

Building Self-Regulation Skills

What is self-regulation? Basically, self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage your energy states, emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in ways that produce positive results such as well-being, loving relationships, and learning.

(This definition is taken from: <https://www.yourtherapysource.com>)

Self-regulation skills are important for the development of anger management skills, attention-to-task skills, social skills, cognitive skills and generally, in overall development.

Activities to develop Self-Regulation Skills.

Birth to 18 months:

- Peek-a-boo, Pat-a-Cake, Criss Cross Apple Sauce, Round and Round the Garden (people games such as these will expand self-regulation)
- Finger Play Games/Songs with simple motor actions: Open them/Shut Them, Eensy Weensy Spider, If You're Happy and You Know it, Roly Poly (or similar activities in any language)
- Hiding games: hide a toy under a cloth and play a hiding game, sing the song Someone is Hiding using a scarf or blanket with your child
- Quick turn-taking activities with adult or adult and peer using cause/effect toys, ball ramps, songs such as : Hurray, Reach Inside and Look into the Mirror
- Dramatic play: dress-up clothes, sweeping floor, washing dishes, etc. play
- Talk to the child about their activities during the day. Begin by using one word names (labels for objects and activities) and as language develops move to two words, etc.



- 18 months to 36 months:

- Finger Plays/Songs with Motor Actions: Eensy Weensy Spider, Hokey Pokey, If You're Happy and You Know it, Head and Shoulders, Everybody Do This, Baby Shark, etc.
- Games such as: Cooperative Simon Says, freeze dance, red light/green light (can be done in circle as well as outside or in the gym), high five hot potato, pass a hand game, etc.
- Matching and sorting games: using objects, lotto games,
- Turn-taking activities with songs such as: Hooray Song, Down at the Corner, Reach Inside and quick turn-taking with insert puzzle, shape sorters, car ramps, etc. (These activities are teacher-directed. For example, each child has a turn putting a piece in an insert puzzle)
- Continue to talk to the child about everything in their environment
- Dramatic play activities: sweeping, plastic food, babies to feed, cloth, etc.



- 3 to 5 years of age:

- Finger Plays/Songs with motor actions: Songs and finger plays with movement are very important to help children learn to self-regulate
- Songs where you add on things such as: Five Green and Speckled Frogs, Down by the Bay, 5 Little Monkeys, Alice the Camel, patterning games (using hands, feet, etc. at circle)
- Games such as: Cooperative Simon says, freeze dance, red light/green light (you can become more complex in your directions), high five hot potato, pass a body part, motor boat motor boat, musical hoola hoops, high five duck duck goose, goose, What time is it Mr. Wolf, Pass a ball by name, etc.
- Cooking activities or making playdough, smoothies, etc. Children learn to follow instructions, wait to put something in, etc.

- Turn-taking activities with songs and activities (continue to give teacher-direction) and puzzles can become interlocking, simple games such as: Crocodile dentist, Pop-Up Pirate, Connect-4, simple card games, lotto memory games, simple bingo (can be cooperative bingo)
- Dramatic play: provide props for a variety of dramatic activities
- Read books, encourage children to tell stories
- Sequencing activities using puzzles, cards, computer games
- I Spy Games/books and When I say game (for example, when I say chocolate, stand up. “Broccoli, soup, hot dogs, chocolate...”
- Yoga, breathing activities: (e.g. smell chocolate/blow out birthday candle)



5-7 years of age:

- Action songs, songs that add on (5 Little Ducks, Alice the Camel), patterning games and songs
- Singing in rounds: Can use Row Row Your Boat to begin
- Games such as: Cooperative Simons (and all the other games described above) as well as fast moving games such as 4 squares
- Card games (Fish, Spoons, Blink, etc.) and board games such as :Candyland, Snakes and Ladders, bingo, jenga
- I Spy games/books (can become more complicated and “When I say” (adult can expand directions (for example: When I Say carrots, clap your hands and touch your nose), also 20 Questions game and “who am I” guessing games
- Sequencing and interlocking puzzles
- Yoga, mindfulness, isometrics
- Mazes, word finds, memory matching games
- Cooking activities



7-12 years of age:

- Songs with dance movements to practice and follow, stop/go games, freeze dance, statue game, red/light green light, what time is it Mr. Wolf, Throw the ball to someone (with a red shirt, blue shoes, etc.) game
- Songs described above can still be used
- Yoga, mindfulness, isometrics, breathing activities
- Games such as: Cooperative Simon Says, patterning games (make movement directions more difficult), When I say, Twister
- Board games such as: checkers, Concentration, Sorry. Card games: Uno, Crazy Eights, Go Fish
- I Spy Games, bingo, puzzles and brain teaser books
- Cooking activities

12 years old and above:

- All the above activities plus...
- Minecraft or computer games with the same ideas, lumosity or cogmed computer activities. Games such as bejewelled, tetris and bubblicious (because you can earn points by delaying your first response)
- Crossword puzzles, suduko

Examples of Isometric Activities:



Exercise 1



Exercise 3



Exercise 4

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