

## ***Supporting your child's speech, language and communication at home***

### *Sentence-building Activities*

This resource is designed to be used at home by parents and carers to support the development of their child's ability to speak in sentences.

While the instructions often describe how the activities can be done by groups of children, **all of these activities can also easily be done with one child**, where the parent or carer takes turns with the child.

# Add an adjective



This exercise is great for encouraging the use of descriptive words (adjectives) and linking them into simple sentences.

## Setting up

Get the children to collect some objects to describe, such as a ball, toy or cup. They can choose more unusual objects such as a sieve or a thistle. The more unusual the object, the wider the range of words needed to describe them.

## Playing the game

Hold the ball in your hand and say: 'This is a ball.' Hand the ball to the next child and ask them to add another word to describe the ball. For example, they might say: 'It's a blue ball.' The ball is then passed to the next child, who adds another descriptive word. 'It's a round ball.' Keep going as long as you can. 'It's a big ball'. 'It's a bouncy ball.'

## Remember

As always, recognise and praise good listening behaviours.



### Make it easier...

Prompt with some gentle questions. 'What does the ball feel like?'

### Make it harder

With older children, get them to add the words together into a sentence. 'It's a blue ball.' 'It's a round blue ball.' 'It's a big, round blue ball ... , and so on.'

'I am learning so many words to describe things.'





# Guess what?

This exercise helps children to practise both understanding sentences and saying them. They have to listen and understand clues to work out the answer. The activity also helps them to learn about categories. Some children might need quite a lot of support with this activity at first.

## Setting up

Create a set of pictures (about 12) by cutting photographs from magazines. Alternatively, use picture cards you might already have from other games.

Arrange the pictures face up. Without being seen, put a coin (or some other reward) under one of the pictures.

Explain that you are going to describe one of the pictures. The children's job is to decide which one you are talking about.



## Playing the game

Let's say you have chosen a photograph of a frog. Offer the children six clues, one for each of the headings below. For example, say: 'This is what category it belongs to - it's an animal!'

### Heading

The category it belongs to  
What it does  
One way of describing it  
What it's like  
What it's not like  
The letter it begins with

### Clue

It's an animal  
It can jump  
It's green  
It's a bit like a toad  
It's not like a rabbit  
It begins with the letter F

### Day-to-day

You can play this game anywhere, any time, without props. Play it like I spy, but instead start by saying, 'I'm thinking of something that lives in a zoo... or I'm thinking of someone who has a baby brother...'

## Taking it further

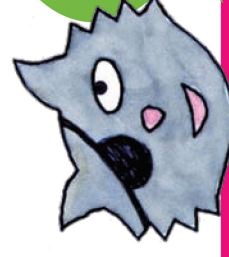
When the children are familiar with the activity, let them take turns at being 'teacher'. At first, the children might need a lot of adult help with making sure their descriptions fit the six categories, though they will develop this ability with practice.

### Variation

Play the game as a quiz.

Choose a picture without telling anyone what it is. See if the children can guess correctly by asking the six questions.

1. What category does it belong to?
2. What does it do?
3. How would you describe it?
4. What is it like?
5. What is it not like?
6. What letter does it begin with?



'I gave really good clues. The others guessed what I was talking about.'

# Do as bossy Boo Cat says

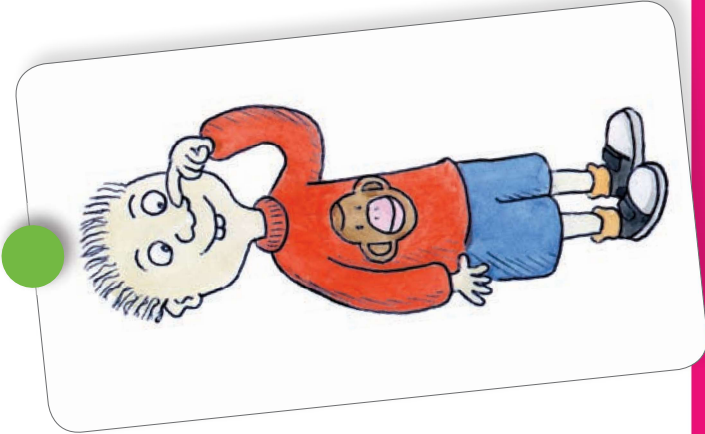


10 mins

This activity encourages children to use simple sentences to tell others what to do. It's also great fun.

