

Improving Executive Functioning with a Deck of Cards

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My name is Emma Voss and I am a Speech-Language Pathologist at SunnyDays Therapy. Because of a placement during graduate school at an adult concussion and stroke clinic, I have found a love and passion for Executive Functioning. At SunnyDays Therapy, I am able to continue this love and begin an Executive functioning program! Executive functioning are skills used in everything you do (and you probably do it without even thinking about it). This includes initiating a task/activity, attending to the task, using sustained and divided attention, planning, adapting, and reviewing what you have done!

I love working on this with my clients because I love doing puzzles, crafts, and card games- which ALL highly focus on executive functioning. It is also fun to see how the kiddos quickly grasp the activities and feel so accomplished once it is done. When I talk with families, I always suggest using a deck of cards to start. For example, was there a game your parents or grandparents taught you that your child doesn't know? Teaching them requires executive functioning. I have also included some pictures for quick and simple ways to work on attention. These exercises are great to warm up the brain to any session or extensive activity, just like warming up before a big race!

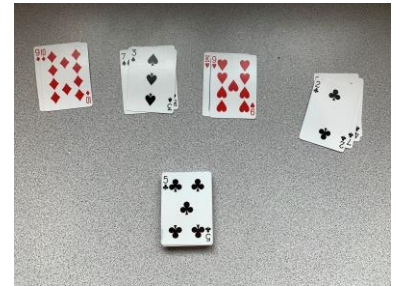


Activities

Building a Deck: This works primarily on verbal attention. Providing two sets of decks, separated into colors. You will say what color (black or red) for your child to add to the deck. Start slow and see how fast you are able to go! Make sure to switch up the colors, to know they are really listening to what you are saying.



Separating a Deck: This primarily focuses on visual attention. Now, with a shuffled deck, create two groups (black and red) and have your child separate the deck into the two colors. At the end, double check the decks to make sure it is completed correctly. If you want to make it a little trickier, separate into the four suits. This may take a while at first, but with practice, should be able to be completed in no time at all!



Pyramid Solitaire: This activity targets working memory, visual scanning, and visual attention. Deal out the cards, 1 card in the first row, 2 cards in the second row, overlapping left & right bottom of the card in the first row. Then 3 cards in the third row, overlapping the cards from the second row, until you have 7 rows in a pyramid shape. The card values include king=13, queen=12, jack=11, ace=1, and all other cards are their face value. The goal is to make combinations of 2 cards that equal 13 (king can be removed, as it equals 13 alone). You can only remove cards that are not covered (the nearest ones that don't have any other cards on top of them). With remaining cards, turn over cards one at a time and make a stack- you can use the top card in combination with the pyramid to make 13. Try to remove all the cards to win.



Adding these games into your game nights or after dinner plans is a great way to help target executive functioning in a fun way! I hope you enjoy as much as I do!