

## Introducing and Using Games

When introducing a game to young children, the following strategy is usually successful. Start it several days before you want children to play the game independently. Gather the whole class around you. Each “step” below is a short and simple action, such as dealing out cards, picking up a card, and so forth.

Teacher	Children
Demonstrates (with one or more children) and describes step A	Describe step A
Demonstrates and describes step B	Describe steps A & B
Demonstrates and describes step C	Describe steps A, B, & C
...and so on	

Keep modeling until children can tell you all the steps two days in a row.

Each child should play each new game *at least once* during the week in which it is introduced

For some situations, it may be necessary for you or an aide to play with single children at first.

### Guidelines for Games

Teachers should be involved with the games, observing, so children know they are important. Here are some answers to some common questions.

#### How do you help children learn to take turns in a game?

In the initial small group work, introduce the order of turns before the game (e.g., "We're going to take turns. First it's Doug's turn (point to Doug's name card), then it's Julie's turn (point).") As you model and guide and game playing, teach children to use name cards or photos to tell whose turn it is (rather than having to continuously say, "It's not your turn").

#### What do you do about losing control of the class?

Hold class meetings to decide how to solve *their* problems. Use “one person” and “the other person” rather than people’s names.

#### Do you assign the games and partners?

Children may be able to choose when they play the games, but recording sheets help keep track of whether they are choosing wisely. Assign children to play certain games as necessary (if they haven’t “signed up” by themselves all week).

Choosing partners of about equal ability is usually beneficial. Choosing or helping children choose partners with whom they will interact is helpful.

#### Do you let children change game rules?

If they ask other members of group, yes.

If they simplify a game too much, refer to the original rules.



### **Do you emphasize competition?**

We often just play so that everyone finishes.

If it comes up, treat “Who won?” as a trivial question.

When children seem to desire a winner, we often treat the first person who finishes (“wins”) as “the first winner,” the next person as “the second winner,” and so forth.

### **What should the teacher do?**

Playing with individual children or small group is most useful.

Assess children’s level and thinking strategies.

Also, what specific knowledge (e.g., counting skills or number combinations) do they possess?