

Attention Games for Kids: In this post, we will explore the concept of attention and different types of attention. We will also share 30 fun attention games and activities for kids. NOTE: WHILE NOT ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES LISTED BELOW WILL BE APPROPRIATE FOR PREK STUDENTS MANY WILL BE AND MUCH OF THE ARTICLE OFFERS GOOD CONTENT ON ATTENTION ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM.

What is Attention?

Attention is the ability to focus on specific information in the environment while disregarding other information. We do not have an unlimited attention capacity, so we focus our attention on some items and tune out some others.

Attention skills are required to attend to the demands in our environment. We are continuously paying attention to information, blocking irrelevant stimuli, and shifting focus. And those attentional processes are linked to other cognitive processes (perception, memory or behavior to cite a few)

Attention span [increases with age](#), and is related to, and plays a role in other aspects of functioning including learning, memory, academic performance, and the understanding and processing of large quantities of information.

Types of Attention

There are many types of attention.

I will include some relevant ones, and some examples to illustrate how these attention types may manifest in your child:

Selective Attention

Selective Attention refers to mechanisms that enable us to process only some aspects of the information we are exposed to. It requires focusing on some aspects of the environment and blocking other stimuli.

Example of selective attention: Your child is attending to the teacher's explanation while blocking the background interference of some kids chitchatting a couple of rows behind.

Divided Attention

Divided Attention (Limited Attention) is the process that enables us to attend and respond to multiple environmental demands.

Example of divided attention: Your child is listening to the teacher while doodling in their notebook.

Alternating Attention

Alternating Attention involves shifting attention between tasks that require different cognitive processing, attending to one task or stimuli and the shifting to the next one.

Example of Alternating Attention: Your child is playing tag with their friends and hears a dog barking, checks there is no danger and continues playing.

Sustained Attention

Sustained Attention is the process that enables us to maintain the attentional focus on relevant stimuli and stay alert over extended periods of time. In other words, it is the ability to focus on an activity or an event over a long period of time.

Your child's attention span would measure their ability to attend to a task or stimulus for a certain period of time.

Example of sustained attention: Your child engages in their drawing for twenty minutes.

Overt and Covert Attention

Overt Attention is defined as aligning sensory receptors and attentional focus. In other words physically directing eyes/audition to the focus of our attention

Example of overt attention: Your child is looking at you while you talk to them

Covert Attention refers to the dissociation of sensory receptors and attentional focus.

Example of covert attention: Your child is pretending to study their text book while listening to the fun conversation going on between their siblings (focus is on the conversation, while the eyes and the orientation is the book)

Attention & Sensory Modality

If we take into consideration sensory modality, we can also talk about visual attention, auditory attention or, most often, crossmodal attention, when we distribute attention simultaneously across several senses.

Attention Problems & ADHD

Attention issues are an inherent part of the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder diagnosis.

Kids with ADHD may struggle with attention, focus, concentration and / or with the inhibition of distractors.

30 Fun Attention Games for Kids

Playing is a great way for kids to develop cognitive skills, so let's dive into this section and explore fun games that will help our kids practice their attention skills.

Memory Games / Matching Games

1. DIY Memory Game

Playing a game to help grow a child's memory is a fun way to grow that part of the brain. As that part of the brain grows, the easier it will be for them to focus on other tasks.

'What's on the tray?' Place 10 items on a tray and only allow your kids to look for 1 minute. Then, remove the tray and have them write down as many items from the tray as they can remember. This is the perfect rainy day activity with items found around your house

‘What’s missing?’ Similar to what’s on the tray (mentioned above), you allow your kids to observe a tray of items for one minute. Then, you remove the tray and take 1-2 items. Allow the kids to observe for one more minute then they can say what is missing from the tray.

2. Matching Games (Visual memory & working memory)

Matching games are fun. Kids can play individually or with friends and family. There are many fun themes like:

- [Disney classic characters](#)
- [Jurassic World](#)
- [Children around the world](#) (matching faces)

3. Matching Sounds

How about working on our kids’ matching and listening skills while using the auditory attention?

- [Animal Soundtracks](#)
- [Sound Lotto](#)

4. Word Matching

How about learning sight words with a [fun bingo game](#)? (Instead of calling numbers, you call words)

This is a great game for young kids and for learners with disabilities.

5. Auditory Memory Game

Older kids may enjoy the [fun bingo game](#) (lights and sounds)

6. Bingo

And, my final matching game for older children would be a classic [bingo game](#).

Board Games

Board games are not just entertaining but also an amazing learning resource.

Most of them are a tool to practice and develop important skills and abilities like: fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, taking turns, waiting skills, social skills, and the ability to pay attention.

These are just a few examples of board games that we can use to practice attention skills:

7. Chess

[Chess](#) is one of the most famous games on the planet, and for good reason. This game is the perfect afternoon pastime to help encourage strategic playing as well as extending a person’s attention span.

There is even [research](#) that suggests that playing chess helps improve focused attention (after just six months of practice!)

8. Battleships

One of the best ways to help a person's focus develop is to play strategy games like [Battleship](#). This board game is set up so that the players can strategically sink the others ships with guessing coordinates.

9. Scrabble

[Scrabble](#) is a fun pastime that can really challenge the brain to work hard. As soon as your child can start spelling words, this game is a fun activity (there are easy versions for younger kids).

