



Brain Builder 1: Follow Along

Preparation

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, watch what I do.**
- **Rule 2 is, do the same thing.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Do a motion.
3. Wait for all children to do the same motion.
4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 with a different motion (see suggested motions below).

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Add more complex motions and challenges as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children's attention for transitioning between activities.
- Add props, such as streamers, shakers, or rhythm sticks.

Suggested Motions

Simple

Put both hands on a body part
Stand up tall
Squat down low
Make your body wide
Make your body small
Clap your hands
Turn around
Do knee bends
Stomp your feet

Complex

Put each hand on a different body part
Make big/small circles with your arms/feet
Draw figure eights with your arms/feet
Swing alternating arms
March in place
March on tiptoe
Put your right hand on a left body part and vice versa
Balance on one foot

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Use complex motions. (A)
- Repeat the same motion a certain number of times. Have children do the same. (A, WM)
- Do two or more motions in a row. Have children do the same. (A, WM)
- Use a verbal prompt with or instead of a motion. (A, WM)
- Have children wait to move until after a verbal prompt. (A, WM, IC)

Brain Builder 2: Which Way?



Preparation

The symbol you'll need to play this game is on the following page. Photocopy it before you play the game.

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, watch which way my arms point.**
- **Rule 2 is, point your arms the same way.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Point both your arms straight in the same direction—either up, down, left, or right.
3. Wait for all children to point their arms in the same direction.
4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 with a different direction.

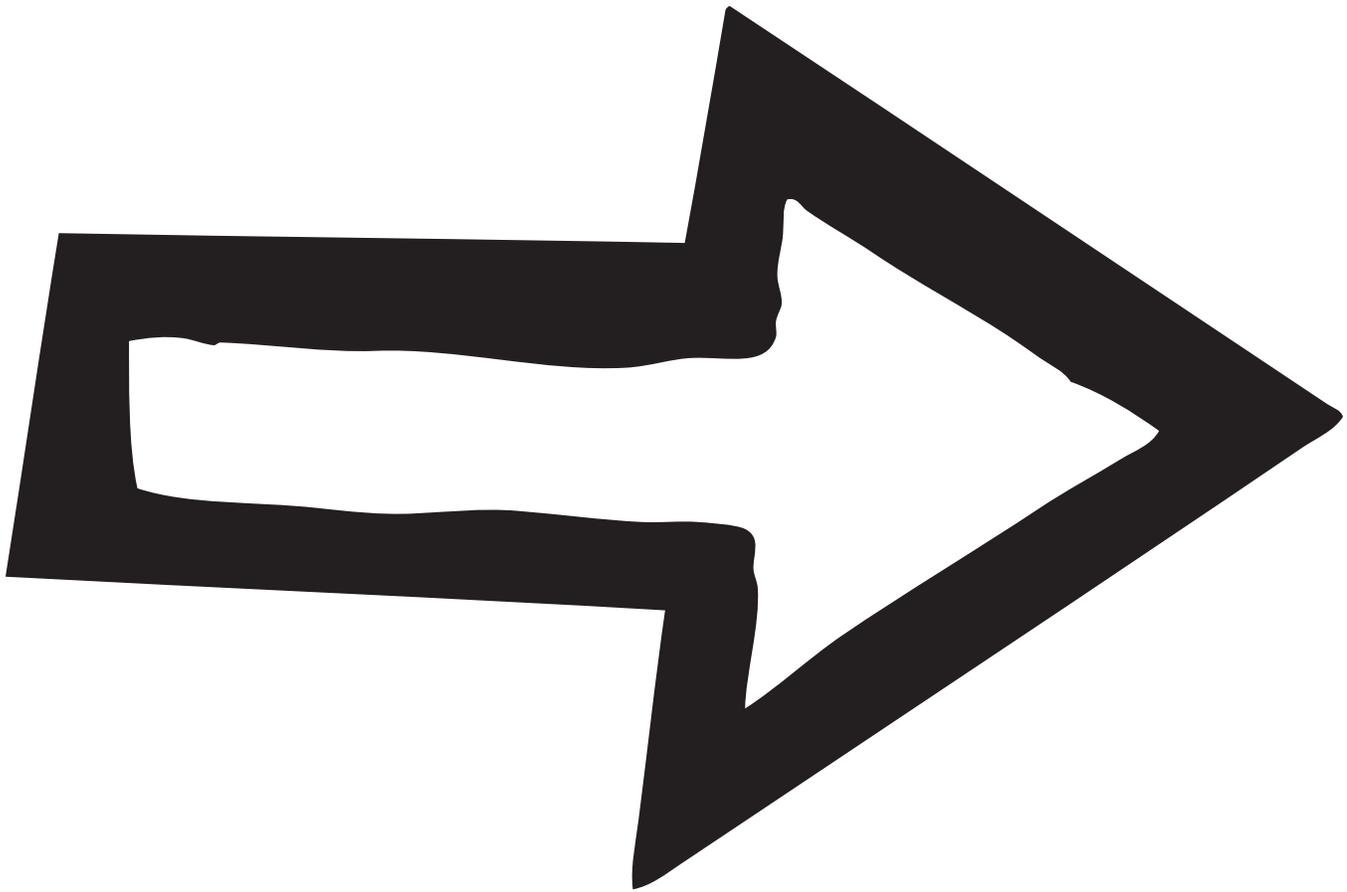
Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children's attention for transitioning between activities.

