

Make Your Own Memory Matching Game!

Memory games are a preschool staple. They give kids practice with looking for same and different—a key skill for this age group. But more than that, they're just plain fun. And preschoolers can be surprisingly good at creaming mom and dad!

You don't need to spend big bucks to buy a pre-boxed version of a matching game at the store. You can make your own... easily. Here's how:

What You Need:

- Photos of multiple members of your family
- Contact Paper

What You Do:

1. Children are very interested in things that are part of their own world. For this memory game, you will be making matching cards using family photos. Take pictures of as many family members as possible: mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, and anyone else that's important to you. When you print out the pictures or get the roll developed, make sure to get double prints. Then in order to make the photos sturdier, either laminate them at the local copy store, or purchase a roll of contact paper and cover the photos, trimming off the excess.
2. Now you're ready to play! Start with approximately five photos (and their matches!). Place them face down on a table in front of you and your child. Then decide who will go first. The first player flips over a photo and then flips another card, in search of a match. If she finds a match, she keeps the set, then gets another turn. But if she doesn't find a match, it's the next player's chance. Play continues until all the photos meet their mates.

As your child gets better at the game, you can add more photos to the mix. But when this version of the game becomes too easy, you can shake things up a bit with a slight change: instead of pairs that match each other exactly, challenge your child with sets that are similar, but slightly different. For example, you can have a picture of Grandma in summer clothes and a picture of Grandma in winter clothes. This is a great way for kids to practice looking for slight variations—something that will help them immensely with reading. It also teaches kids to pay attention to details.

Every child enjoys a new treat. When these versions of the game get old-hat, you can create new versions using pictures of whatever you wish—household items, toys, sports equipment, local landmarks... You can also cut heavy card stock into squares and give your kid a crack at the creation! Arm him with a set of stamps and a water-based stamp pad, and put him to work!

Or, for more great games for preschoolers beyond Candyland, read our Preschool Board Game Roundup for games you may not already have in your toy chest!

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