What’s a fun way to help children build strong brains?

The Serve and Return Origami Game

Scientists say the way to help children build strong brain architecture is through “serve and return” interactions. A child reaches out for interaction (“serves”), and the caregiver responds (“returns”). Here’s a serve-and-return game to play with toddlers and up. Find a small friend and have some fun!

Cut along edge of game and fold using instructions on back.

Play a game of Tic-Tac-Toe.

Have a thumb wrestling match.

Tell a knock-knock joke.

Act like an animal. Ask your partner to guess what.

Try not to smile for 30 seconds. NO SMILING!

Make up a song about your friend and sing it to them.

Make up a secret handshake.

Have a staring contest.

What’s a fun way to help children build strong brains?
How to fold

1. Cut the game out and place face down.
2. Fold all corners to the centre.
3. You now have a square.
4. Turn the square over.
5. Fold corners to the centre to make a small square.
6. Insert your fingers.
7. Ta-da!

How to play

1. Get a partner.
2. Ask your partner to pick a word (Let’s, Build, Strong or Brains).
3. Spell the word. As you say each letter, open and close the game forwardly and sideways to show the numbers inside. (Ex. “Let’s” goes forwardwards, sideways, forwardwards, sideways.)
4. Ask your partner to pick one of the four numbers.
5. Count up to the number out loud while opening and closing the game.
6. Ask your partner to pick a number.
7. Open that number. Read the instructions to your partner.
8. When your partner is finished, switch roles!

Learn more about Serve and Return at

tn.gov/tccy/topic/tccy-aces
AlbertaFamilyWellness.org