## Setting up

Prepare a set of picture cards by cutting up the Do as bossy Boo Cat says sheets. These cards show actions like touch your nose, run to the window or wiggle your foot. Explain that Boo is feeling very bossy today. Take one of the picture cards yourself. 'Bossy Boo Cat says sit on the floor.' Sit on the floor, as instructed.



## Playing the game

Ask a child to pick a card. Get them to pass on the instruction to another member of the group. For example: 'Bossy Boo Cat says walk to the door.'

## Taking it further

When they're ready, the children will be able to think of their own bossy Boo Cat instructions without the help of cards.

### Make it harder

You can get the children to use longer sentences by having them include an extra description. Here are some examples. Bossy Boo Cat says:

- Touch your nose with your thumb
- Walk to the door quickly
- Jump up and down four times
- Sit on the floor and keep still

### Variations

You can turn the activity into a dressing-up game. Prepare a collection of clothes, including items like hats, scarves, socks, trousers, belts, sunglasses, watch, rings, shoes, and so on.

In the basic version of the dressing-up game, make sure some of the instructions are unexpected (like 'Put the tie on your leg.'). This will make sure the children think about the instructions rather than carry them out automatically. As an extension to this version, get the children to add another detail such as:

- Put the woolly hat on your hand
- Put the stripey scarf on your head
- Put the blue sock on your nose



'I can make a sentence AND tell people what to do!'





# Barrier games

Barrier games are a fabulous way of encouraging children to be precise in what they say. The idea with these games is to put a 'barrier' between the players so that they can't see what the other person is doing. You can make an effective barrier by using a large opened-out book, a tray or piece of cardboard.



10 mins

## Getting ready

Play in pairs. Give each pair the same drawing and identical sets of coloured pencils. For example, you can use the drawings on the *Barrier games* sheet.

One child colours in a part of their drawing and instructs the other child to do the same. For example, the child might say: '*Colour the curly hair brown. Colour the straight hair yellow.*' Continue until both pictures have been coloured in.

At the end, the children check the pictures and decide whether or not they are the same.

## How to help

Go through the pictures with the children and identify what went well and what could have been done differently to make the pictures more identical. Help them to understand the idea of clarification. For example: '*Did you mean light blue or dark blue?*' Encourage the child who is doing the drawing to ask questions if they are at all confused: '*Do you mean the boy with the straight hair or the curly hair?*'

Barrier games are powerful because they provide children with immediate feedback on whether or not their message got across clearly. They also help children to understand how powerful and useful language can be.

**This activity is demonstrated on the DVD.**



'I need to give clear instructions to make sure our pictures are the same.'

## Variations

Barrier games can be used in many different ways to practice giving and understanding instructions. Here are some examples, all of which can be adapted to suit the children's abilities.

- Give one child a picture to describe so the other can copy it.
- Get the children to make identical sets of beads.
- Use the pattern on a pegboard as the item to be described for copying.
- Give both children the same set of bricks (different shapes, colours and sizes) and get them to create the same patterns.
- Give each child the same set of toys - like Playmobile figures - and get them to create identical scenarios.
- Dress identical picture dolls with a variety of clothes.
- Complete a task, like making a sandwich, with a choice of bread and fillings.
- Describe where to put items on a simple map.