10. Boggle

[Boggle](#) is a family favorite! Perfect to pack up in your bag for afternoons at the park or for family game night, this game is so entertaining that everyone will want to play for hours.

This game is similar to Scrabble, and they are both great options to practice attention skills as well as learning vocabulary and improving spelling.

11. Power Grid

[Power Grid](#) is a lesser known board game will challenge your family to build a functioning power grid for your city. With so many aspects to consider, this game will have your family's brains working toward a common goal for hours.

Action Video Games

Screen time can be a good thing when it is used as a tool to develop the focus of young children. Just one hour of video gaming can increase performance on visual selective activities ([source](#)).

Here are a few ways to use your tv screen to help your children's attention span.

12. **Classic Nintendo Video Game Console** is a blast from the past and is ready to develop the newest generation of kids' attention spans, just as the Nintendo console did for kids in the early 90's. Even better? This console comes with 30 of the games that made the original Nintendo famous, so get ready for hours of fun!

Another option is to get your child a **Nintendo Switch**, which is similar to a Gameboy. This handheld gaming device is perfect for kids looking for a fun way to use an afternoon. Even better? Its a great tool to help develop kids' attention spans.

13. Strategy Computer Games like **Starcraft II** require the brain to plan, strategize and manage limited resources and logistics.

14. **Sim City** is a great simulation game that requires the player to build a city with finite resources and consequences for decisions.

15. **Little Big Planet** is a puzzle game where the player controls Sackboy through various levels and can build their own levels for other players to play.

16. For any sports fans in your family, a game like **Fifa** can help them develop strategy skills while playing their favorite game.

17. One popular video game among young kids is **Minecraft**. It is being used to help educate children on everything from science to coding to how to plan out entire worlds.

Focus Games / Attention Activities

Playing a simple game is so much more than an afternoon pastime. In fact, it is one of the best tools for helping your child's brain grow and develop skills that will help them well into adulthood.

18. Card Games

Classic Card Games like Crazy Eights, Old Maid or even Solitaire (Patience) are great for encouraging children to grow in strategy and develop their attention span. Even better? All you need is a deck of cards!

19. Red Light, Green Light

Red Light, Green Light is a fun way to get kids to burn energy and focus on the task of stopping and starting.

When your child hears the words "Green light" they can move forward, but when they hear "Red light" they must freeze.

Mix it up by making your own rules such as roundabout (spin in circles) or reverse!

20. Simon Says

If you need to kill a large amount of time, a great game to play is Simon Says. This classic game is done by only repeating the action when the person in charge says the phrase 'Simon Says' beforehand. Do an action without the phrase and you are out.

21. Spot the Difference

[This book](#) of spotting the difference is made for 1st-5th graders and is a fun way to train the brain to focus.

22. Tangram

Have you ever played with a [Tangram](#)? This simple, easy to use game is a fun way to increase a child's concentration skills. With a select number of shapes, use the book to solve puzzles and make new shapes.

23. A classic puzzle

Let your child work alone or with the entire family to put together a classic brain working activity.

Some puzzle themes that you can purchase on Amazon are:

● [Legos](#)

● [The moon](#)

● [Dinosaurs](#)

Whatever your child is passionate about, then there is a puzzle for them!

24. 3D Puzzles

[Guaishu Brain Teasers](#) are small puzzles that seem simple, but are far from it. Each device is a challenge and engages the entire brain to solve.

Another option that we love at home are the [crystal puzzles](#).

25. Freeze

One simple game that is loved by almost everyone is a game of Freeze. All you need is a space to dance and a music player (we play it dancing!). Everyone dances when the music plays. Once it stops, everyone on the dance floor freezes. Once you move, you are out!

26. Word Search

Brain games are a great way to practice attention skills while your kid improves spelling, vocabulary and reading speed!

A couple of examples: [Ages 4-8](#) and [ages 8-10](#).

27. Attention Games Book

I've added this book to my attention games list because it suggests more than one hundred games:

● [Attention Games: 101 Fun, Easy Games That Help Kids Learn To Focus](#)

The author, Barbara Sher, is a pediatric occupational therapist and has compiled 101 attention activities to help children of all ages become better at focusing and paying attention.

Tip: although the book is for kids of all ages, there are more activities for younger children.

Listening Games

Attention is a key component of the listening process, so [listening games and activities](#) are a great way to practice attention skills.

These are just a few examples:

28. Musical Statues

Dance to the sound of music and freeze when the music stops

29. Follow the Story

Start a story. Every few sentences a new kid is chosen to continue where the previous one left it.

30. String of Words

Did you play this game in your childhood?

“I went to the supermarket and bought...”, as you go around, each kid repeats the previous items and adds a new one.

Related reading: [18 Listening Games and Activities for Kids](#)

There are many other attention games, but these focus games above are a great start!

Enjoy playing!

Other Attention & Focus Resources

- [30 Effective Impulse Control Strategies](#)
- [ADHD Chairs to Help Improve Focus](#)
- [How to Teach Kids to Wait \(15 Ideas!\)](#)
- [Impulse Control Activities](#)
- [10 ADHD Strengths \(Includes hyperfocus\)](#)
- [Time Management Activities for Kids](#)

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