

MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

Executive Function Life Skill: Making Connections

Making connections is at the heart of learning—**figuring out what’s the same and what’s different, and sorting these things into categories. Making unusual connections is at the core of creativity.** In a world where people can Google for information, it is the people who can see connections who are able to go beyond knowing information to **using this information well.**

Suggestions for Promoting Making Connections



Tip:

As you look at the pictures in *Alphabet City*, ask your child:

- “What are all of the things you see in this painting?”



Skill:

When you ask your child to respond first and name all of the things he or she sees, you are helping your child **pay attention to details** as well as **promoting creativity**. This back and forth conversation you have with your child about these paintings is what researchers call “**serve and return.**” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something (serves) and the other responds (returns). The importance of these everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.



Tip:

You can share all of the things you see in the paintings.



Skill:

When you share what you see and then compare what your child saw with your observations, you are **increasing the connections** between each of your views.



Tip:

If your child hasn’t included a letter of the alphabet in his or her list, ask:

- “Do you see a letter here?”

Enjoy finding the letter together and talk about all of the words you can think of that begin with that letter.

Next look for letters in the landscapes around you—in your home and outside.



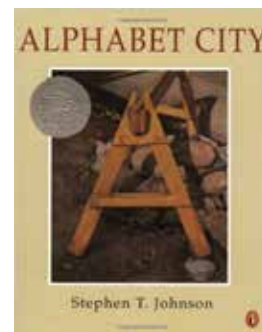
Skill:

Making Connections between letters, landscapes, sounds and words helps your child understand more about his or her language. In fact, researchers have recently found that the world’s written languages are all based on the same patterns of lines and angles and are based on these patterns in landscapes. This is fascinating because, on the surface, it seems so implausible—for instance, written languages in different parts of the world look so different, but it is true. When you ask your child to **see things in different ways**, you are promoting **Executive Function** skills.

Alphabet City

By Stephen T. Johnson

Alphabet City is a stunning series of paintings from city landscapes. The artist has captured each letter of the alphabet as it naturally occurs in city surroundings.



High-quality books and educational resources from First Book supporting research-based Life Skills from *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky



Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need. www.fbmarketplace.org.

You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: **Serve and Return** and **Executive Function** skills.

Serve and Return, like game of ball, involves a back and forth conversation between you and your child where you listen, then build on and extend what your child says or does to promote learning.

Executive Function skills are skills you use to manage your attention, your feelings, your thoughts and your behavior to reach your goals.

They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self control.

Find more about Families and Work Institute’s *Mind in the Making* at www.mindinthemaking.org.