



The Executive Skill Lending Library

The rapid rate of development during early childhood provides adults with an important window of opportunity to scaffold executive skills in young children.

Executive skills are crucial building blocks for school readiness, academic and social success, even more so than early literacy or math. These skills begin developing shortly after birth, and require nearly two decades of caring, attuned relationships and prefrontal lobe lending from adults.

Research shows that the rate of executive skill development increases significantly from birth to three years of age, and advances even more dramatically from three to five years of age. The rate of development slows significantly after age six, but continues steadily through age 25 (Weintraub, Dikmen, Heaton, Tulsky, Zelazo, Bauer, Carlozzi, Slotkin, Blitz, Wallner-Allen, Fox, Beaumont, Mungas, Richler, Deocampo, Anderson, Manly, Borosh, Havlick & Gershon). The rapid rate of development during early childhood provides a critical window of opportunity for executive skill scaffolding.

Children's challenging behavior communicates to adults that the child does not feel safe, does not feel connected, and/or needs help with a missing or emerging executive skill: attention, time management, organization, prioritization, working memory, impulse control/emotional regulation, flexibility, empathy, metacognition, goal persistence/achievement and task initiation.

The Executive Skill Lending Library for Infants and Toddlers provides developmentally appropriate examples of specific ways to help children with each executive skill. To use the Executive Skill Library effectively, adults must follow the **ABC** process:

Access your executive state through active calming.

Be willing to perceive children's misbehavior as communication or a call for help.

Coach new skills as necessary.

The Executive Skill Lending Library for Infants and Toddlers will help you determine which interventions are most likely to be helpful in scaffolding the development of essential skills for our youngest children.

Attention (6-12 Months)

- Attention songs at the start of Baby Doll Circle Time
 - Change tone and use sounds
 - Nonverbal and verbal cues
 - Minimize distractions
 - Notice children and actions
 - Provide pauses
 - Use a slow pace
 - Make tasks fun and interesting
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Self-Regulation (6-12 Months)

- Hold child and breathe deeply
 - Teach stress reduction strategies (S.T.A.R, etc.)
 - Model holding baby dolls and breathing deeply
 - Regulate the environment
 - Start and stop games
 - Face-to-face games (I Love You Rituals)
 - Composure lap
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Working Memory (6-12 Months)

- Verbally recall past activities
 - Perform familiar activities during one-on-one times
 - Do Baby Doll Circle Time at predictable times in routine
 - Notice children when they react to familiar songs/lessons
 - Minimize distractions
 - Visual reminders of choices
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Empathy (6-12 Months)

- Notice, describe and label instead of judge
 - Notice body, reflect feelings and reflect desires (D.N.A.)
 - Tell children, "I will keep you safe."
 - Use empathetic tone
 - Encourage children by saying, "You can do it" or "You can handle this."
 - Add language to baby doll's pretend internal experiences
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Prioritization (6-12 Months)

- Offer choices of activities
 - Encourage children to request familiar games
 - Break down tasks to one step at a time
 - Visuals with steps involved
 - First/then books
 - Give simple one or two step commands
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Flexibility (12-24 Months)

- Give warnings
 - Incorporate family social games and rituals
 - Change pace and speed and observe how children manage
 - Give choices, "How should we move our babies, fast or slow?"
 - Create social stories
 - Role-play anxiety situations
 - Reduce novelty
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Organization (12-24 Months)

- Encourage children to take baby dolls out and put them back in basket
 - Follow predictable sequence of Steps 1-5 in Baby Doll Circle Time
 - Meet at the same location each time you do Baby Doll Circle Time
 - Guide and prompt children
 - Visual reminders
 - Picture books
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