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Barrier Games—"Do You See What I See?"

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Barrier games are a great language tool—they provide opportunities to develop receptive (understanding) and expressive (speaking) communication skills. In a barrier game, two players sit across from each other with a barrier, such as an easel, between them. Each player has duplicate scenes and objects. Place the barrier so that each player is unable to see the other player's scene and objects. One player—the directing player—chooses where to set each object on his/her scene. The directing player then gives verbal directions to help the other player set up his/her scene exactly the same way. The barrier keeps both players from seeing each other's scene during this process. Each player must be very attentive, patient, and clear in his/her descriptions or questions in order to match the two scenes. Once the players feel like their scenes match, let them compare their scenes.

What Are Some Benefits of Using Barrier Games?

The barrier game format is perfect for improving receptive and expressive language skills such as:



- Listening carefully to directions and details.



- Giving clear and concise directions.



- Questioning for clarification and accuracy.



- Comprehending and expressing basic concepts.



- Storytelling.



- Using and understanding vocabulary.



- Using describing words such as adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions.



- Discussing and reflecting on an activity.

What Are Some Examples of Barrier Games?

From Head to Toe – Print out two copies of the same person or character and two identical



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(cont.)



sets of clothes and accessories, then cut out and laminate the copies. Seat each child on either side of the barrier. Give each child the same person or character and set of clothes and accessories. One child dresses the person or character and describes to the other child how to do the same. The other child listens to the directions and attempts to make his/her person or character look the same. When the clothes and accessories are on the pictures, the children then compare the pictures for similarities and differences. A great variation to this game is to use Mr. Potato Head®.

Make It Match! – Provide each child with a piece of paper and markers or crayons. One child draws a picture and describes it. The other child listens to the directions and attempts to draw the same picture on his/her page. Switch roles after each turn. Modify this task by giving the children copies of a page from a coloring book to color.

Say What? – Provide each child with identical picture scenes (park, beach, store, etc.) and objects for his/her side of the barrier. The teacher or parent gives the children different commands (i.e., “Put the fish in the water.” “Put the bird in the sky.” “Put the girl beside the blue car at the mall.”). The children follow the directions at the same time. Once the teacher or parent gives all directions, compare each child’s work for listening and comprehension accuracy. For extension, the children can tell a story about a time they went to the park, beach, store, etc.

Variations on Barrier Games

To increase the difficulty level, have the children give two or more directions at a time. To practice social skills, have the children work together in teams of two or more on each side of the barrier. To work on narrative skills, have the children create a story about the scene and the people or characters in it.

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