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Repeat the same direction a certain number of times. Have children do the same. (A, WM)
- Do two or more directions in a row. Have children do the same. (A, WM)
- Move your arms in opposite directions. Have children do the same. (A, WM)
- Use a verbal prompt with or instead of a motion. Say: **Up/Down** or **This way/That way.** (A, WM)
- Use a symbol (see the arrow on the following page) to show the direction. (A, WM)
- Use a symbol (see the arrow on the following page) and a verbal prompt. (A, WM)
- Have children wait to move until after seeing a symbol and/or hearing a verbal prompt. (A, WM, IC)
- Point your arms toward a specific person or object (for example, a table, clock, or door). Then have children name the person or object and do the action. (A, WM, IC)
- Call on one child to tell you which direction to point your arms. Do the action. Have the rest of the children do the action. (A, WM, IC)



Brain Builder 3: Stop and Start



Preparation

The symbol you'll need to play this game is on the following page. Photocopy it before you play the game.

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, when I say "Start," move in your own space.**
- **Rule 2 is, when I say "Stop," show me the stop pose.**

Steps

1. Model the stop pose for children (see suggested stop poses below).
2. Say: **Start**. Children move in their own space.
3. Say: **Stop**. and show the stop pose. Wait for all children to show the same pose.
4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3.

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Use the same stop pose all day or all week.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game for transitioning between activities. Say: **Stop** to get children's attention. Then say: **Start** _____ (cleaning up, lining up for recess, moving to a different center).

Suggested Stop Poses

Simple

Put both hands on a body part
Stand up tall
Squat down low
Make your body wide
Make your body small

Complex

Put each hand on a different body part
Put your right hand on a left body part and vice versa
Make shapes with your hands/arms
Make letters with your whole body
Balance on one foot

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Add an action to the "start" direction: **Start** _____ (walking, hopping, crawling, stretching). (A, WM)
- Propose different forms of locomotion (train, airplane), animals (bird, dog), and so on, for the start action. Have children propose stop poses to match. (A, WM)
- Model a sequence of two or more actions for the stop pose. (A, WM)
- Say: **Stop** without showing the stop pose. (A, WM)
- Use a symbol (see the stop sign on the following page) with or instead of words. (A, WM)
- Increase the time children are stopped. (A, IC)



Brain Builder 4: Clap-Down, Snap-Up



Preparation

The symbols you'll need to play this game are on the following pages. Photocopy them before you play the game.

