# ADHD: CONCENTRATION EXERCISES



PLAYFUL LEARNING AT HOME



#### Dear parents,

Children with ADHD need reliable, consistent family structures, or, in a metaphorical sense, a "handrail" they can hold onto as they negotiate the first phase of their lives. However, no parent wishes to educate and discipline their child incessantly. They all want to enjoy leisure time playing with him or her too. But what about combining playful moments with the communication of rules? This guide aims to introduce you to a selection of games containing and promoting specific structures and conveying rules, which we hope you and your offspring will enjoy. These games focus specifically on improving concentration and memory performance. It goes without saying that this brief guide will be unable to provide you with all the information you may require. As a result, some suggested further reading is listed below:

Prof. Dr. Med. Christine Ettrich / Monika Murphy-Witt: ADS – So fördern Sie Ihr Kind.

Ettrich, C.: Konzentrations-Trainingsprogramm für Kinder I (Vorschulalter), II (1. und 2. Klasse), III (3. und 4. Klasse). These materials served as the basis for some of the exercises in this guide.

#### About the author:

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#### I. INCREASING **CONCENTRATION**

Lack of concentration checklist

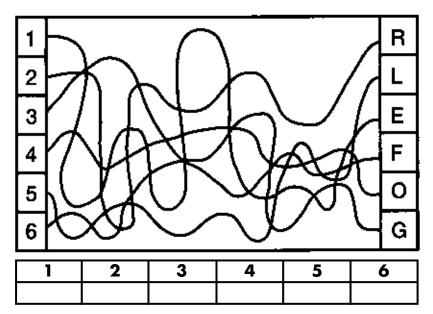
	YES	NO
Does your child find it difficult to concentrate on tasks in an age-appropriate manner?		
Does he or she abandon craft work, jigsaw puzzles or drawings regularly? Is he or she a "Master of the Unfinished"?		
Does your child get distracted easily by trivial things instead of persevering with the task at hand?		
Does he or she dawdle over homework and make slow progress?		
Is he or she erratic? Does your child quickly lose interest in a game or activity and look for something else immediately?		
Is your child often oblivious to his or her environment? Is he or she often lost in daydreams and immersed in a completely different world?		
Does your child tire easily when doing compulsory tasks and quickly lose interest?		
Does he or she often complete tasks in a superficial manner? Do careless mistakes often creep in? Does he or she overlook details easily or copy information down incorrectly?		
Does your child often sit in front of the television as if hypnotised? Does he or she occupy him- or herself with Game Boy or computer games for hours if you permit it?		
Can your child only listen superficially or for short periods, and only repeat what's been said imprecisely?		
Do you feel that what you say to your child often goes in one ear and out the other?		

Concentration becomes an Children with ADHD can important way in which children can exploit their intellectual capacity when they start school, if not before.

This means that they have to keep a clear, cool head, focus their attention on set tasks and block out everything distracting.

learn to concentrate. The exercises and games which follow can help them to achieve this.

# 1. Matching



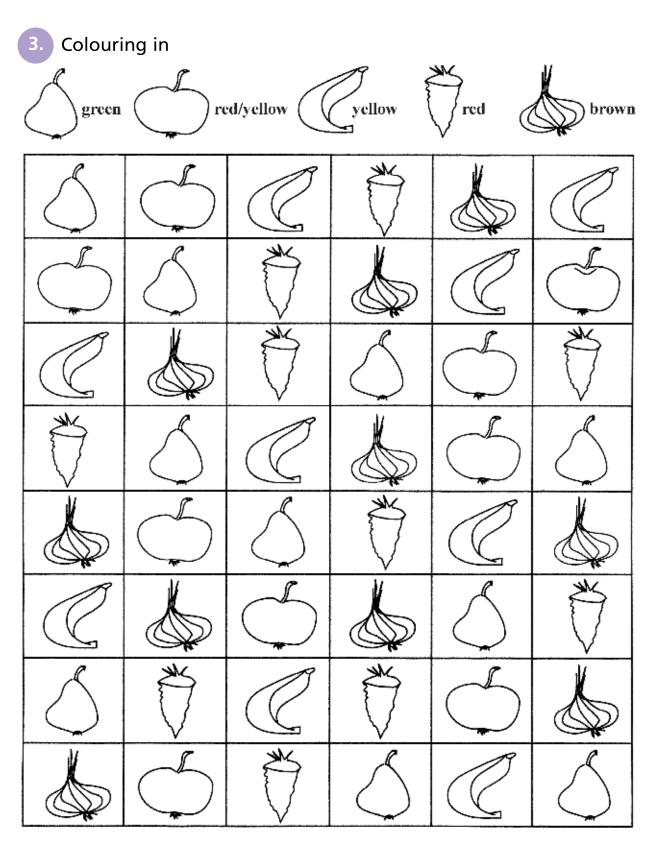
The object of this exercise is to unravel the strings in order to match the numbers to their corresponding letters. The letters should subsequently be entered below the picture in the correct order. The solution will remind your child of something that is worth improving: his or her concentration, which will ultimately lead to SUCCESS.

