

Looking for a simple way to boost Executive Function skills in your K – 3rd Grade classroom?

At Reflection Sciences, our goal is to reduce gaps in achievement and opportunity by advancing children's learning capacity through the science of Executive Function.

“The EF Way to PLAY” Intervention Activities

Both practical and PLAY-ful, Reflection Sciences Intervention Activities will be an instant favorite for both you and your students alike!

Based on trusted childhood games and developed by Executive Function researchers, educators, and parents, these fun intervention activities promote social emotional learning, mindfulness, and self-regulation.



Our step-by-step games are appropriate for children in grade K – 3. They target the earliest stages of Executive Function development, ensuring an effortless and enjoyable integration of Executive Function into any classroom.

Check out the free sample activity below, *Bear and Dragon*, one of our most popular games. It includes five different challenge levels along with reflective questions to help you model Executive Function and ensure that all children benefit.

To purchase our Intervention Activities Guide, visit [reflectionsciences.com](https://www.reflectionsciences.com) or email info@reflectionsciences.com

Bear/Dragon & Simon Says

This activity requires children to use their Executive Function skills to **remember**, **follow**, and **switch** between different sets of rules.

Grade Level	K – 3rd Grade
Start at Game __ if MEFS App™ Scores fall into __%	Game Level 1: 0 - 33% Game Level 2: 33 - 67% Game Level 3: 67 - 100%
Group Size	Small Groups
Materials (Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Store-bought Puppets or Toys ▪ Sock Puppets ▪ Character cut-outs on sticks
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Classroom ▪ Gym ▪ Outdoors
Time to Complete	10 – 15 Minutes
Video Link	https://youtu.be/pxDgPNvX668



Activity Overview:

Two puppets are presented. Children are asked to follow the “happy” puppet but not the “grumpy” puppet. The game ends after 5 minutes or until the game has reached a good stopping point as determined by the teacher.



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Executive Function Skills:

- Listening to and Remembering Rules
- Inhibiting Impulses
- Cognitive Flexibility

Observe & Respond:

If a Child...

Has trouble stopping an action...

Has trouble switching from one rule to the next...

Then...

Have them sit on their hands until they hear/see the signal.

Offer ways to make transitions easier, such as visual cues.

Game Level 1 | Follow Bear Not Dragon:

Have children sit in a group, facing you, with some room to move. Next, show children eight actions (or more if you choose) and ask them to imitate each action:

"Touch your ears; cover your eyes; clap your hands; touch your feet; touch your tummy; wave your hand; cross your arms; jump; stick out your tongue!"

Once children are familiar each action, bring out the puppets, one on each hand. Introduce children to the **Happy Bear** and **Grumpy Dragon**. Tell them:

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“Okay, lets meet our friends. This is the **Happy Bear**. The **Happy Bear** is happy, so we will do what he tells us to do. The **Grumpy Dragon** is grumpy, so we don't listen to him. We do not do what he tells us to do. No way!”

Ensure they understand what to do when the **Happy Bear** or **Grumpy Dragon** talks. Ask them:

“Which one is the **Happy Bear**?” (Group points to bear)

“Which one is the **Grumpy Dragon**?” (Group points to dragon)

“When the **Happy Bear** talks, do we do what he says?” (Yes!)

“When the **Grumpy Dragon** talks, do we do what he says?” (No way!)



If the group answers incorrectly, restate the rules and questions. Model a series of correct responses prior to conducting the level. Once they understand, keep them seated (option to sit on their hands). Conduct three or more rounds with the **Happy Bear** and **Grumpy Dragon**, alternating commands from each. If children have difficulty, stay on this level.

Game Level 2 | Follow Dragon and NOT Bear:

Repeat Level 1, but instead of instructing children to do what the **Happy Bear** says and not what the **Grumpy Dragon** says, instruct them listen to what the **Grumpy Dragon** says but not the **Happy Bear**. Tell them:





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“Now we’re going to be silly. When the **Happy Bear** talks, we are not going to do what he tells us to do. And when the **Grumpy Dragon** talks, we will do what he tells us to do!”

