

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Executive Function Life Skill: Focus and Self Control

Children need this skill in order to achieve their **goals**, especially in a world that is filled with distractions and information overload. It involves **paying attention**, **remembering the rules**, **thinking flexibly** and exercising self control.

Suggestions for Promoting Focus and Self Control

Tip:

As you read each page of *Goodnight Moon*, point to the objects named in the story (the red balloon, two little kittens) and ask your child to point after you.

Skill:

When you invite your child to find the objects, you are helping your child learn to **pay close attention** to the details in the pictures, which calls on **Executive Function** skills. The back and forth interaction you have with your child in reading this book is what researchers call “**serve and return**.” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something (serves) and the other responds (returns). The importance of these everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.

Tip:

After the opening of the book, there is a tiny mouse on all of the pages with pictures in color. See if your child can find and point to the mouse. If not, point the mouse out to your child.

Skill:

Your child will not only have to pay attention to find the mouse, he or she will also have to use the skill of **self control** to select the mouse in the midst of everything else happening in the picture.

Tip:

Once your child has heard *Goodnight Moon* a number of times, stop before words that rhyme. Can your child remember that after “Goodnight, kittens” is “Goodnight, mittens?” You can help your child remember by pointing to the relevant pictures.

Skill:

When you play the rhyming and remembering game, you are not only helping your child learn to **listen carefully to the sound of words**, you are also promoting his or her **working memory**, an important aspect of Focus and Self Control.

Goodnight Moon

By Margaret Wise Brown

In this classic bedtime story, a rabbit says goodnight to what’s in the room, from “Goodnight, moon” to “Goodnight, nobody” finally to “Goodnight, noises everywhere.” The mesmerizing cadence of the rhymes and the clever details in every picture form a reassuring and calming end of the day tradition for children and adults alike.



High-quality books and educational resources from First Book supporting research-based Life Skills from *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky



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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.