# 2. Discover new objects

#### Disappearing trick

A magician has a hand in this particular game. Objects keep disappearing, and new ones appear. Only those who look closely and watch carefully will be able to keep track of what's happening. Tell your child to close his or her eyes. Now place various objects on the table (a pencil, a sweet, a toy car, a rubber, a spoon and a feather, etc.), and cover them with a large cloth. Then let your child open his or her eyes. Remove the

cloth and let your child observe the objects. After the child has had a chance to look, cover the objects with the cloth again. He or she should now try and remember what's under the cloth this works best with closed eyes. While your child is doing this, swap some of the objects under the cloth for others, replacing the pencil and spoon with a flower and a balloon, for example. See whether he or she notices this the next time the objects are revealed!



A magician has put a spell on the fruit in this picture – all the colours have vanished! The child's task is to return the fruits to their normal colourful state, colouring them in line by line and not going over the edges. He or she should also use the given colours as far as possible. 4. "Ringing" names

Give your child a little bell or rattle. Now read a story and tell him or her to ring or rattle every time the hero's name is mentioned. The game can be made more complicated by the addition of one or two other main characters.

Then you can tell your child to ring when the first name is mentioned, knock on the table at the mention of the second name and rattle at the third.

5. Photo puzzle

Cut some large pictures out of magazines or newspapers – animals, faces, landscapes, cars. Stick each of

these onto a white piece of paper.

cut the pictures into in-

dividual pieces, making them smaller or larger depending on the child's age. Start off with a few pieces only.

If your child manages to complete the puzzle, make the task more difficult and increase the number of individual pieces.

6. Soundscape

Blindfold your child before telling him or her to sit in the middle of the room and listen carefully.

What noises can he or she hear? A ticking clock, the droning of the refrigerator or cars outside on the street? Now make noises which belong in this room on purpose. Turn on the

kitchen tap, whip something with a whisk, etc.



# 7. Mandala

Colouring in mandalas is both a wonderful concentration exercise and perfect for relaxing.

Book shops and craft stores sell mandala templates in abundance, both simple ones and more complicated, ornamental versions. You can also design your own mandalas with your child using a stencil (available from craft or toy shops), which he or she can subsequently colour in.



8. Storyteller

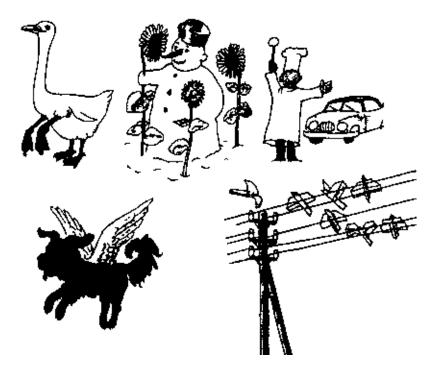
Here, the focus is on paying attention and developing the imagination. Start by telling your child a story about someone (with a name). Then stop midsentence, e.g.:

"One morning, Tom went to the meadow at the edge of the woods with his dog Emil. There...". Now ask your child to continue the story. After a couple of sentences, either you or another participant should take over so the story keeps on growing.