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, when you hear me clap, sit down.**
- **Rule 2 is, when you hear me snap, jump up.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Clap your hands or snap your fingers.
3. Children respond with the matching action. When you clap, they sit down; when you snap, they jump up. Wait for all children to finish the action.
4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3.

Tips

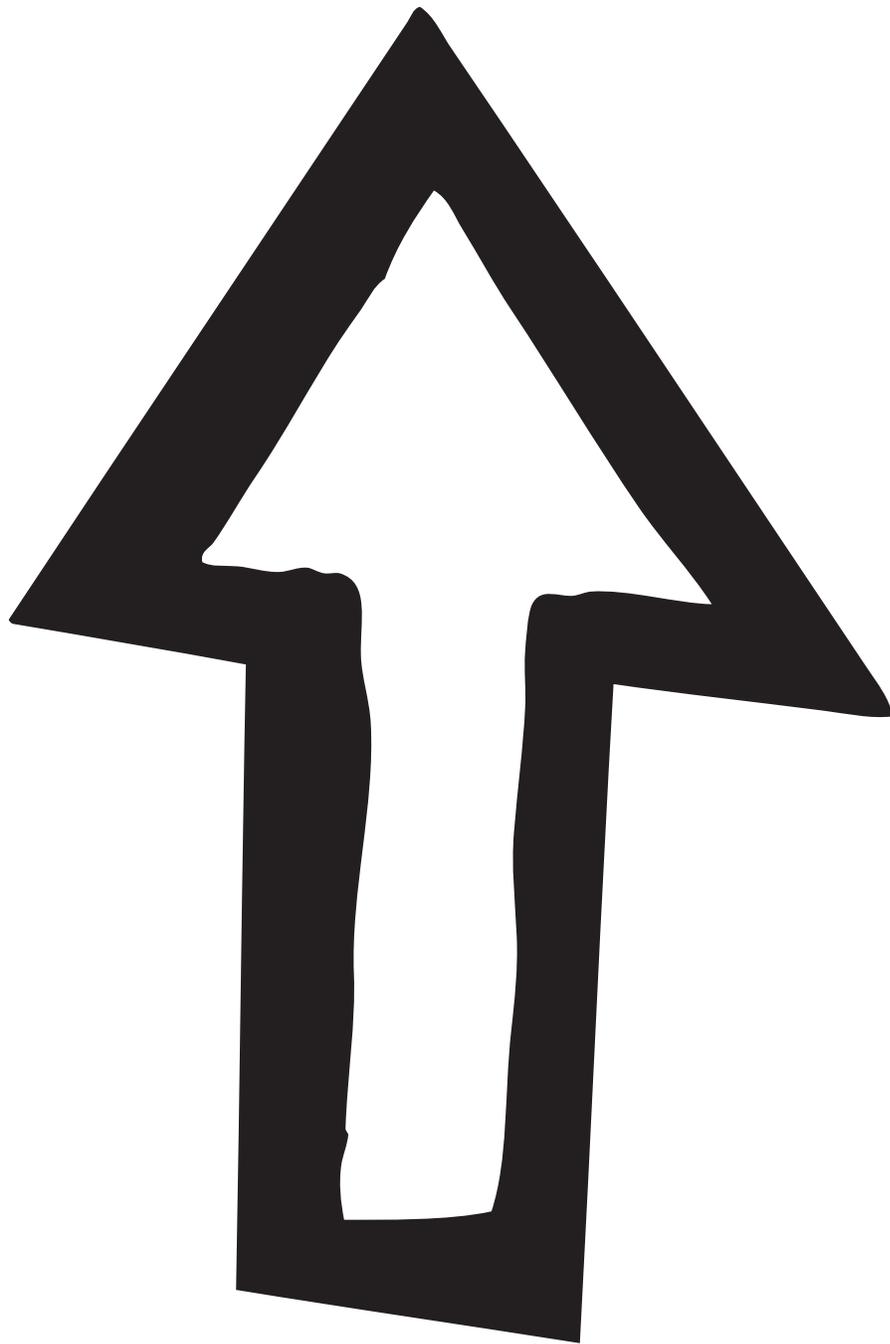
- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children's attention for transitioning between activities.