Ensure they understand what to do when each puppet talks. Ask them:

“When the **Grumpy Dragon** talks, do we do what he says?” (Yes!)

“When the **Happy Bear** talks, do we do what he says?” (No way!)

If the group answers incorrectly, restate the rule and question. Once they understand, conduct three or more rounds. Continue at this level until they have demonstrated mastery.

Game Level 3 | Simon Says (no puppets, no modeling):

Have children stand up and repeat Level 1 but remove the visual cues of the bear and dragon puppets and replace the rules with Simon Says. Tell them:

“Okay, now we’re going to play this game without the puppets helping us. This is called Simon Says. If I say, ‘Simon Says’ then you will do what I ask you to do. If I don’t say ‘Simon Says,’ you will not do what I ask you to do.”



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Ensure they understand what to do when you give them directions. Ask them:

“When I say, ‘Simon Says’ do we do what I ask?” (Yes!)

“When I DON’T say ‘Simon Says’, do we do what I ask?” (No way!)

If the group answers incorrectly, restate the rule and the question. Once they understand, conduct three or more rounds. Continue the game until you feel children have demonstrated an understanding of the rules.

Reminder | Game at a Glance:

Game Level 1: Listen to Bear not Dragon

Game Level 2: Opposite Bear/Dragon

Game Level 3: Simon Says (no modeling)

Game Level 4: Simon Says (with modeling)

Game Level 5: Opposite Simon Says

Game Level 4 | Simon Says (actions modeled by adult):

Repeat Level 3 but model all the actions. Children now have to resist imitating you!

“Okay, now we’re going to play Simon Says again. I am going to do all the movements. Remember, you’re not imitating me, you only do what I ask when I say, ‘Simon Says’.”

Ensure they understand the new rules as you did in Level 3. Once they understand, conduct three or more rounds. Continue at this level until you feel children have demonstrated mastery.

Game 5 | Simon Says Reverse Rules (optional)

Explain that children should now do the activity every time EXCEPT when you say Simon Says!



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Talk & Reflect:

At the end of each activity, talk with children about what they noticed about the activity. Use language that acknowledges the difficulty of the game.

Ask children:

“What was the hardest part about playing this game?”

“What did you do that helped make it easier?”

Model reflection by restating some of the student responses for everyone to hear again:

“It can be hard not to do what the dragon says!”

“It was easier if we thought about how happy the bear was!”

Give children some time to think. Call on children at random. Ask other children to give a thumbs up if they had the same idea.

Additional Ideas & Resources:



Try the activity at different times of the day (morning, midday, afternoon) and in different settings. If outdoors, make one of the actions more active. For example, run to a certain structure outside, do jumping jacks, balance on one foot.



Share! Children will be excited to tell their families about the activities. Let parents know you are working on “Executive Function” skills and share about this in your emails, newsletters, family nights, conferences, etc. This can help reinforce Executive Function development.



Teacher Tip



Additional Resource



Curricular Integration

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Additional Ideas & Resources, Continued:

- A+** Prior to playing the game, children make a “grumpy” and “happy” sock during craft time. Encourage them to make stories about each sock.
- A+** Use different sock characters each time. Make the socks familiar people or animals, with the sock telling facts about who/what they are before the game begins.
- A+** For example, “I am a frog. I eat flies, make the sound ‘ribbit,’ and used to be a tad pole. Sometimes I can be poisonous, but only if I’m very colorful.”
- A+** **Numbers:** Make the actions verbal: “Count to ten.” “Count backward from 5.”
- A+** **Vocabulary:** Use keywords from a category as the actions (animals, vehicles, colors): “Flap your arms like an Eagle.” “Be a choo-choo train.” “Point to something yellow.”
- A+** Video Link: <https://youtu.be/pxDgPNvX668>

Grumpy Dragon



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Happy Bear



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