The sole condition:

people, names and other details can't be changed, and the story must remain consistent so it turns into an exciting tale.

# 9. Topsy-turvy world



Pictures like these can both amuse your child and prompt him or her to look closely and find mistakes. Show your offspring these or similar images you've thought up yourself one after the other, and ask him or her to circle the mistakes using a crayon.

# 10. Colourful necklaces

Threading beads requires both a great deal of dexterity and a high level of concentration, especially if a given pattern is being followed. But the results are worth the effort – exclusive, original pieces of jewellery! Give your child beads sorted into different colours.

First of all, decide how the necklace should look, and draw the colour sequence on a piece of paper, for example: pink, turquoise, white, blue, turquoise, blue, white, turquoise, pink and then back to the beginning. Once the pattern has been drawn, your child can start threading the beads on a (leather) cord or a thick piece of string. Once your child has practised a little, you can help him or her create more complicated patterns, such as 3 red, 2 yellow, 3 red, 5 green, 3 red, etc.



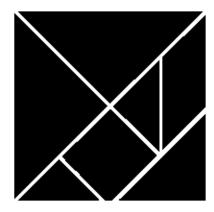
There's a lot going on in this picture. It shows various objects, foods and animals. Individual objects, foods and animals are depicted again in the two rows beneath the picture for the sake of clarity. It will be

interesting to see which objects and animals your child finds right away, and to watch him or her colouring them in the picture.

# 12. Tangram

Do you know this old game from China? It consists of seven wooden shapes – triangles, a rectangle and a square. The aim is to put the pieces together to form shapes using a pattern. You can either buy this game, or make one yourself.

Cut a square out of a piece of thick, black card. Then, using our template, copy the seven individual shapes with a ruler, cut them out, and there you go! Then see whether your child can put



together figures suggested by you or invented by him or her.

# 13. Magic eight

The following exercise boosts attention skills, improves intellectual powers and increases the child's capacity to comprehend and perform new tasks. It is therefore an ideal concentration booster to use now and then. Your child should sit down straight and stretch out his or her left arm in front, with the thumb at nose height pointing upwards. He or she should now trace a figure eight in the air, starting from the centre and proceeding towards the upper left.

The arm should remain stretched out, and the head should be still. Only the child's eyes should slowly follow the movement of the thumb. Once your child has completed this "roller coaster" three times with the left arm, the right arm should take over. To finish, the child should stretch out both hands, folded together, and trace eight the magic with them. Afterwards, he or she should pause for a moment and relax before doing something else.

# 14. Spot the difference

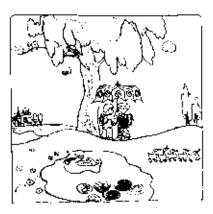
Your child needs to look closely and concentrate in order to be able to spot the differences between pictures. Games like these are often printed in magazines. Alternatively copy

our material – preferably enlarged.

At first glance, both pictures look identical...

...but there are seven mistakes to discover in the second one.





# 15. Magic letters

Your child can conjure up new words by adding or taking away the individual letters printed by each word. He or she should remove these letters from or add them to the words in the first and second sections respectively, so that new words with a completely different meaning are formed. If your child doesn't yet know the meanings of these words, it's a good opportunity to explain them.

#### **Omitting a letter:**

omitting a letter.		
BREAK - B	BOWL - B	STAND - S
GATE - G	PART - P	TRAVEL - T
BLANKET - B	SOFTEN - S	SHARE - S
MARVELLOUS - M	DOG - D	FRITTERS - F
Write down the new v	vords in capital letters i	the spaces provided:
Adding a letter:		
TRE - E	TRAVE - L	ILE - F
RESS - D	KUR - T	EATHER - L
INK - P	AR - T	ARDS- C
ED - B	BAND - R	FAT - E
Write down the new v	vords in capital letters in	the spaces provided:

