

Hopped Up Hide and Seek

This game may *seem* like nothing more than a slightly tweaked version of "Hide and Go Seek", but don't be fooled. Sure it's fun, but in between all that play, it reinforces verbal instructions and listening skills. Plus, it gives kids practice with positional words, colors, and number concepts. In this version of the game instead of hiding yourself you'll hide a very small item, such as a penny, for your child to find.

What You Need:

- A small object, anything from a coin to a toy car

What to Do:

1. Begin by having your child close her eyes until you've placed the item in a well-hidden location.
2. Give simple but very specific directions to guide your child in finding the object. A typical game might include: "Walk three steps forward." "Turn toward the window." "Walk five steps forward." "Walk two more steps forward." "Look up on the second shelf." "Look behind the plant." Or throw in some colors, for example, "Look next to something that is red." At first, allow her to finish each step before moving on to the next direction.
3. But once she's gotten the hang of it, challenge her memory and her listening skills, by giving multiple-step instructions: "Walk three steps forward and then turn toward the window."
4. Don't be a "Hide and Seek" hog! After playing the game a number of times, allow your child to hide the object for *you* to find. In the beginning, it may be difficult for her to give specific instructions, but as long as you don't gloss over her mistakes, she'll improve quickly. Be sure to follow her instructions exactly, so that she can learn from any errors that are made. For example, if your child tells you to look beside a cup but really means for you to look behind it, she will quickly understand when she sees your actions that she used the incorrect word. Give suggestions as needed.

The great thing about this game is that it's portable! It can be played just about anywhere, from the park, to your own living room, to a doctor's waiting room. The skills of giving and following directions are an important part of every young child's life. When presented in a game format, they can be fun too!

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