

# CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR KIDS



- **But / So:** This is a storytelling game. One person starts the game by coming up with a storyline — “The sloth wanted to run a marathon.” Players take turns adding sentences that begin with but or so. For example: “But he was so tired he stayed home.” Then another participant adds on to the story with the word “So” — “So he decided to take a nap and try again tomorrow.”
- **Hidden Words:** Choose a category like animals. Players take turns naming words that have an animal in them. The player who names the most words wins. For example: birdcage, doghouse...
- **Grandma’s Trunk:** The first player begins by saying “I went to my grandmother’s trunk, and I found a...”. The object the first player found must begin with the letter “A”. The next player repeats the same sentence and adds another object that begins with the letter “B”. Each player takes turns repeating the original sentence with all the previous objects in alphabetical order and adds one until they reach “Z” or they make a mistake.
- **Phrase-y Chain:** The first player must say a short, well-known phrase such as “Good Night” or “lunch time”. The next player must say a new phrase beginning with the last word of the previous player’s phrase. For example: “Good Night” becomes “night time”. Play continues until a player cannot think of a phrase. Phrases must be well known so “lunch red” or “night green” are not acceptable.
- **Playing Favourites:** Players take turns sharing their favourite and least favourite things for categories such as colours, food, cars, games, clothing etc. Players must explain why they do or don’t like something.
- **Letter Pair:** All players decide on a “key” letter to be used in all phrases. The first player says a 2 word phrase. The first word must begin with “A” and the second word must begin with the “key” letter. If the “key” letter is “J”, the first person could say “apple jam” and the second player could say “bad joke”. Play continues until the end of the alphabet is reached. Players can skip a turn if they can’t think of a phrase and the letters “X” and “Z” may also be skipped.
- **Many Questions:** Ask your child (or have them ask each other) questions requiring more than a “yes” or “no” answer. For example: Why do you think they are painting that house?, Would this be a good place for a movie theatre?, What do you think would happen if the farmer slept in? Answers can be longer than one sentence and often lead to another question.
- **Name that Story:** One player begins by telling the plot of a well-known story. This player tells the story bit by bit without naming any characters. For example: “This story is about a brother and sister who have an evil step mother”. Pause to give the other players enough time to make guesses. If no one guesses correctly, then give them another clue: “They decide to run away from home into the woods...” Play continues until either the entire story is told or one of the other players guesses correctly.
- **Hidden Letters:** Take turns calling out a letter and the first person to find that letter wins the round. Look on signs, labels...
- **Would You Rather:** Take turns asking each other silly questions. For example: “Would you rather have a sock for a nose or underwear for hair?” or “Would you rather fold 2000 towels or sort 200 cards?”

# CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR KIDS



## PENCIL & PAPER GAMES

Grab a pen or pencil, and a notepad or some scrap paper, and have an adventure everywhere you go. Try out the games below, or make up your own. Play, talk, and see where your child's imagination takes you and your family!