Increasing the Challenge

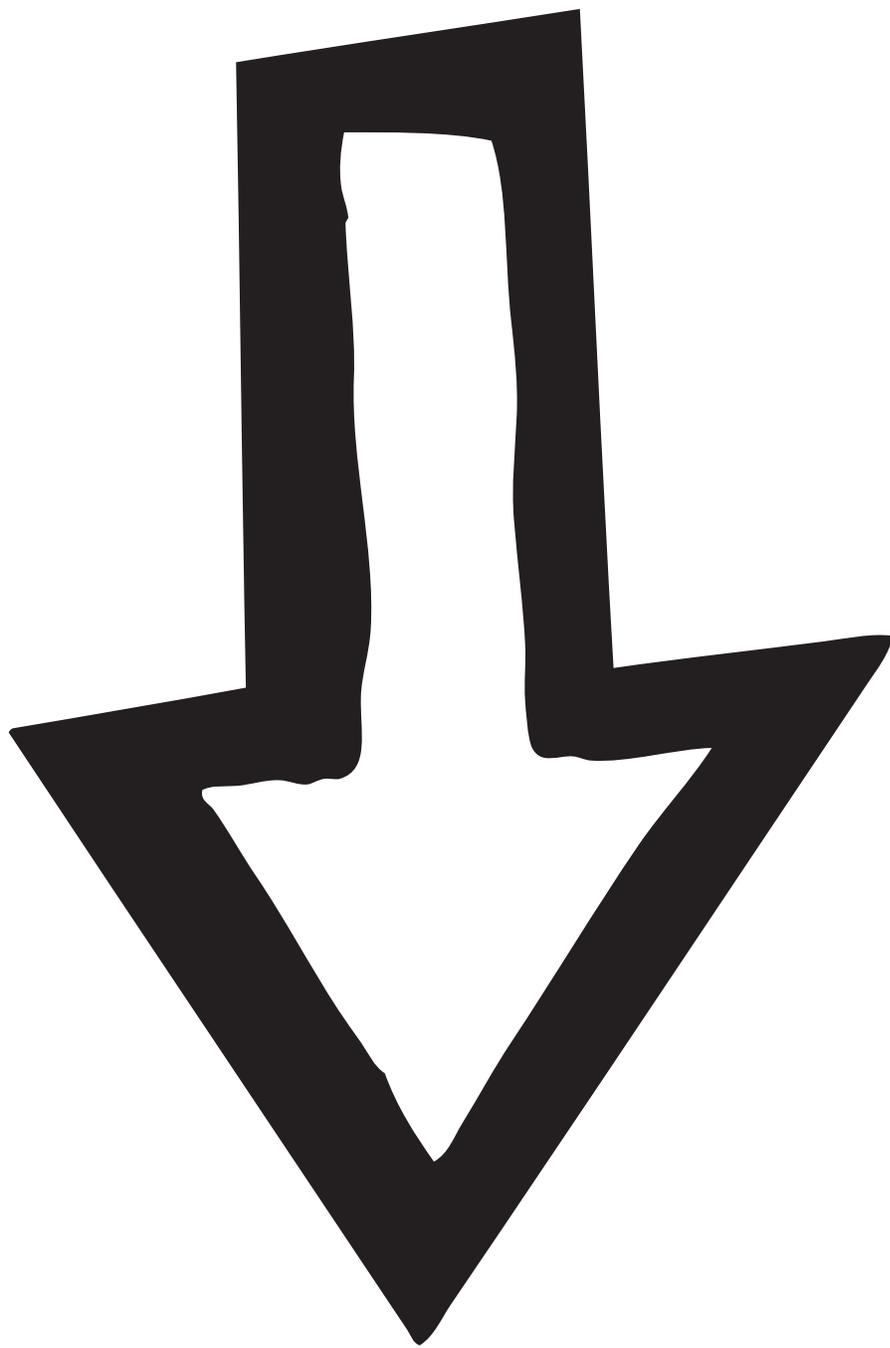
Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Say: **Clap-down!** or **Snap-up!** Children respond with the matching action. (A, WM)
- Say: **Clap!** or **Snap!** Children respond with the matching action. (A, WM)
- Say: **Clap** (pause) **down!** or **Snap** (pause) **up!** Children wait until they hear “down” or “up” before doing the action. (A, WM, IC)
- Say: **Clap!** or **Snap!** Children say “down” or “up” and then do the matching action. (A, WM, IC)
- Clap or snap. Children say “Clap-down!” or “Snap-up!” Then they do the action. (A, WM, IC)
- Show two symbols (see the clapping hands/snapping fingers and up/down arrows on the following pages). Children say “Clap-down!” or “Snap-up!” and then do the action. (A, WM, IC)
- Say: **Clap-down!** or **Snap-up!** Children do the opposite action. (A, WM, IC)
- Show two symbols (see the clapping hands/snapping fingers and up/down arrows on the following pages). Children say the symbols and do the opposite action. (A, WM, IC)