# Barrier Game Guidance

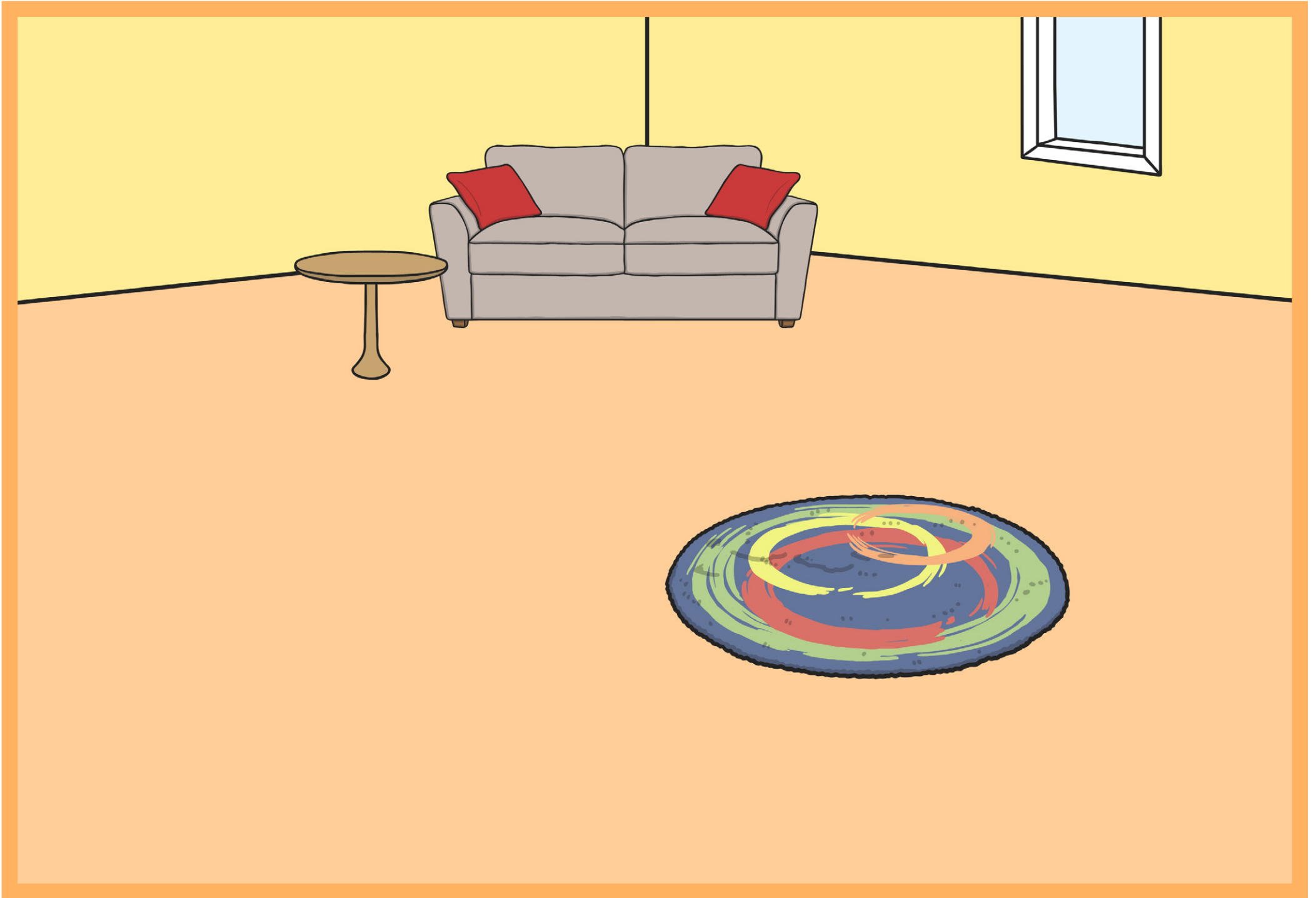
Barrier games are a fun way to develop children's speaking and listening skills. They can also be used to explore prepositions and positional language.

