Same or Different Words

In this activity, you will help your child identify whether two words sound the same or different. Playing this type of game helps children focus on listening and hearing differences among sounds. This is part of phonological awareness, an important skill that helps children later when they learn to read and spell.

Let's Play!

Introduce the activity to your child by saying:

Let's play a listening game. I am going to say two words, and I want you to tell me if they sound the same or if they sound different. Let's practice: mouse / mouse. These two words sound the same.

Provide another example: cat / cat. These two words also sound the same. Now, what about cat / spoon? Do these two words sound the same?

Wait for your child to answer. If she is confused, help her by saying: cat / spoon. These two words do not sound the same, they are different.

Continue using more sets of words as long as the child remains engaged in the game.

Tips

- Children need to understand the concepts of “same” and “different” before playing this game. If you are not sure your child understands what these terms mean, you might play visual matching games first. Using picture cards or sets of small toys or objects that have similar qualities, point out what makes two items or pictures “the same” or “different.”
- Start this activity by using words that are familiar to the child and words that sound very different from each other.
- If the child is having trouble figuring out the difference in the words, ask them to close their eyes and repeat the words to focus on what they hear.
- If your child masters hearing differences in words that sound very different (e.g., dog / car), try words that sound more similar, such as words that rhyme (e.g., cat / hat) or words that start with the same sound (milk / mouse).
- Another variation on this game is to let your child have turns to give you two words for you to say whether they are the same or different.
- This type of activity is great to play in the car, on the bus, or while waiting in line.