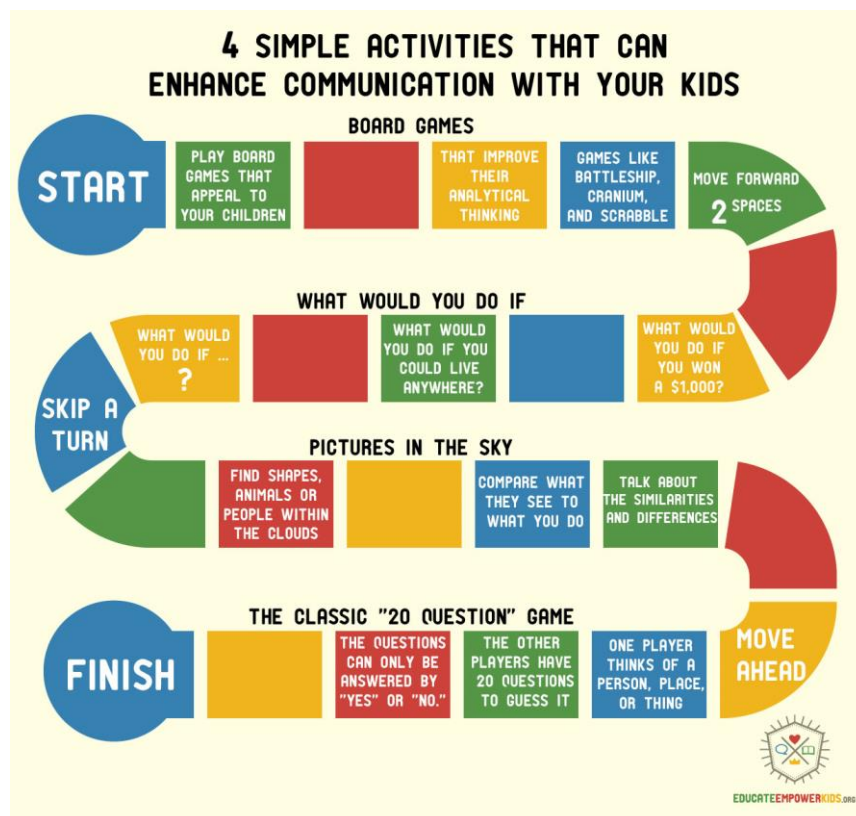


Honest, open, and ongoing communication is one of the most effective tools at your disposal in teaching your kids about the world and developing in them healthy self-worth, self-confidence, and emotional stability. You can make yours a home in which each person feels safe to talk about what's on their mind, where your children know they can come to you with their toughest questions, and where each person's voice is heard. There are fun and simple games that enhance family communication, such as these.



## Board Games

Play board games that appeal to your children and that improve their analytical thinking and communication skills. For example, *Battleship* requires good listening skills, the various *Cranium* games push players to find the best way to communicate with each other, and the classic *Scrabble* builds vocabulary. Although your kids may think they're just having fun with you, they will be strengthening their knowledge base and communication abilities as well.

## "What Would You Do If ..."

This can be a really fun and eye-opening game with your older kids and teens. Write on scraps of paper all kinds of "what would you do ..." scenarios such as "if you won \$1,000?", "if you had a chance to guest-star on a TV show that you don't know," or "you could choose to live anywhere in the world you want?" In giving their answers, your kids will

have the chance to put their ideas into words and describe their inner thoughts. This activity opens up fun and imaginative conversations, adding another layer to your foundation of good communication with your children.

### Pictures in the Sky

Lie in the grass watching the clouds go by with your children, encouraging them to find shapes or animals or people within the clouds. Compare what they see to what you do and talk about the similarities and differences. Their imaginations will be sparked and you'll have a window into your kids' creative minds.

### The Classic "20 Questions" Game

One player thinks of a person, place, or thing, and the other players have 20 questions to spend in guessing what it is. The catch is the questions can only be answered by "yes" or "no." If no one guesses the word by the 20<sup>th</sup> question, the player is the winner. This is fun and helps children practice asking direct questions. It encourages them to think about and build on previous answers, connecting the clues until they find the solution.

Communicating with your children in fun and creative ways helps strengthen the foundation for discussing more serious and sensitive subjects. When your kids know that talking with you can be fun and valuable, they will be used to family discussions and more open to the more difficult conversations that are sure to come.