

# grades 3-5

## Get Their Attention 6 games to wake kids up

*Think a child is either born to sit like an angel or fidget constantly? Think again. Research shows attention is a skill that can be taught, like reading. Try these ideas from the new book Attention Games, by Barbara Sher.*

### ALL THE THINGS YOU CAN THINK OF

**HOW TO PLAY:** Take turns asking, "What are all the things that you can think of that start with the letter M?" Or, "that you can buy at the hardware store." Pick high-interest topics, such as TV shows.  
**WHY IT WORKS:** The game requires that kids scan their memories, make connections, and concentrate. Plus, it helps kids develop pride in their knowledge.

### BACKWRITING

**HOW TO PLAY:** One person sits with his back to another. The other person, using her fingers, "draws" a letter on the person's back. At the same time, that person draws on a piece of paper what he thinks is being drawn on his back.

**WHY IT WORKS:** Kids learn to pay close attention to tactile information, while integrating their academic knowledge.

### BELLY COUNTS

**HOW TO PLAY:** Have kids hold in their stomach muscles and start counting. Be sure they don't hold their breath! See what number kids can count to before they lose focus or their muscles tire.

**WHY IT WORKS:** Tightening muscles takes concentration. Add counting, and kids must focus on two challenges at once.

### FOCUSED FIDGETING

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give a small piece of clay

to students when they are required to sit quietly. It can be twisted, squished, flattened, and rolled and is satisfyingly responsive to poking and pulling.

**WHY IT WORKS:** Some kids need to deal with their natural (high) level of energy. Fidget items such as clay respect this need and give kids a subtle way to do it.

### HOW DO YOU FEEL?

**HOW TO PLAY:** Take turns making faces that depict various feelings, such as stuck-up, shy, guilty, goofy, etc. The others have to guess the emotion.


**WHY IT WORKS:** Children enlarge their ability to be aware of body language—their own and others'. They learn to be attentive to social cues.

### NAME THAT SOUND

**HOW TO PLAY:** Before you leave the room to walk to the cafeteria or playground, ask kids to help you guess the number of sounds you'll hear along the way. While walking, say "I can hear a \_\_\_\_\_" and wait until the others hear that sound too. Keep walking and let everyone have a turn identifying sounds. Writing down each sound makes it easier to remember. Did you guess the right number?

**WHY IT WORKS:** Because it requires continual scanning of the environment, the game encourages open attention. □

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## JOIN OUR 3-5 TEACHER GROUP!

### Meet the Host:

Beth Wingham teaches third grade in Troy, Michigan, just outside of Detroit. Her teaching philosophy is that the most effective instruction comes from a love of content. Beth loves reading and will do whatever she can to pass on that passion to her kids. She is also a great chat about literacy with Beth and other super elementary teachers and get some great ideas for your classroom. Get started by clicking on "Join the Discussion" at

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