

Resources for Children’s Literacy Tutors

Summer Reads



Title: Simon Says

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Target audience: Elementary school children

Topic(s):

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Alphabetics | <input type="checkbox"/> Fluency | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> One-to-One Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Techniques |
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Format:

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About Summer Reads:

This children’s literacy tutor resource was created by Summer Reads VISTA members. Summer Reads is an [AmeriCorps VISTA national service](https://www.americorps.gov/vista) program of Literacy Minnesota. For 8 weeks over the summer, Summer Reads VISTA members volunteer full-time as children’s/youth literacy mentors in schools, libraries and out-of-school-time programs across Minnesota. They bring literacy to life for low-income students through a variety of activities – one-on-one tutoring, creative enrichment activities like using arts and drama to explore language or practicing vocabulary and comprehension in science and other subjects. They also connect students and parents/caregivers to community resources through wrap-around basic needs support. At the same time, the VISTA members build their own leadership, explore career paths, pay for college and become lifelong advocates for the communities they serve due to the power of their experience. www.literacymn.org/summerreads

Games for Tutoring - Face-to-face or Virtual

Title: Simon Says

Description:

- ❖ In this active game, players will be asked to listen to each other and follow directions for movements. The player in the role of “Simon” will think of creative actions for their peers to imitate. However, the other players must also listen carefully to “Simon’s” directions, because doing an action that has not been specified or preceded by the phrase “Simon says!” will result in losing the game. The options for commands are endless and will make everyone laugh. Tutors can use this game as an icebreaker or warm up to start the day, or as a transition/movement break throughout the day.

Pros:

- ❖ Adaptable
- ❖ Develops listening and speaking skills
- ❖ Incorporates movement and social interaction
- ❖ Strengthens higher order thinking skills (executive function)

Cons:

- ❖ Can become repetitive
- ❖ Need space to move around

Benefits:

- ❖ Physical/motor skills development
- ❖ Listening/speaking practice
- ❖ Memory (for longer and more complex commands)
- ❖ Social interaction (taking turns)
- ❖ Taking initiative (choosing commands)

Platform:

- ❖ Face-to-face: For in-person situations, tutors will want to ensure that there is sufficient space for all players to move freely without bumping into each other (or observing social distancing).
- ❖ Virtual: For virtual tutoring sessions, each individual will need space to safely move without hurting themselves or items/furniture in the room. Thus, tutors may want to guide students to clear a space at the start of the game. Also, players in a video call will want to adjust their camera to show their actions to the other players - to the extent that they are comfortable showing themselves and their surroundings to the other players. Potential platforms include Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Facetime, and others.

Age range:

- ❖ 5-10 years old; elementary school
- ❖ Simon Says is especially engaging for students in grades PreK-4, as the movement, creativity, and imitation are aligned with their developmental needs. However, this game may be played with students of any age, with difficulty added as needed for older students. Simon Says can be used with ESL students at any age to practice vocabulary for body parts and action verbs. Additional challenges could take the form of combining multiple actions, using strong action verbs, using words from a book recently read, etc.

Time frame:

- ❖ 5+ minutes
- ❖ Simon Says can be a quick warm up activity, a longer movement break, or a stand-alone activity in itself. Tutors can be “Simon” themselves, give each player a turn to be “Simon,” or extend it to multiple rounds where each player is “Simon” several times. For example:
 - 2-5 min.: the tutor is “Simon” or chooses one player to be “Simon” for a specified number of actions;
 - 5-10 min.: each player is allowed a turn to be “Simon,” leading for a given number of actions or until someone makes a mistake;
 - 10+ min.: play can extend for as many rounds as desired. Tutors can decide whether the game ends after a certain number of rounds or when only one player has not made a mistake.

Number of players:

- ❖ 2+ players
- ❖ Simon Says can be played with two or more players, as long as there is one “Simon” and one player imitating “Simon.” If the number of players imitating “Simon” gets too large, the students could be split into two separate groups for two separate games. Alternatively, two players could be “Simon” as a team, alternating actions or working together to brainstorm actions.

Materials needed:

- None!
- Optional:
 - special hat, wand, or cape etc. for “Simon” to wear
 - Whiteboard & markers to integrate reading/writing if desired

Step-by-step instructions:**#1. Set-up:**

- a. Clear a space to play

- b. Each player should have enough space to move around without bumping into anyone else.
- c. For a virtual situation, tutors should encourage students to move to a space where furniture, pets, etc. will not be in the way. Students should also adjust their webcam to show their participation in the game, as much as they are comfortable with.

Choose a player to be “Simon.”

- a. For a short game, the tutor can simply be “Simon.”
- b. Otherwise, tutors can allow a student to be “Simon,” choosing randomly or based on good behavior, participation, or volunteering.
- c. Throughout the game, another player may be designated “Simon” by being the last to make a mistake, volunteering, or pre-arranged order.

#2: Play:

1. “Simon” thinks of an action for the players to imitate, then says “Simon says, ____.”
 - a. Ex. “Simon says, jump like a monkey!”
2. The other players then do that action.
3. HOWEVER, “Simon” can choose to say an action without putting “Simon says” in front of it. If the players imitate that action, they are out of the game.
 - a. Ex. “Give yourself a big hug!”
4. Players who follow the directions given without “Simon says” are out of the game.
5. Play continues with “Simon” giving directions, players imitating, and catching those who imitate even when “Simon didn’t say!”

#3: Taking turns:

1. The tutor/leader can set up how often to switch up who is “Simon” at the beginning of the game. “Simon” could switch every three commands, whenever someone goofs up, or based on good behavior.
2. The new “Simon” simply takes the lead (perhaps stepping to the front of the group) and begins giving instructions.

#4: Ending the game:

1. The game may end when only one person remains who has not made a mistake. In that case, they would be the winner.
2. The game could also end after a set number of rounds or length of time.

Example game:

Tutor: "Simon says spin in a circle." (*students spin in a circle*)

Tutor: "Simon says dance a happy dance." (*students dance a happy dance*)

Tutor: "High-five your neighbor." (*students should NOT high-five their neighbor, if they are listening!*)

Tutor: "Maria was listening to Simon, so now you can be Simon."

Maria: "Simon says fly like a bird." (*tutor/students fly like a bird*)

Maria: "Simon says do karate chops." (*tutor/students do karate chops*)

Maria: "Moo like a cow." (*tutor/students should NOT moo like a cow*)

Maria: "Jason did not moo like a cow! Now he can be Simon."

Jason: "Simon says..."

Potential adaptations:

- ❖ Integrate reading/writing: "Simon" has to write their directions on the whiteboard
- ❖ Increase complexity: give multiple commands at once
- ❖ Switch it up: vary your speed, use fine motor and then gross motor skills, etc.
- ❖ Focus on visual perception: instead of saying commands, act them out silently
- ❖ Be creative: consider the needs of your students to come up with new variations

Tips:

- ❖ Designate how long each player will be "Simon" beforehand.
- ❖ Involve students in being "Simon" as much as possible - children love the opportunity to choose the commands and be in charge.
- ❖ Keep your students in mind: can they handle multi-step commands? Do they know right & left? etc.
- ❖ Keep the game moving so that students have to think quickly.
- ❖ Get creative with commands that go beyond "touch your toes" or "shake your head."

Websites/resources:

- ❖ Inspiration: <https://bighappybackyard.com/simon-says-ideas/>
- ❖ Inspiration: <https://empoweredparents.co/simon-says-ideas/>
- ❖ Cognitive benefits: <https://www.emergepediatrictherapy.com/the-therapeutic-benefits-of-playing-simon-says/>