- Many games require some type of exchange of information. A player must monitor game play, listen for information, and be ready to answer a query. Often some type of communication is needed to move the game along.

- Games in general involve competition among players to determine who will "win" the game. It is important to understand how a winner is determined and who your opponents are.

- Often teamwork is part of a game. Working with another player or players to share a win can be temporary and changeable or more formal with a name, coach, and often a uniform. It requires shared understanding and acceptance of roles to play and tasks to complete. Constant monitoring of other team members and timely cooperation can be critical when a task must be completed in unison.

- Sportsmanship is an important aspect of all games. Players must know and follow what is acceptable fair play for a particular game. Where competition is high and prizes are at stake there is often a referee to monitor play and sanction fair play violations. Players must learn to accept referee decisions. In most cultures it is expected that winners and losers will congratulate each other for good play and part on friendly terms. Violence and injury of any kind are unacceptable.

- Games might include: table/board games, computer games, sports, and quiz shows. Some require primarily physical performance while others involve mental engagement. Most require some type of equipment or materials that must be secured and maintained.

- As adults, social engagement for many involves either game participation or observation. Often the games we have played when young are the games that we enjoy watching later in life.

Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Children can be introduced to simple games at a very early age and play with adults who can slowly introduce rules, turn-taking, and communication.

- Children can have opportunities to play table games with other children with minimal supervision once they have learned them.

- Children can participate in team sports at an early age and develop physical skills and game understanding as they grow.
- Children and young adults can engage in online computer games with supervision to insure safety from undesirable players.
- Children and young adults can attend sporting events and become familiar with various aspects of being an observer and fan.
- When observing games, instances of good and poor sportsmanship can be discussed and evaluated.
- Children can be encouraged to care for gaming materials and equipment.

A person with autism or other developmental delay might:

- become preoccupied with an object in nonpurposeful repetitive activity.
- be unable to sit and focus on a table game for long periods.
- be unable to understand the rules of the game.
- be unable to understand the sequence of play in the game.
- not understand the concept or purpose of winning and not know how the winner is determined in the game.
- be unable to monitor and take a turn without a prompt.
- be unable to understand what is asked for in a game or respond quickly enough.
- be distracted by other players talking during a game.
- not have the fine motor skills to manipulate game materials or have developed sufficient gross motor skills for acceptable performance in sports.
- have difficulty monitoring other players performance or communication.
- be unaccepting when losing to other players.
- be unable to respond quickly enough to cooperate with team members and participate in coordinated team maneuvers.
- struggle to communicate in socially acceptable ways.
- be at risk to become obsessed with computer games that are repetitive and do not involve interaction with others.
- be unable to care for gaming materials and equipment.

- be uncomfortable or unable to tolerate long periods of sitting and inactivity when attending sporting events as an observer.
- be preoccupied with sensory sensitivities.
- lack assumed skill levels in related areas.

User Friendly Strategies for Activities, Lessons, and Materials:

- Engage the child in play with objects in specific purposeful game actions and game routines.
- Manipulate objects and visuals that depict sequences of game play.
- Engage the child in game routines.
- Engage the child in simple game routines with other children.
- Discuss winning/losing and give good/bad examples of sportsmanship.
- Incorporate conventional game communication in structured game play.
- Offer suggestions and prompts to communicate in socially acceptable ways.
- Have an assistant prompt the child for rules, turn-taking, and communication during game play with peers.
- Peers can be chosen that are accommodating and understanding of the help that might be needed.
- Have visuals for independent materials and equipment cleaning and storage.
- Closely monitor online gaming activity and limit time periods for non-face-to-face interaction.
- Have limited short periods of sitting and inactivity when attending sporting events as an observer. Have hand-held devices available.
- Observe and detect sensory sensitivities to materials and environment and alter as necessary.
- Observe carefully to detect competencies in order to know what they don't know.

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