

What Doesn't Belong? A Categorization Game

In this outdoor activity you and your child will have fun hunting for objects that have something in common and choosing one that doesn't belong in the group. The object of the game is to have the other person figure out what item doesn't quite fit. Your child will have so much fun playing this game she won't even know that she'll be practicing some important learning skills like: understanding relationships, categorizing, comparing, contrasting and observing.

What You Need:

- 1 shoebox for each player

What You Do:

1. Introduce the game to your child and play one round together so she knows exactly what to do. You can start by gathering the following 5 objects: rock, ball, twig, leaf, piece of grass
2. Pretend you're guessing which one doesn't belong. Model your thinking for your child so she can see how you go about deducing what doesn't fit. You can say something like: *I see a rock, a ball, twig, a leaf and a piece of grass... I found them all outside, so they have all that in common. A rock and a ball are both round, but I don't think shape works with this one. They are all different colors, so it can't be that. A piece of grass is much smaller than everything, but the twig is pretty small too. I keep looking at the ball because it doesn't seem to fit in this group. Let me think...oh! A rock, a twig, a leaf and a piece of grass are all things that come from nature, and a ball doesn't! A ball is man-made – it doesn't come from the earth, so it has to be the one that doesn't belong!*
3. Review with your child different ways you can categorize things based on your thinking. Shape, color, and size are some you thought about when modeling your thinking. But there are also other categories that you can use like: textures, how things are made, and even what letter each object starts with. Have your child think about some ways to categorize objects as well so she understands how to go about playing this game. After going over these different categories, you're ready to play the game with your child.
4. Get a shoebox for yourself and give one to your child. Give yourself and your child ample time to find 5 objects, and remind her to pick one that doesn't fit into the group.
5. When you're both done, sit next to each other and trade shoeboxes. Focus on one shoebox together. Start with yours. If your child is having trouble finding what doesn't belong, ask her questions like: *Do they have similar colors? What about their textures? Do you think their sizes are all the same? What do you think about their shapes?*
6. These guiding questions will get her thinking and will help her deduce which object doesn't belong.
7. When she figures out what doesn't belong, take a look at the items in her shoebox. Model your thinking like you did in Step 1 until you find the object that doesn't fit.



The more practice you have with this game, the easier it will be to find what doesn't belong. For each round, encourage your child to find a different way to categorize objects and to try to make them harder and more challenging to make the game more interesting. What's going on? Although the game may seem simple at first, classification is a core skill throughout elementary school science, and it's almost impossible to overdo practice!