

Playing Tactile Matching Video Transcript, March,2021

Today I'll speak about how to use the tactile matching game as part of pre-braille learning. If you haven't seen the video on how to create the game I suggest checking it out first. So this game is what I put together for my pre-braille students as a fun and motivating way to focus on developing some pre-braille skills which are essential when preparing students to eventually learn Braille.

According to Francis D'Andrea, one of the editors of the book "Instructional Strategies for Braille Literacy", pre-braille learning includes fostering language and concept development and this is necessary for children that are congenitally blind as well as children who previously had vision. One of the main objectives of this particular game is to develop and expand one's descriptive vocabulary but before I demonstrate the game I need to introduce another component I made for it and this is a pretty important one because this piece of the game is what students will use to place and pick up their cards from and when they do that they will be practicing their orientation and organizational skills.

This is a fairly easy board to make and you can use it as a template for many other cards or tile games. If you've already made matching game cards you'll notice that I use many of the same materials to make this inexpensive and lightweight board. I used a white foam core for the board and created raised lines to indicate the number of rows using black foam core. I also used a reddish wiki stick to indicate the columns. So I've made a point of using a different texture for the rows and for the columns and I've also added a small piece of velcro to the back of each card and to each card placement on the board. Finally I used my glue gun and I've added a raised dot on the right hand corner of each card. Now that raised dot's position on the card lets the student know that it's the top of the card and the student can now place the card back down on the board in the correct position.

So here we have our matching game cards and I'm going to mix them up and place them on the board. As a teacher or aid I would want to model a tactile exploration of the board so it becomes an orientation exercise and then i would ask the student to take the time to do the same. Depending on the level of that learner you may want to encourage the student to memorize the placement of the cards then when a card is chosen and

explored the student can place the card back in its original spot. So now I've oriented myself with the rows and the columns and I've decided to choose and pick up a card, turn it over and explore it. So this is where the descriptive vocabulary comes in. The learner will feel the tile with both hands and then begin to describe what they are feeling. So for example I picked up a card that has a wood triangle at the top center of the card. It's important to note that pre-braille students are learning to find the words that help them describe their experiences and sensations and itinerant teachers and aides can help them by asking questions like, "What does it feel like? Is it hard or soft? What type of shape does it have? Where on the card is it? The top, bottom, middle, to the right, to the left? Does it have straight edges? Is it filled in or is there an outline?" Model this type of exploration with the student first and provide the vocabulary as you play the game. As you continue you may find other textures on the different tiles in order to again build vocabulary.

So here's my next card and we repeat the exploration and determine if it matches the first tile. Again if the learner is not sure how to start, ask questions, What does it feel like? Does it feel rough or hard? Encourage the learner to repeat the descriptive words that you have suggested as this will help the student commit words to their memory.

So now we have two cards to compare. Why is it different? Why is it the same? If it's not the same then we'll turn them both over and start again. This gives the learner the opportunity to track the first tile's location or position on the board and you can encourage the learner to try memorizing the locations of the explored cards by counting which columns it's in, in what row.

This enables the learner to practice spatial awareness and if the child needs to turn over every card before they get a match well they have had the opportunity to expand their expressive vocabulary through tactile exploration.

So why is having a descriptive vocabulary important? Lowenfeld, a psychologist researcher and advocate for the blind said that children who are visually impaired need a variety of direct concrete experiences with objects and situations in their immediate environment. This matching game is just one example of how one can begin introducing new vocabulary and concepts in a very clear and understandable manner. We are teaching our

fingers to understand through touch, to differentiate between a variety of textures, provide vocabulary to tactile exploration and provide descriptive language for expressive communication.