

# Critical Thinking in the Classroom

## VroomTip™ Collection

### Space Explorer (0-12 months)

**Vroom Tip:** Show your child the world from different points of view. When they're in your arms, crouch down low or gently lift them up in the air. Describe what you're doing and respond to their reactions. "You're as high as the light! Look what you can see up here!"

**Brainy Background:** Moving your child around and talking about what you're doing helps them learn about important things like shape and space. Children learn these ideas through back and forth conversations, where you follow their lead and respond to their reactions.

### Peekaboo Many Ways! (6 months – 2 years)

**Vroom Tip:** How many ways can you play "Peekaboo"? You can hide your eyes behind your hand, or use a hat, a napkin, or whatever is handy and then say "Peekaboo!" Help your child take a turn. What can they hide behind? Saying "I see you!" when one of you stops hiding should make you both laugh.

**Brainy Background:** This back-and-forth game builds the connection between you and your child. As they watch your face and movements, your child is learning to trust that things (and people!) go away and come back. This is an important part of building relationships and becoming independent.

### Big Time (2.5 – 3 years)

**Vroom Tip:** Play "Big Time" to make waiting time fly by. Hold up an object—a magazine, an item from a bag, or a toy. Ask your child, "Can you find something bigger than this?" After they do, then ask, "Can you find something smaller than this?"

**Brainy Background:** When you take turns asking questions, this game becomes a back and forth conversation about size. It is a chance for them to focus on and explore the idea of size—something they will use to organize their understanding of the world.

### Twenty Questions (2.5 – 5 years)

**Vroom Tip:** When you're reading or telling a story to your child at bedtime, ask them questions about the story. Pause the story and ask: "What do you think will happen next? How do you think the character feels? What would you do if that happened to you?"

**Brainy Background:** Asking questions (what, where, when, who, why) helps your child learn to focus and pay attention to the details of the story and use critical thinking skills. These questions also build their memory.

### Guess Who? (3-5 years)

Vroom Tip: Ask your child to think of a family member or friend without telling you who. Have them give you hints until you guess who the mystery person is. Then it's your turn to pick a person and their turn to guess.

Brainy Background: This guessing game helps your child with critical thinking skills. They use these while figuring out the important things about a person to use as clues.

### One Letter at a Time (3-5 years)

Vroom Tip: Is your child curious about spelling? Take turns going back and forth spelling a simple word like "cat." You say "C," they say "A," and you say "T." Add a twist and help them spell the word backward with you!

Brainy Background: Playing games like this helps your child connect letters and sounds. Spelling backward helps them to think flexibly and not just go on autopilot. Spelling games like this one also help prepare them for later reading and writing.

### Sentence Mixer Upper (3-5 years)

Vroom Tip: Sometimes it can be fun to mix things up as you make statements like, "Your banana is blue. I wear shoes on my ears," or "This ice cream is hot." Give your child a chance to correct you and show how much they know before they take a turn mixing things up.

Brainy Background: In this game, your child compares what they know about the world to your mix-ups. Playing helps them develop the thinking skills of paying attention to details and using information they know in fun and flexible ways.

### Pretend Packing (3-5 years)

Vroom Tip: Pretend you and your child are packing for a trip. It can be for a visit to a family member's house or an imaginary trip, like to outer space. Take turns naming things to bring. As they get older, you can try coming up with things in alphabetical order.

Brainy Background: As they think of what to bring, they use what they already know to plan for the future. This is thinking critically to plan and thinking flexibly to come up with new and creative ideas. Taking turns also helps your child practice their self-control.

### Prepare a Pattern (4-5 years)

Vroom Tip: Do you have a muffin tin or an empty egg carton? Look for things that can fit inside each hole, like pen caps. Make a pattern, like one red cap in a hole, then two blue caps in another, then another red cap. Then give the caps to your child. Can they match the pattern?

Brainy Background: Making and re-creating patterns asks your child to focus and keep the pattern in mind, even when it isn't there anymore. Being able to recognize patterns is an important skill for math, science, and language learning.