

As our children grow, we all want them to develop into creative, innovative thinkers who work well with others and have a range of social skills that will allow them to succeed in life.

There is a wide range of advice available on how to teach children how to think.

- + Give them opportunities to play.
- + Pause and wait - don't intervene immediately. Give them time to think for themselves.
- + Ask lots of open ended questions – why? What do you think would happen if...?
- + Don't make judgements about your child's choices but encourage them to explore their ideas without criticism. Let them learn by themselves.
- + Demonstrate with your own behaviour how to make choices.

Playing card games with family and friends offers opportunities to develop all these skills and more.

Recent studies have showed that playing card games with children has a range of educational and emotional benefits. Card games can be seen as promoters of healthy competition, as well as for efficient social interaction, and they can trigger the development of several skills among children.

CARD GAMES HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP THEIR MOTOR, COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Playing card games is beneficial for dexterity and eye-hand coordination. The simple action of holding playing cards in their small hands helps children develop these two main motor skills. Agility can also be developed thanks to card games depending on the game complexity. The age required for such games is usually 3+.

COGNITIVE SKILLS AND MATHS DEVELOPMENT

The cognitive skills triggered by playing card games with children are numerous: from memorisation to matching, number and pattern recognition and the promotion of more complex math concepts depending on the difficulty level. Increasing levels of difficulty makes children use their intellect more in providing solutions and in finding new ways of winning, thus developing creative and strategic thinking.

Card games also engage skills related to probability and statistics. Yet, the game has to be constantly fun, in order to keep the child focused on it. So, whoever is accompanying the child in this activity (parents, brothers/sisters, grandparents or other friends) has to maintain a joyful atmosphere. Playing is fun, so learning can be, too.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The interaction of multiple players can certainly help to improve emotional health and well-being. Children will interact with their family and are encouraged to take part in competition in a safe and friendly way.

Achieving a goal can be as important as learning to handle a loss. Patience and fair-play can be developed or taught from early ages and card games are extremely useful means for it. All card games require communication, so children have to talk to each other, to negotiate or comprehend the rules, to take turns and to challenge each other. Helping a friend in difficulty and being an honest team player can also be representative for the emotional benefits of card games. How do we handle the child's emotional distress caused by specific situations in card games? By keeping things entertaining and by showing the child that playing should be fun no matter what.