Brain Builder 5: Echo, Echo!

Preparation

Have children sit.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, listen to the word I say.**
- **Rule 2 is, stand up and say the same word.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Say a word (such as listen, focus, attention, self-talk, happy, sad, mad, and so on).
3. Children stand up and repeat the word.
4. Have children sit down again.
5. Repeat Steps 2, 3, and 4 with a different word.

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children's attention for transitioning between activities.

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Say two (or three or more) words. Children stand up and repeat the words. (A, WM, IC)
- Teach children actions to match specific words (for example, listen means stand up, attention means jump up, self-talk means squat down, happy means turn around, sad means touch shoulder, and so on). Children do the action when they hear the word. (A, WM, IC)
- Have children repeat the word and say the action before doing it. (A, WM, IC)
- Make matching actions more complex (for example, stand up and clap). (A, WM, IC)
- Divide children into two (or more) groups. Assign each group a different word-action pair. Children respond only if they hear their word-action pair. (A, WM, IC)

Brain Builder 6: Lost and Found



Preparation

Gather a few items that make noise, such as a ball, musical instruments, or squeaky toys.

Have children sit, leaving enough room to move, and close their eyes.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, remember what I say is lost.**
- **Rule 2 is, listen for the sound in the room.**
- **Rule 3 is, point to where you hear the sound.**

Steps

1. Face children. Make sure their eyes are closed.
2. Tell them what is lost, and demonstrate the lost item's sound: **The bell is lost.** Ring the bell.
3. Move to a different spot in the room.
4. After a few moments, have the lost item make its sound again.
5. Have children point to where they hear the sound.
6. Have children open their eyes. Say: **You found the bell!**
7. Repeat the steps with different items.

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children's attention for transitioning between activities.

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Change the pitch, volume, or tone of your voice. (A)
- Have a person be the "lost item." (A, WM)
- Make other sounds to distract from the one children are listening for. (A, WM)
- For Step 2, make the sound and have children guess the item. Complete Steps 3–6 with that item. (A, WM)
- Introduce two (or three or more) items for Step 2. Complete Steps 3–6 with each item at random. Have children guess which item they've found based on its sound before they open their eyes. (A, WM)
- Introduce one item for Step 2. Move to different spots in the room and make sounds for a variety of items introduced in other rounds of the game. Children wait to point until they hear the item from Step 2. (A, WM, IC)



Brain Builder 7: Shape Shifter

Preparation

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, look at the shape my body makes.**
- **Rule 2 is, when I say “Shape shifter!” make the same shape.**
- **Rule 3 is, stay frozen in that shape until I show you a new shape.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Make a shape with your body (for example, a narrow shape, a wide shape, a tall shape, a small shape, and so on).
3. Say: **Shape shifter!** Children make the same shape and stay frozen in it.
4. Repeat Steps 1 and 2 with different shapes.