#### Coaching tips

- Remain calm and don't expect too much of your child. Stress disables the brain. It's only possible to concentrate effectively when at ease and relaxed.
- Switch off all sources of distraction. Be it a constant stream of background noise from the TV or radio,
   Dad's surfing on the internet or noisy siblings – all these things disturb your child's concentration.
- Give your child a cushion filled with chestnuts or beans to sit on. This is particularly calming for hyperactive children, because they feel their bodies more easily and are more attentive as a result.
- Another seat which boosts attentiveness and promotes a healthy back is a large gymnastics ball. When children sit on these balls, they have to keep their balance continually. This keeps the brain responsive and gives the body some light exercise.
- Children sometimes find it easier to do their homework sitting, or even lying on the ground. Try this out, and stick to the most successful version.
- Make sure children have access to fresh air while doing homework. The body uses 15% more oxygen than usual when doing concentrated mental work.
- Gently massage your child's ear lobe and outer ear between your thumb and forefinger, from top to bottom and from inside to outside. This exercise, which derives from applied kinesiology, makes us more alert and attentive.
- Give your child time to rest, as concentrating is tiring.
   Relaxing between exercises is crucial. Please note: the younger your child, the more often he or she will need a break.
- The length of time children can actually concentrate on a single task is often overestimated.

#### On average:

- → 5 7 years: 15 minutes
- → 8 9 years: 20 minutes
- → 10 12 years: 25 minutes
- → 12 years +: 30 minutes.
- → These periods may be shorter, depending on time of day and energy level. A break is the only effective way to restore concentration.

# II. MEMORY TRAINING

Do you always know where you put your car keys? And yesterday you forgot to buy salt when you went shopping, even though that was the reason you went shopping in the first place.

This sort of thing happens to all of us from time to time. But most children with ADD experience it on a daily basis. They often just have very bad memories. Above all, their short-term or working memories don't function as they should. In fact, these are more like a sieve through which many things simply slide. As a result, it's no wonder that some messages never reach the brain. But that's not a major problem, whether with or without ADD. After all, with their 100 billion nerve cells, our brains can be compared to gigantic networks with enormous storage capacities which

today's computers can only dream of having. Unfortunately, we use around 20 per cent of our brain's capacity - no more than our ancestors did in the Stone Age! This is why "brain management" experts maintain that there is no such thing as a bad memory - just a badly trained one. So there is a solution. Because practice makes perfect. And those who practise reqularly will have no problem increasing their brain capacities and improving their memories. This also applies to children with ADD!

The following games and exercises are designed to give everyone's memory a helping.



# 1. Remembering names

Peter is sitting at home, feeling bored. Suddenly, the door bell rings. Ben and Tom have come by to pick Peter up to go and play football. Nick, Anna and Kirsten are already waiting in the playground. They want to play too. Peter is annoyed, because he doesn't want to play with girls. He'd rather go and pick up his classmates George and Michael from the after-school care centre. They'll be sure to want to play. Peter, Ben and Tom cross the street to go to the care centre. But then they see the brothers George and Michael in a passing car. Their Dad has already picked them up. The three boys are annoyed, because they now have no choice but to play football with the girls. When Peter arrives home for dinner, his father asks him what he did that day. Peter tells him about the football game and has to admit that Anna and Kirsten play pretty well, after all!

After reading your child this story, ask him or her which names he or she can remember, and which names were mentioned more than once. You could also repeat the story and ask your child to "fill in" the names. Alternatively, you could ask your child other questions related to the story, such as:

- What did the children want to play?
- Why couldn't the two boys at the after-school care centre play football with the others?
- Who did Peter tell about the football match, and when?
- What did Peter have to admit in his account of the football game?



### 2. Memory

Memory games are excellent exercises for improving both memory and concentration. Most toy shops stock numerous versions of "Memory" in various degrees of difficulty for younger and older children. Most of these are perfect games for the entire family, combining learning and fun.

However, you can also make special Memory games with your child yourself. How about "Listening Memory"? Simply fill empty film holders with various materials or objects. Two holders should always contain the same things, such as: paper clips, beans, rice, little nails, little stones, sand. It's perfect for making children prick up their ears!

Or why not make your own personal Memory game using photos from your last holiday, pictures of animals or leaves you've collected and pressed yourself. It should be possible to make pairs using the pictures.