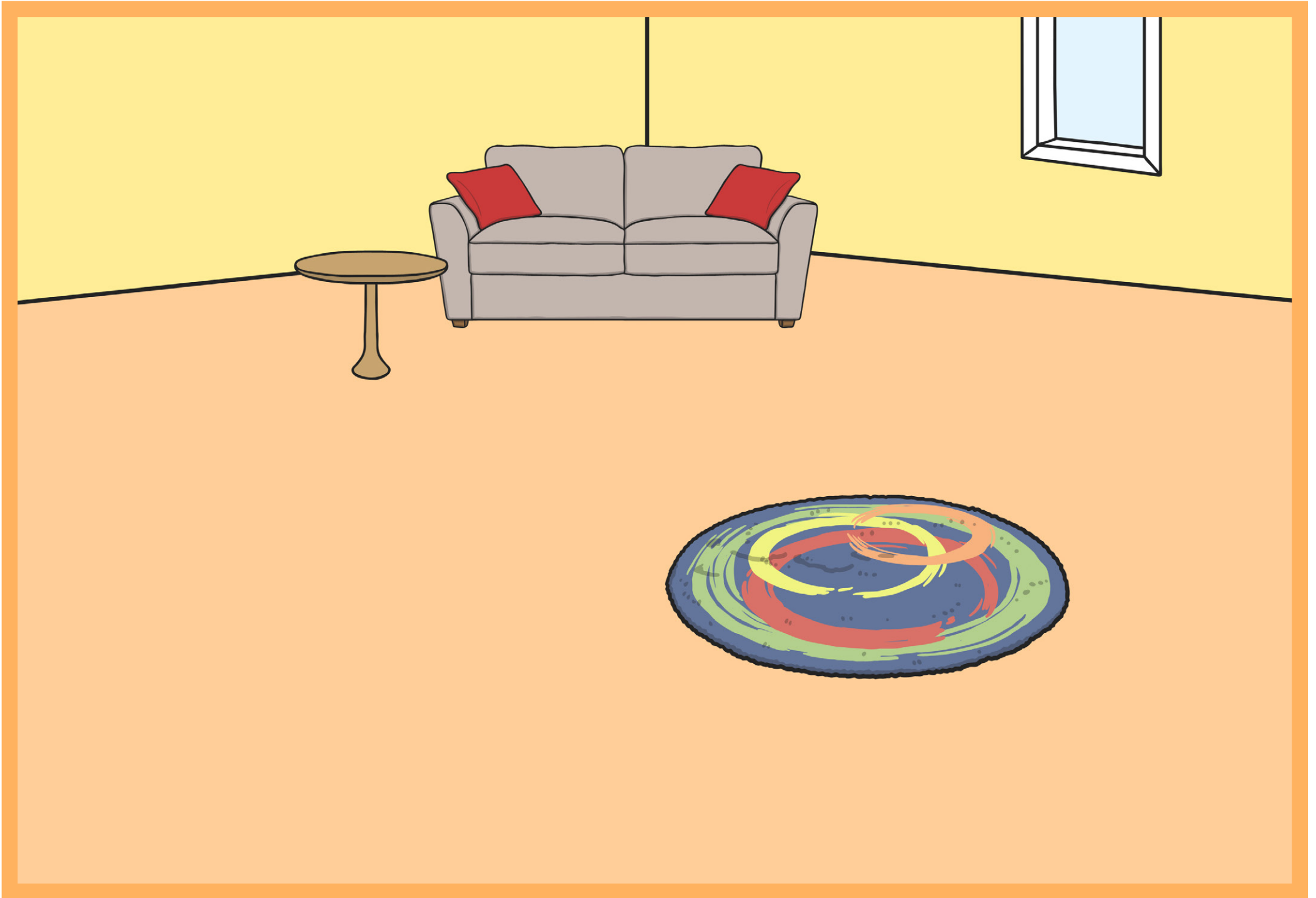
These barrier games are designed for two players. Each player has a background scene and a set of picture cards. The two players sit opposite each other. A barrier is then placed between the two children (such as a book) so they are unable to see the other child's picture.


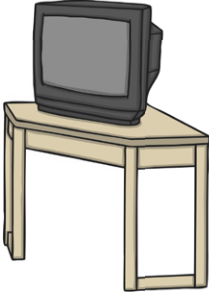

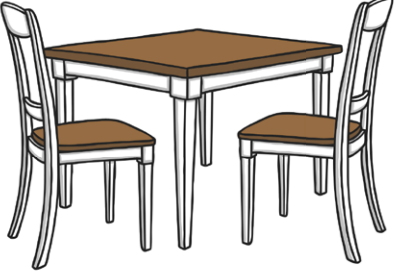



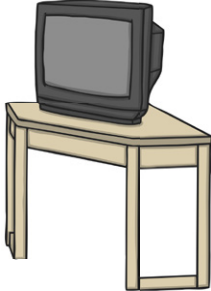

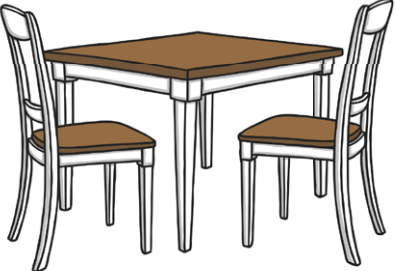


1. Player A puts a picture card on the background scene and then gives verbal instructions to player B, for example: Put the rug on the floor.
2. Player B listens, and then responds to the instruction by putting their matching card in the position described to them on their background scene.
3. Steps 1-2 are then repeated until both players have put all their picture cards on the background scene.
4. At the end of the game the barrier is removed and children compare their pictures. The children can then discuss why their pictures do or don't look the same.

The players could then swap roles and play the game again.







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1. Player A puts a picture card on the background scene and then gives verbal instructions to player B, for example: Put the pens on the table.
2. Player B listens, and then responds to the instruction by putting their matching card in the position described to them on their background scene.
3. Steps 1-2 are then repeated until both players have put all their picture cards on the background scene.
4. At the end of the game the barrier is removed and children compare their pictures. The children can then discuss why their pictures do or don't look the same.

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