

Skillmatics®
FAMILY
GAME
NIGHT
101



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Why Host a Family Game Night?

Parenting is a hard job. It's one that includes balancing learning with fun, discipline with compassion, and the everyday tightrope walk of challenging your child while supporting them. Throw in meetings and work projects, afternoon traffic, endless laundry, plus inevitable spills, bickering between siblings, and someone's refusal to eat their peas, and it can feel impossible to show up for fun, quality time with your family. Although there's no silver bullet that will suddenly make the parenting juggle easy, there is one activity that comes pretty close: family game night!

Hosting a family game night has tons of benefits for your little ones, from improving their social-emotional skills to helping them meet various cognitive developmental milestones. Planning a family game night allows them to express themselves creatively and using problem-solving skills, while spending time with parents, siblings, and friends helps them form important connections and learn how to cooperate with others. Finally, playing the games themselves will help your child work on everything from observational skills to storytelling to counting, all while having a blast!



Family game nights introduce your child to a wide range of topics and help them develop a myriad of skills, especially because Skillmatics games are specifically designed to be played by kids of certain age groups. Whether you reach for a game all about animals or community figures, matching or counting, or how to identify an unknown object, your little one will have a better picture of the world. Furthermore, playing these games will help your child learn to navigate that world, whether they're developing fine and gross motor skills, learning how to communicate with others, or recognizing patterns and exercising their memory.

In addition to developing your little one's motor and cognitive skills, family game nights also help your child exercise their social skills around other people. From following the rules to negotiating turns to winning graciously and losing gracefully, playing games with others will help strengthen cooperation and communication skills in your kid. Games with steps, desired outcomes, and multiple rounds also help instill a growth mindset in your child, and playing them with your little one will give you the opportunity to challenge them to be resilient and to celebrate success.

Beyond developing skills and encouraging growth, hosting a family game night achieves the most important goal of quality time together. By removing screens and other distractions, and bringing everyone together to work on the same task, family game nights present a wonderful opportunity for you to learn your child's habits and the little things that make them your favorite person, and for them to learn about and get closer to you, too. Shared challenges — even ones as small as matching flashcards or answering questions — bring you and your little one closer together, and the experience of playing games with each other will create a wealth of fun and fond memories that will last a long time.

Tips for a Fun Game Night



Planning a family game night can be as simple as pulling out a couple of board games one night, or as involved as writing it on the calendar and counting down the days. To increase the excitement — and the learning — try folding your little ones into the planning process.

- Your first step will be picking the night. To get into the rhythm of regularly setting aside time for a family game night, pick a night without any conflicting activities, or one that is easy to remember, like the first Friday of the month. Maybe after a few weeks, you want to have more family game nights, so you go for every other Friday night, or even every Friday night — it's all up to you! If they seem to be a hit, try inviting the neighbors over for a game night, or trade off going to a family friend's house every other week it's time to play.





- Next, ask your little one for help coming up with a fun and creative theme for the night. Maybe they'd like to explore the ocean, so throw some blue scarves or tape blue construction paper over the lights to get in an underwater mood. If you're going to be playing a lot of animal-related games, encourage them to make masks of their favorite creatures, or enlist their help making a snack inspired by the animal kingdom. Get their help creating a lion's mane out of an array of colorful veggies or putting paw prints of their favorite big cats on cupcakes. If you're playing a game that involves superheroes, or make smoothies with leafy greens to give them super strength. If you're playing a game that involves counting, ask your little ones to use cookie cutters to cut numbers out of dough and decorate them with a certain number of sprinkles.

• If you're having trouble coming up with a theme, nothing beats the classic pajama night, complete with pillow forts and blanket nests that your kids can construct while you get some snacks ready. Try making a set of simple instructions for your little one to follow, like including three towers or making a tunnel out of blankets in which to play the games in order to give them some practice following directions and using gross motor skills. To take the sleepover theme a little further, throw down some sleeping bags and pillows out in the backyard or on an apartment rooftop or deck and play games under the stars!



• To encourage everyone in your family to participate in the games and increase healthy competition, consider throwing in a prize to give to the winner each week. Maybe whoever wins a certain game or the most games if you're playing a couple gets to pick a movie to watch for a family movie night, or a fun dessert to make before the next family game night. You can get really creative and foster some artistic skills in your little one by having them make a prize certificate with markers, paint, and sparkles, or certificate with markers, paint, and sparkles, or even a crown made from simple craft paper. Check these creative crown craft printables made by [abcdelearning](#).

How to Pick Games for Family Game Night



One way to make sure your little one enjoys family game night is by ensuring you pick games that match their age and skill level. Your three year old will probably be overwhelmed by a strategy game that involves navigating around the board, while your seven year old might find a flashcard memory game a little too easy.

Game night is not only enjoyable family time, but a time for your little one to stretch developmental muscles, so you want to make sure you find a game that provides tricky but achievable challenges for them to complete. Skillmatics makes picking games easier by designing games for kids of specific age groups, ensuring there's always something engaging and fun to play!

