

Reading & Writing Games

These homemade games give your child a double dose of learning fun. That's because she will practice reading and writing while she makes the games—and while your family plays them!



Reading-opoly

If *Monopoly* were based on *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, what would the streets be called? In this game, it's totally up to your youngster! Encourage her to pick a book and use its characters, settings, and plot to make her own version of *Monopoly*.

Materials: book, poster board or cardboard, pen, index cards, play money, two dice, one game token per player



1. Have your child read the book and then make a game board to go with it. She can mark off 12–16 spaces around a poster board, label one corner space “Go,” and name four random spaces “Book Chance” or “Library Chest.” The remaining spaces are properties—she can give them book-themed names like “Mad Hatter Avenue,” “Rabbit Hole Railroad,” and “Looking Glass Lane.”

2. Let your youngster label two sets of index cards “Book Chance” and “Library Chest” and write a book-related task on each card. *Examples:* “Throw a tea party. Collect \$50 from each player” or “Meet the Red Queen. Lose a turn (but keep your head).” Finally, she'll need to make property “deeds” on separate index cards.

3. Give every player \$100 in various bills. Stack the cards facedown on the board.

4. To play, roll the dice, and move the number of spaces shown. Depending on where you land, buy a property and take its deed, pay another player rent (\$10), or draw a card and follow the directions. When you pass “Go,” collect \$10.

5. Continue until only one player has money left. She's the winner.

Story trivia

What color is Pippi Longstocking's hair in Astrid Lindgren's novel? What was the pig's name in E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*? If your child can answer book-based trivia questions like these, he's on his way to winning this game.

Materials: chapter book, index cards, pencils, one “buzzer” (bell, noisemaker) per player

1. Pass the book around, and take turns reading a page of the first chapter aloud.
2. Let each player make five trivia cards about that chapter with a question on one side and an answer on the other.
3. Read your questions aloud, one at a time. The first person to “buzz in” and call out the correct answer gets the card. If everyone is stumped, the player who wrote the question keeps the card—so it's a good idea to write challenging questions! Read another chapter, and play again.
4. When all the questions have been asked, the person with the most cards wins.



continued



Mix-and-match tale

There are no winners or losers in this game in which players write separate stories and combine them.

Materials: paper, colored pencils, scissors

1. Work together to pick a main character and a setting. Be creative—perhaps your tale will be about an ice cream man in a desert or an orangutan in a classroom.
2. Have each player use a different-color pencil to write his own story using the chosen character and setting.
3. Cut your stories into individual sentences. Place all the sentences faceup in the middle of the table.
4. The first player selects any sentence to begin a shared tale. Take turns choosing the next sentence to add—the only rule is that no sentence may be in the same color as the one before it.
5. After all the sentences have been used, encourage your youngster to read the story aloud.
6. Set those lines aside, and make another story with new sentences.

Instructions with a twist

Stretch your youngster’s writing skills with this game that requires careful word choices to write clear instructions—without using “forbidden words.”

Materials: paper, pencils, small box

1. Ask each person to write three tasks on separate slips of paper (“plant flowers,” “make toast,” “load the dishwasher”).

On the back of each slip, she should write five related words, such as *plates, cups, clean, detergent, and pans* for “load the dishwasher.”



2. Place the slips in the box, and let everyone draw one.
3. On separate sheets of paper, each person writes instructions for completing the task on her slip. The catch? You can’t use any word on the slip—or any variations (avoid *dish* and *wash*, for instance, since they’re found in *dishwasher*). She might write, “Open the door to the appliance that puts soap and water on the things we use when we cook, eat, or drink.”
4. Take turns reading your instructions aloud. The first player to name the task gets to read hers next.

Super similes

Your child can have fun with language as he turns random words into similes. (A simile compares two different things using the words *like* or *as*.)

Materials: six craft sticks per player, marker, bag, timer, paper, pencils

1. Let your youngster write a noun (person, place, or thing) on each craft stick. *Examples:* pen, raindrop, boy, Australia, sandwich, home.
2. Place the sticks in a bag, shake, and have each person reach in and pull out six. Set a timer for 3 minutes.
3. Players use pairs of words from their sticks to write as many similes as possible. Make words plural if necessary. *Examples:* “Words dripped *like raindrops* from my *pen*” or “*Home* felt as comforting as a grilled cheese *sandwich*.”
4. When the timer goes off, read your similes aloud. Vote for your favorite (no voting for your own). The player whose simile got the most votes wins the round.

What’s my word?

Stick words on each other’s foreheads in this game that introduces the whole family to new vocabulary.

Materials: dictionary, paper, pencils, sticky notes

1. Everyone secretly chooses 10 words from the dictionary. List your words on a sheet of paper—but don’t let anyone see!
2. Have each player write one word from her list on a sticky note and place it on an opponent’s forehead without showing her the word.
3. On each turn, ask a yes-or-no question to figure out the word on your own forehead. “Is it a noun?” “Is it a thing?” “Is it in this house?”
4. Play until everyone guesses her word. Then, start another round with new words.