Tips

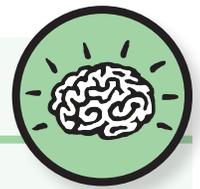
- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Have children take turns leading the game.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children’s attention for transitioning between activities.

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Show children a sequence of two (or more) body shapes. Have them freeze in the final shape. (A, WM, IC)
- Introduce a new rule: Children should shift shapes in the sequence only if you say “Shape shifter!” first. (A, WM, IC)
- Add sound effects to accompany changes from one body shape to the next (for example, start in a small shape, say: **Pop!** and switch to a tall, wide shape). (A, WM, IC)

Brain Builder 8: Sink or Swim



Preparation

Have children stand in a line along one side of a large space (an open area outside would work well). Say: **You are on the bank of a river. The goal of the game is for all of you to swim across the river to the other side where I am standing.** Demonstrate a swimming motion. Tell children to listen to the rules.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, when I say “Swim!” you swim across the river.**
- **Rule 2 is, when I say “Sink!” you sink down to the bottom of the river.**
- **Rule 3 is, stay frozen on the bottom of the river until you hear me say “Swim!” again.**

Steps

1. Stand facing children on the other side of the river.
2. Say: **Swim!** Children start to swim toward you.
3. After a few seconds, say: **Sink!** Children slowly sink down.
4. After a few seconds, say: **Swim!** again.
5. Repeat Steps 2–4 until all children have crossed the river.

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Have children take turns leading the game.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children’s attention for transitioning between activities.

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Combine swim and/or sink with other actions (for example, swim and clap, swim and hop, swim and skip, sink and spin, sink and wave, and so on). (A, WM)
- Have children remain sunken for longer and longer periods of time. (A, IC)
- Call out other actions instead of “Swim!” Children can move only when you say “Swim!” (A, WM, IC)
- Introduce an opposites rule: Children swim when you say “Sink!” and sink when you say “Swim!” (A, WM, IC)
- Change the setting and actions every few rounds. For example, say: **You are in a band marching down the street.** The actions are march and rest. Or say: **You are rabbits hopping across the garden.** The actions are hop and crouch. (A, WM, IC)



Brain Builder 9: Who's Wearing Red?

Preparation

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move. Begin the game by choosing one color that most children are wearing.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, when I say "Who's wearing red?" run in place only if you're wearing red.**
- **Rule 2 is, keep running in place until I say a different color.**
- **Rule 3 is, if you're not wearing red, stand still.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Say: **Who's wearing red? Run in place if you're wearing red.** Model running in place.
3. Children wearing red run in place. Other children stand still.
4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 with other colors and actions (see color-action pairs below).

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children's attention for transitioning between activities.

Color-Action Pairs

Color	Action
Red	Run in place
Pink	Point to the teacher
Orange	Open your arms wide
Yellow	Yawn really wide
Green	Grab the air
Blue	Balance on one foot
Purple	Pat your head
Brown	Bend your knees
Black	Blink your eyes
White	Wiggle your fingers

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Introduce a new rule: If you just say the action, children sit down. (A, WM, IC)
- Have children continue to do the action for the first color. Then add the action for a second color to create a sequence. If children are wearing the second color, they add the action for that color too. (A, WM, IC)
- Ask the question without giving directions for the action. Children do the action. (A, WM)
- Hold up color cards without speaking. Children do the matching action if they're wearing that color. (A, WM)
- Have children face a partner. Children do the actions that match the colors their partners are wearing. (A, WM, IC)



Brain Builder 10: Mixed-Up Rules!

