

Activity Share: **Observation Game**

Age group: Toddler



The next time you're on the road or waiting for a meal, give these classic hidden object games a mathematical twist.

Play this game with your child while riding the bus or driving in the car, waiting at the doctor's office or shopping together in the supermarket.

Directions:

1 Find something in clear view and choose one attribute for a clue. For example, you might say, "round like a ball" for an orange.

2 Then say, “I spy with my little eye something round like a ball.” Invite your child to look around and figure out what it was you spied.

3 Once your child spies the object you've chosen, switch roles and invite your child to spy something for you to look for.

4 As you look, talk about one or two different things you see that don't have the attribute your child has given you. (“Hmm ...That box couldn't be it – it's not shaped like a ball...”) until you find the object your child has chosen.

5 As the game continues, increase the attributes to two. For example, “I see something with 4 legs and that is smaller than this car” (a dog).

Parent Tips:

This activity helps your child figure out how to recognize an object's attributes and sort objects into groups with similar attributes – skills related both to math and science. The ability to group by number, shape, or measurement helps develop your child's mathematical thinking. Grouping by color, texture, or hardness will introduce your child to scientific classification.

As an extension, help your child practice organizing objects by similar attributes. In the supermarket, encourage your child to organize the purchases in the cart in some way of his own choosing. Invite your child to tell you the rule for the grouping (maybe “green with leaves” or “boxes”) so you can place additional items in the right group. You might make a mistake in placing an object so your child can have fun showing you the “right way” to group things.

