

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Executive Function Life Skill: Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is the ongoing search for **valid and reliable knowledge to guide beliefs, decisions and actions.**

Suggestions for Promoting Critical Thinking

Tip:

You can ask questions that will help your child make predictions or come up with theories to predict what causes different things to happen. For example, you can ask:

- “What do you think it means when the egg jumps?”
- “What do you think will happen if the baby bird leaves the nest without his mother?”

Skill:

Critical Thinking promotes **cause and effect thinking**, which calls on **Executive Function** skills.

Tip:

As the baby bird encounters each animal and object, you can ask your child if he or she thinks that’s the baby bird’s mother, and ask why or why not.

Skill:

The baby bird uses **problem solving**—an aspect of Critical Thinking—to try to find his mother, but because he has just hatched, he doesn’t have very much prior knowledge and has to rely on information from the other animals and objects.

Tip:

Ask children to share an experience of losing something and trying to find it. Once they tell their story, ask them what clues they used. What worked for them in finding the lost person or object?

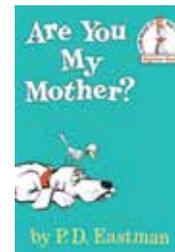
Skill:

Helping children **analyze their problem-solving process** and how well it worked helps them become more adept at Critical Thinking.

Are You My Mother?

By P.D. Eastman

After he falls from his nest, a confused baby bird asks everyone he meets (dog, plow, airplane and more) if they’re his mother until (hooray!) he finds her. This charming story of identity and belonging is also available in a bilingual edition..



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You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: **Serve and Return** and **Executive Function** skills.

Serve and Return, like game of ball, involves a back and forth conversation between you and your child where you listen, then build on and extend what your child says or does to promote learning.

Executive Function skills are skills you use to manage your attention, your feelings, your thoughts and your behavior to reach your goals.

They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self control.

Find more about Families and Work Institute’s *Mind in the Making* at www.mindinthemaking.org.