- **Categories.** Draw a grid on a piece of paper with as many squares as you like. Down the left side, write letters (perhaps the letters in one player's name). Across the top, write categories (girl's name, boy's name, animal, place, etc.). Players take turns filling in the squares with words that fit the categories at the top and begin with the letter at the side.
- **Travel Journal.** Have your child use a notebook to record what they see and do on their trip.
- **What's in that truck?** Help your child prepare a list of items that a truck might be delivering. Once the list is finished, have your child try to spot as many trucks carrying the items on their list. If more than one child is playing, set a time limit for searching and the winner is the one who spots the most number of items on their list.
- **Reverse Tic Tac Toe:** This game uses a traditional grid of 2 horizontal and 2 vertical lines. One player uses x's and the other player uses o's, but the object is to avoid getting 3 of them in a row.
- **Gomoku.** This is a Japanese version of tic tac toe that uses a grid of 19 vertical and 19 horizontal lines. Players take turns placing their x's and o's on the intersections of the lines instead of the spaces. The first player to get 5 x's or o's in a vertical, horizontal or diagonal row wins.
- **Crazy Drawing!** One player tells the artist what to draw but the artist must draw it with the paper and pencil on top of their head or with their eyes closed.
- **I Spy a Shape.** Play I Spy for circles, squares, triangles. You can add more challenge for older children by asking them to find a specific number of objects that are circles. Bring a dice and let them roll the number.
- **Silly Messages.** Take turns calling out 5 different letters. Each player writes down the letters in order and the first player to create a silly sentence about an animal using the letters to start each word wins. For example: letters AHGSP could be Alligators Have Green Silly Pants.
- **Pairs.** One player writes the numbers 1 to 21 randomly on a sheet of paper. The next player writes the numbers 1 to 21 randomly on the same piece of paper. Be careful not to have 2 of the same numbers too close together. The first player draws a line (curved or straight) to connect 2 identical numbers. The next player draws a line to connect 2 other identical numbers without crossing the other line. Players continue taking turns until no more lines can be drawn without crossing another line.
- **Pack It!** One player pick a place where everyone is going. All players must write down their list of 10 favourite things they absolutely must have on the trip. Players try to guess what another players wrote down on their list. For example: "What 10 things would you take if you were going to the Amazon? The moon? The Arctic? An island? The desert?"

# CONVERSATIONS WHILE GROCERY SHOPPING



- Which do you think comes in more colours: fruits or vegetables? Keep track of all the colours on a piece of scrap paper and see if your guess was correct.
  - Have you ever heard someone say “You’re the apple of my eye” or “That’s peachy!”? What other fruit or vegetable phrases can you think of?
  - Is it possible to eat the alphabet? Try to find a fruit or vegetable for each letter of the alphabet. For example: Avocado, Banana, Cucumber...
  - **Grocery Store Tales:** Work together to tell a “grocery store” tale or story. Either you or your child can start the story, setting the scene. Each person builds on the story, taking turns back and forth. The only rule is that each new addition to the story has to include something the person sees at the grocery store.
  - **Grocery Store Bingo:** Just like the classic bingo game but using a card filled with grocery items. You can make your own ahead of time or use this cute grocery bag bingo card from PBS and Whole Foods.
- will cost and help with the food preparation. The more you include children in meal preparation, the more they’ll enjoy mealtime.
- Experiment on weekends with different raw vegetables and dips like Hummus. Try different flavours so you know which one they like best. \*\*Hummus is a great meat alternative.

## Bring the Conversations home...

- Be creative with and use different fruits to make faces on a whole grain bagel. How about pineapple chunks for hair, blueberries for eyes, an apple slice for a mouth and strawberries for a nose and bow tie.
- Children are natural scientists. Try planting carrot tops, potatoes that have sprouted or apple seeds in soil and see if they will grow.
- **Encourage older children to plan a meal.** Read the recipe together and have them prepare a shopping list, estimate how much it

