

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 *Noisy Nora*, suggest things Nora could do instead of causing trouble:

- “Nora might like to read a book while she waits.”
- “Nora could think of something funny as she waits.”
- “It might be easier for Nora to wait if she sings a song.”
- “Nora might tell her parents that she needs some attention, too.”

Skill:

Focus and Self Control includes finding ways **to wait even when it is hard**, which calls on **Executive Function** skills. Getting good at waiting requires strategies, including telling people what you need. Your child can learn strategies from you and the characters in books.

Tip:

Ask your child what else Nora could do to help her wait.

Skill:

By asking your child to suggest his or her own ideas for waiting, you are helping your child to be prepared with strategies when **self control** is necessary. The back and forth conversation you have with your child about 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:

Remind your child of a time when she or he managed to wait successfully:

- “When I was on the phone, you waited for me to read your book by looking at the pictures alone.”

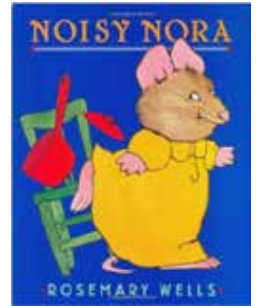
Skill:

When you remind your child of a time that he or she exercised Focus and Self Control, you are **reinforcing the strategies that have been successful**.

Noisy Nora

By Rosemary Wells

What’s a mouse to do when her father and mother spend all their time with her older sister and baby brother? Make lots of noise—that’s Nora’s solution! So, “First she banged the window. Then she slammed the door ...” Hushed by her parents and scolded by her sister, Nora runs away,



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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.