Games for Toddlers

As a toddler, your little one should start reaching some developmental milestones that include following simple directions and sorting objects by shape or color. With these goals in mind, playing with flashcards is a great activity for you and your little one to do together.



Test your toddler's memory by putting down four shape cards, having them name all four, and then removing one to see if they can identify the missing one. You can also help them strengthen their gross motor skills and color recognition with a fun matching activity: cut out colorful pieces of paper and lay them on the ground or a table, then instruct your child to put the flashcard on the piece of paper with the same color. For an extra challenge, have everyone play a sorting game by setting a timer and instructing everyone to gather all animal cards of a particular habitat — underwater animals, insects, or birds — before the clock runs out.



Games for Three Year Olds



At three years old, your child's attention span is approximately 6-9 minutes, so expect game night to last only about a half an hour or so - it's okay if your kid doesn't always finish a game. With that in mind, set up family game night when your little one is well-rested and has a full belly, and take movement breaks to get the wiggles out if a game is going on too long. Similarly, pick a game that matches your child's age and interests, as a game that's too challenging can lose their attention or end in big emotions.



Three years old is also when children start to branch out from their immediate family, making game nights a great opportunity for your child to play with neighbors, friends, and classmates. Playing with others teaches your preschooler the value of fairness, how to share, and react to a loss with grace - all skills that will positively impact their development and make for a happier child.



Boom Boom Bingo

In this fast-paced game, players have to look through their Bingo bag for tiles matching their board, and when they find a match, they have to shout "Boom Boom Bingo!" The key skills required here are speed and matching as many tiles as possible before time runs out.

There's an element of surprise too, as players exchange bags after each turn, adding even more excitement to the already speedy game! Other than being fun, Boom Boom Bingo runs on matching work, which has been proven to further brain development in children. It gives them the opportunity to concentrate, work on their reasoning skills, solve problems, develop memory and much more.



Memory Match

Testing and strengthening your little one's memory, Memory Match has players match tiles to picture boards or roll the special picture dice and match animals to their habitats.



The game encourages the use of match skills which helps your child build observational, memory, critical thinking and spatial reasoning abilities. Get even more use out of Memory Match by repurposing the dice for these DIY games!



Guess in 10 Junior

A twist on 20 Questions, Guess in 10 Junior has players ask questions to guess the animal on the game card. Beyond developing communication skills, the game also strengthens problem solving, decision making, and creative thinking abilities in your child by pushing them to use the information they have to come up with questions that help them get closer to the answer.



Thoughtfully designed for younger players, Guess in 10 Junior comes with guided tiles to allow little ones to play without reading, letting everyone get in on the fun! Guess in 10 also comes with different versions such as Community Helpers, Food We Eat, and Inside My House, letting your little one expand their knowledge of various subjects.



Games for Five to Seven Year Olds

Around five or six years old, kids will start to put more time into relationships with peers, making this a great age to encourage them to play games with friends and classmates. Doing so presents them with lots of opportunities to practice good sportsmanship, something you can help with when you have a family game night. Model good behavior while playing a game, validate their emotions by encouraging healthy coping tools — suggest taking deep breaths or a quick cool down walk — and celebrating their successes in the game, even if they don't win the whole thing.



In terms of cognitive development, elementary school age is a time when kids begin to read, take on simple addition and subtraction, and practice problem solving. Look for games that involve some measure of strategy, vocabulary and reading comprehension, or math to help strengthen these skills while they play.

Rapid Rumble

Looking for the fastest, funniest, and most clever category game out there? Look no further than Rapid Rumble! Roll the die, set the timer, and get ready!



Quickly shout out answers for the categories and be the first one to finish your deck of Letter Cards. Perfect for helping your child pick up on new words and learn phonics, Rapid Rumble pushes players to think of answers and get rid of letter cards as fast as possible to win!



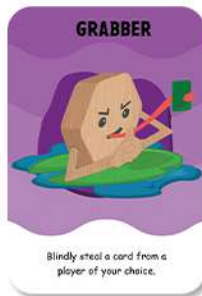


Sinking Stones

Perfect for strengthening your child's developing cognitive skills, Sinking Stones is a fast-paced strategy game.



Use the different cards to hop around and off the stones and save yourself from drowning in the deep water. This game strengthens your child's critical thinking and reasoning skills, all while they try to survive the sinking stones!



Games for Kids 8 Years and Older

At this age, your child will start to become more independent, accomplishing daily tasks on their own. At this age there's an opportunity to hand over official hosting duties. One idea is to let them plan a family game night (mostly) on their own, or to let them host a game night just for them and their friends. Giving your child this responsibility will increase their confidence and allow them to practice planning and making decisions for themselves on a more manageable scale - a skill that will definitely come in handy throughout life!

In terms of games, look for ones that encourage critical thinking and logical reasoning, as well as activities that continue to strengthen reading comprehension.





Conclusion

Adding a family game night to your rotation of family activities is not only a great way to encourage neverending learning in your child, but it's also a wonderful opportunity to start a new family tradition and form strong bonds with the people close to you. No matter how you play, family game night is sure to bring new excitement and experiences to you — that's the real win!



Shop our Skillmatics collection of games for your family game night here.