# CONVERSATIONS WHILE DOING LAUNDRY



- **Sock ball:** Place a bin, container or basket for each child against a wall and a basket of clean socks nearby. Tell players to take turns pulling matching pairs of socks out and rolling them into a ball. Players take turns tossing sock balls into the correct bin. Each sock that lands in the bin belonging to the sock owner is worth 2 points. Each sock ball that lands in a different player's bin is worth 1 point and each sock ball that lands on the floor is worth 0 points.
  - **What do you feel?:** Have your children close their eyes, and guess the items you give them just by feeling. It's fun, and it encourages kids to use lots of words to describe texture, size, and smell.
  - **Rainbow Challenge:** That basket of clothes is like a mashed-up rainbow. Encourage your child to pick up a piece of clothing, and name as many other things he/she can that are the same color. For instance, after choosing those red pajamas, he could name an apple, a fire truck, pizza sauce, or a ladybug. Have him/her do it with every color in the pile - and then, see how you do on this color challenge.
  - **Make folding laundry a family affair:** Try washing and drying all the laundry during the day and set one or two nights for Family Folding. Set up baskets for each family member and perhaps one for towels and wash cloths. Folded laundry can be placed in the correct basket. Have fun doing this chore together while talking about your day.
  - **Laundry Toss:** This game can be played with clean or dirty clothes. Make a pile of dirty laundry and set up baskets for whites and colours. Take turns tossing laundry into the correct basket. Give each person a basket and as laundry comes out of the dryer, take turns tossing clean clothes into the owner's basket.
- Need more challenge- race to neatly fold and place laundry in the correct basket.
- **Folding Race:** Dump all your clean laundry on a table or floor, set a timer for 3-5 minutes and challenge the whole family to neatly fold as many pieces of laundry before the timer ends. The winner is the person who neatly folds the most laundry.
  - **Laundry Baskets Aren't Just for Laundry:** Young children can work on hand strength and fine motor skills while pushing large pom poms, scarves, socks and more through the holes or slots in a laundry basket.
- ### Bring the Conversations home...
- **Laundry Race:** Name a colour and call out "GO". Each child must race to their room and bring back all their dirty laundry with that colour. Keep going naming colours until all dirty laundry is sorted into baskets ready for washing.
  - **Laundry Basket Push Game:** While the laundry is in the washer or dryer, encourage your toddler to push a basket with books or toys in it around the room. Use cushions, shoes, detergent bottles, cones or painter's tape on the floor...as obstacles to go around. This provides muscle developing exercise perfect for indoor play.
  - **Practice Hanging Laundry:** This activity provides wonderful fine motor skill development for children ages 2 and older. Encourage children to hang laundry on clothes lines or create your own using cord or skipping ropes.

# CONVERSATIONS WHILE ON THE MOVE



- **Acronym Game:** Another fun license plate game for your kids to play on move is the acronym game. First, you pick a random license plate on the road. Then you pretend the letters of the license plate are an acronym for a made up word or phrase. The silliest/funniest acronym or phrase wins. For example, let's say the license plate you spot reads: TC4DB. You might say, "The Center 4 Dancing Bears". This game is good because it forces your child to use his or her imagination.
- **Snork:** One player chooses an object that is often seen from the car. Each time the car passes a matching object, that player says "snork". The other players must look around and call out guesses for what that object might be. The winner is the first player to correctly guess what the "snork" is.
- **Silly Signs:** Players take turns making silly messages from road signs. Players can only change one word on the sign and the new word must begin with the same letter as the changed word. For example: "Men at Work" could become "Monkeys at Work".
- **How Many Cows?** Players decide on a number such as 50. Each player counts the cows they can see from their window and the first person to reach that number wins. Players can also look for other items such as stop signs, red cars, dogs... if they are traveling inside the city.
- **Word Search:** Players find a license plate with at least 3 letters (not including letters from Province names etc.) The first player to call out a word using the letters in the order they appear on the license plate wins the round. If the letters "CFL" appear, the word "colourful" could be called out.
- **Spotter:** One player names an object likely to be seen from the car or bus window. The first player to spot the object gets to call out the next object. For example; tree, dog, garbage truck...
- **Plate Counting:** Players must find numbers in order from the large numbers on license plates. Numbers must be found in order and only one number can be used from each plate. If the numbers 1,2,3 appear on a plate, it can be used as either 1,2,3,12 or 23. It cannot be used as 1, 2 and 3. The numbers must be used in the order they appear on the plate so numbers 1 2 3 cannot be used for 32, 21 or 31. The player who reached the highest number before you reach your destination wins.

# CONVERSATIONS WHILE SHARING MEAL TIME



- **What's in my bag?** Each child lists all the items they think might be in your bag or purse. The one who guesses the most items wins!
- **Menu Reading.** Reading a menu and ordering food is a great way to build your child's confidence and conversation skills. Practice at home or before ordering so it is less intimidating. Don't be afraid to tell the server you need more time.

## Plan ahead for meals outside the home

- Prepare for any family outing with a 'busy bag' filled with paper, pencils, crayons, crossword or word search puzzles, books, magazines, and travel games.