

## Indoor Games to Reinforce Learning

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During this pandemic, when most of our children are not able to attend school and online classes are not the solution to reach a majority of them, indoor games can prove to be an effective means for not just learning but also to build various cognitive and emotional skills.

This article looks at a few such games which can be introduced to children to help reduce their screen time as well as achieve various learning outcomes. Though these games are designed to be played in a specific way, following certain rules, these are only as limited as a child's imagination or the teacher's creativity. Blocks of *Jenga* can be used to make a building, a puzzle can be converted to a beautiful story and dominoes into a long train.

Many of these games can be developed using low-cost materials. Our teachers are doing this and using these games to reinforce learning in their students.

### Indoor games developed by teachers

One of our proactive teachers, Ms Jayamma, has developed several games using low-cost materials that can be sourced easily.

#### *Match numbers to balls*

In this board game, students have to match the number of thermocol balls which are fixed on the board with number caps which are to be screwed onto the bottles.



In her words, 'I have designed this game to help my student practise counting using concrete materials as well as to help them exercise their fingers so as to develop the grip for writing.' She goes on to explain why she develops such games, 'I keep developing these games as teaching aids because they make my work easier by keeping my children engaged and lead to reinforcement of what they have learnt without the need of me being with them.'

Learning outcomes that can be achieved through this game include:

- Associating objects with numbers
- Understanding the concept of zero
- Developing vocabulary (by explaining observations)
- Counting of numbers from 1 to 10

#### *Puzzles*

Puzzles are excellent tools for developing fine motor, problem-solving and sorting skills. Jayamma teacher examines branded puzzles sold in the market and creates her own version using low-cost materials. These can be effectively used to promote talk, develop vocabulary and help children think. Children can also be motivated to create stories around these puzzles.



#### *Dominoes*

A regular game of dominoes has rectangular tiles and the back of the tiles in a set is indistinguishable, either blank or has some

common design. Instead of the dots, pictures that can be matched can be printed on these tiles. This game can be played by an individual player or a group of three to four players.

Jayamma teacher made dominos using waste packing material from our TLC. Similarly, characters from the English *Nali Kali* series can be printed on these dominoes. Skills of matching and sorting along with vocabulary can be effectively developed using this game.

#### *Let's go fishing*

In this game, the children have to pick the fish which has the word that their teacher or friend calls out. Whoever is able to pick the maximum number of fish, is the winner. Jayamma teacher has used magnets on the cards to make this game more interesting. The magnets have been taken from used remote-control cars that she has collected from her students.

#### *Who fills first*

Another teacher, Ms Annamma, has developed a board game to help her students practise counting. This game is played by two students sitting opposite each other. They throw dice or *kavade* (cowrie shells) by turns and fill the boxes with the corresponding number of counters. The counter can be seeds or stones. Whoever succeeds in filling all the boxes first, is the winner.

'It helps my children practise counting in an engaging way, it actually hastens the process of their learning along with supporting peer learning which is the aim of our *Nali Kali* classes. My children are able to construct their own knowledge and develop mathematical vocabulary during the process of their play which I could not have done through our regular method of teaching.'

#### *Let's create words*

This game is developed by Ms Tulasi, also a teacher. In this game, children use colourful pieces of puzzles printed with letters to build new words.



## Simple indoor games that promote learning

Name	How to play	Skills
<i>Ali guli mane</i>	<i>Ali guli mane</i> is an abstract strategy board game that has originated in Karnataka. The name of the game is simply a description of the board – ‘wooden block with holes’. <i>Ali guli mane</i> is played using tamarind seeds. This game can also be played by making circles on the floor if a wooden block is unavailable.	Waiting for one’s turn, counting, subtraction can be effectively introduced and developed through this game. This game can also be used to help children explore and experience the concept of grouping numbers. For instance, children could be asked to distribute the given number in various groups of twos, threes, fours, fives, tens etc. It can then be used to discover the fastest strategy to count by distributing the seeds into various groups to skip counting each.
<i>Kavade</i>	This is another traditional game that can be played by four players who have to move their counters without their counters ( <i>kayi</i> ) being ‘killed’ by those of other players. Tamarind or other such seeds can be used as counters. The player who succeeds in making his or her counters reach the centre first is the winner.	Waiting for their turn, problem-solving, decision-making, counting, subtracting can be effectively introduced and developed using this game. This game can also be used to develop the concept of odd and even numbers.
Jenga	In this game, players take turns to remove one block at a time from a tower constructed of 54 blocks. It can be played individually or with two or more players. When two players play, whoever is able to remove the maximum number of blocks is the winner. Locally available wooden blocks can be used to play this game. Children enjoy constructing various structures using these blocks.	Fine motor skills, patience and concentration can be learnt through this game. It also helps in controlling impulsive behaviour. These Jenga blocks can also be used to teach grouping, counting and shapes. Children learn and discover the strategy of arranging these blocks which will help the building last longer.
Matching blocks	Printed blocks with different shapes and letters can be used to help children play with letters and objects printed on the blocks.	Fine motor skills, sorting, vocabulary, phonetics awareness can be developed using this game.
Matching discs	50 to 60 discs on which multiple objects are printed are given to children. Discs are placed upside down and players keep lifting the discs to match objects on the discs with the previous disc that they have picked.	Preconcepts of counting, such as matching shapes, can be developed using these discs.
Get the car out of the traffic	Multiple puzzles can be played using this board game. Players have to come up with various strategies and get the car out of the traffic. Various objects like wooden or cardboard blocks can be used instead of a toy car.	Strategising skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills can be developed using this game.

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Playtime is a sacred, magical bonding space. Of course, during the course of the day, some or the other child might pipe up with an idea for playtime, because their creativity has been stirred by the games and it continues to bubble. At such a time, you would have to resist the urge to say, 'stop daydreaming and pay attention,' and gently tell them to save it for the next round of play.

*Valentina Trivedi, Emotional Development Through Play, p 88.*