



second

# Brain Builder Game: Sink or Swim

## WHAT?

**Brain Builders** are active, fun games with specific rules and steps.

They include ways to increase the challenge.

They give children the message that their brains can get stronger and smarter with practice and effort.

## WHY?

**Brain Builders** look like simple games, but they do a whole lot more.

They develop the parts of children's brains that help them pay attention, remember, and have self-control.

## WHO?

**Brain Builders** can be played with children ages three to eight.

In this age range, children's skills are rapidly developing, so it's the perfect time for extra practice.

## WHERE?

**Brain Builders** can be played often and at any time, either inside where children have room to move, or outside.



### Get Ready

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

### Play the Game

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.

### Increase the Challenge

- 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).
- Have children remain sunken for longer and longer periods of time.
- Call out other actions instead of “Swim!”
- Children can move only when you say “Swim!”
- Introduce an opposites rule: Children swim when you say “Sink!” and sink when you say “Swim!”
- 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.

### 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 get better at the game.