

Brain Builder 8: Sink or Swim



Preparation

Have children stand in a line along one side of a large space (an open area outside would work well). Say: **You are on the bank of a river. The goal of the game is for all of you to swim across the river to the other side where I am standing.** Demonstrate a swimming motion. Tell children to listen to the rules.

Rules

- **Rule 1 is, when I say “Swim!” you swim across the river.**
- **Rule 2 is, when I say “Sink!” you sink down to the bottom of the river.**
- **Rule 3 is, stay frozen on the bottom of the river until you hear me say “Swim!” again.**

Steps

1. Stand facing children on the other side of the river.
2. Say: **Swim!** Children start to swim toward you.
3. After a few seconds, say: **Sink!** Children slowly sink down.
4. After a few seconds, say: **Swim!** again.
5. Repeat Steps 2–4 until all children have crossed the river.

Tips

- Play the game for only a few minutes at a time.
- Play the game at least twice a day.
- Have children take turns leading the game.
- Increase the challenge as children become more adept at the game.
- Use the game to get children’s attention for transitioning between activities.

Increasing the Challenge

Attention (A), Working Memory (WM), Inhibitory Control (IC)

- Combine swim and/or sink with other actions (for example, swim and clap, swim and hop, swim and skip, sink and spin, sink and wave, and so on). (A, WM)
- Have children remain sunken for longer and longer periods of time. (A, IC)
- Call out other actions instead of “Swim!” Children can move only when you say “Swim!” (A, WM, IC)
- Introduce an opposites rule: Children swim when you say “Sink!” and sink when you say “Swim!” (A, WM, IC)
- Change the setting and actions every few rounds. For example, say: **You are in a band marching down the street.** The actions are march and rest. Or say: **You are rabbits hopping across the garden.** The actions are hop and crouch. (A, WM, IC)