Preparation

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, when I say “Touch your nose,” touch your toes.**
- **Rule 2 is, when I say “Pat your back,” pat your belly.**
- **Rule 3 is, when I say “Tap your knees,” tap your ears.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Say: **Touch your nose.** Children touch their toes.
3. Say: **Pat your back.** Children pat their bellies.
4. Say: **Tap your knees.** Children tap their ears.
5. Repeat Steps 2–4 with other mixed-up rules (see below).

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children’s attention for transitioning between activities.

Mixed-Up Rules

Direction	Action
Jump high	Squat low
Turn around.....	Sit down
Wiggle your toes	Wiggle your fingers
Look down	Look up
Hop back	Hop forward
Clap your hands.....	Stomp your feet

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Have children say the mixed-up rule action before doing it. (A, WM, IC)
- Have children say both your direction and the action before doing the mixed-up rule action. (A, WM, IC)
- Shorten or lengthen the waiting time between actions. (A, IC)
- Have children stand facing a partner. One child does the action you say, and the other does the mixed-up rule action. (A, WM, IC)
- Say two (or more) directions in a row. Children do the mixed-up rule actions. (A, WM)



Brain Builder 11: Partner Patty-Cake Walk

Preparation

Have children stand and face a partner.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, when I say “Go,” start stepping in place.**
- **Rule 2 is, when I say “Patty,” clap your hands together.**
- **Rule 3 is, when I say “Cake,” clap your partner’s hands up high.**
- **Rule 4 is, keep stepping and clapping until I say “Stop.”**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Say: **Go.** Children start stepping in place.
3. Say: **Patty.** Children clap their hands together.
4. Say: **Cake.** Children clap their partners’ hands up high.
5. Keep saying **Patty cake** while children step and clap. Then say: **Stop.**
6. Repeat Steps 2–5 with other clapping patterns (see below).

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children’s attention for transitioning between activities.

Clapping Patterns

Patty, cake, patty, cake
Patty, patty, cake, cake
Patty, cake, cake, patty
Cake, patty, cake, patty
Cake, cake, patty, patty
Cake, patty, patty, cake

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Speed up or slow down the clapping pattern. (A, WM, IC)
- Combine two or more clapping patterns. (A, WM)
- Introduce a mixed-up rule: When you say “Patty,” children clap their partners’ hands; when you say “Cake,” children clap their hands together. (A, WM, IC)
- Change the cake action: Children clap their right hands together and then their left hands. (A, WM, IC)

Brain Builder 12: Partner Pause



Preparation

The symbols you'll need to play this game are on the following pages. Photocopy them before you play the game.

Have children stand, leaving enough room to move.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, while I'm clapping, walk around the space.**
- **Rule 2 is, when I say "Pause," stop walking and stand toe-to-toe with a classmate.**
- **Rule 3 is, when I say "Play," start walking again.**

Steps

1. Face children.
2. Begin clapping. Children walk around the space.
3. Stop clapping and say: **Pause.** Children find a partner and stand toe-to-toe.
4. Say: **Play** and start clapping. Children begin walking again.
5. Repeat Steps 2–4 with different sounds and different types of movement (such as crawling, skipping, hopping, rolling, and jumping).

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Have children take turns leading the game. Allow them to choose the type of movement and the sound.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children's attention for transitioning between activities.
- Make a "remote control" that you point at children when you give the directions.

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Say: **Fast forward!** Children move more quickly. (A, WM)
- Say: **Rewind!** Children move backward. (A, WM)
- Say: **Stop!** Children stop in place. (A, WM)
- Use symbols (see the control buttons on the following pages) instead of verbal commands. (A, WM)
- Increase the pause time. (A, WM, IC)
- Change the partner pause action (for example, have children stand shoulder-to-shoulder, back-to-back, or finger-to-finger). (A, WM, IC)
- Make different sounds or play music while children are moving (for example, bang a drum, hit rhythm sticks, shake a tambourine, or play a CD). (A)
- Teach children specific types of movement to match different sounds (for example, clapping means walking, drumming means hopping, hitting rhythm sticks means crawling, and so on). (A, WM)

