



# Barrier games

Barrier games are a fabulous way of encouraging children to be precise in what they say. The idea with these games is to put a 'barrier' between the players so that they can't see what the other person is doing. You can make an effective barrier by using a large opened-out book, a tray or piece of cardboard.

## Getting ready

Play in pairs. Give each pair the same drawing and identical sets of coloured pencils. For example, you can use the drawings on the *Barrier games* sheet.

One child colours in a part of their drawing and instructs the other child to do the same. For example, the child might say: 'Colour the curly hair brown. Colour the straight hair yellow.' Continue until both pictures have been coloured in.

At the end, the children check the pictures and decide whether or not they are the same.

## How to help

Go through the pictures with the children and identify what went well and what could have been done differently to make the pictures more identical. Help them to understand the idea of clarification. For example: 'Did you mean light blue or dark blue?' Encourage the child who is doing the drawing to ask questions if they are at all confused: 'Do you mean the boy with the straight hair or the curly hair?'

Barrier games are powerful because they provide children with immediate feedback on whether or not their message got across clearly. They also help children to understand how powerful and useful language can be.

**This activity is demonstrated on the DVD.**

## Variations

Barrier games can be used in many different ways to practice giving and understanding instructions. Here are some examples, all of which can be adapted to suit the children's abilities.

- Give one child a picture to describe so the other can copy it.
- Get the children to make identical sets of beads.
- Use the pattern on a pegboard as the item to be described for copying.
- Give both children the same set of bricks (different shapes, colours and sizes) and get them to create the same patterns.
- Give each child the same set of toys - like Playmobile figures - and get them to create identical scenarios.
- Dress identical picture dolls with a variety of clothes.
- Complete a task, like making a sandwich, with a choice of bread and fillings.
- Describe where to put items on a simple map.



'I need to give clear instructions to make sure our pictures are the same.'