However, the pictures or photos don't necessarily have to be identical. It is important that the two motifs match, such as a photo of a beach and one of a shell, a picture of sheep and one of lambs, or a beech leaf with a picture of a beech tree. Countless combinations are possible!

Stick the pictures onto stiff cardboard and cut them into equally sized pieces. This type of memory game can be supplemented continually. Every time you find a new pair, simply add it to your collection. This ensures that the game remains exciting.

#### 3. Robinson Island

This game is all about listening carefully and remembering information in the short-term. It can be played as a pair or in a group.

To start with, each player receives food for the journey in the form of five crackers or jelly bears. The first player begins, saying: "I'm travelling to a lonely island and am taking a... with me" – a fishing rod, for example.

The next person repeats the first player's choice and adds another object to the

list. The game proceeds, and the list of luggage gets longer and longer.

Each time a player forgets an object when repeating the list, he or she has to forfeit a cracker or jelly bear.

Players with nothing left to eat must quit the game, because they would starve without food on the lonely island.

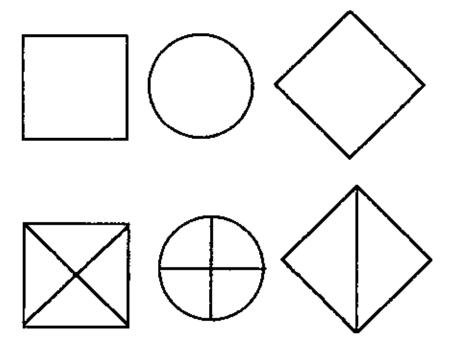


# 4. Drawing shapes

Cut several geometric shapes out of paper or cardboard (you may like to use the examples given here). Give these specific markings and train your child's memory by showing him or her the shapes in different sequences (approx. 5 seconds per shape), and asking him or her to draw the shapes from memory.

You can start with two shapes and increase the number as you go. After one round in which your child forgot some of the shapes, display them again for a short period of time and let him or her try and draw the ones missed.

The same game is possible using wooden sticks which you can use to create simple figures (but not letters) and show them to your child. Here, it's important that you remember the shapes and their order yourself, or write them down!



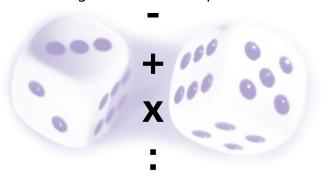
### 5. Maths whiz

Mental arithmetic is a great memory trainer. Vary the type of arithmetic according to your child's age. How about "counting peas" for children in their first year of school? Prepare a bowl full of dried peas. Your child should take the corresponding number of peas out of the bowl or put some back in depending on the nature of the task.

5 + 3, 4 - 3, 8 - 6, 3 + 7, etc. "Chain calculations", with or without peas, are more difficult: 7 + 3 - 2...

Calculations using a dice

is a good idea for older children: tell the children whether to add, subtract, multiply or divide. Then the first player rolls the dice. All the children remember the number. The dice passes to the next player. But Mum's the word - the children should do the sums in their heads, not out loud. After the dice has been rolled and the numbers called, each child writes down his or her solution. Then the results are compared. Players with the right answers are awarded a point.



6. Flashback

What happened at school this morning? Or last weekend? Why not take a look back at these events with your child in a playful way.

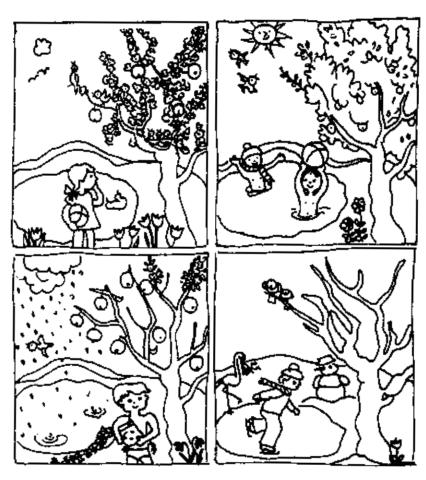
"Oliver, your classmate is ill. Please tell him what happened, hour by hour, so he knows exactly what went on and can catch up." – Or test your child's memory like this: "I've completely forgotten what we were doing this time yesterday. Can you remember? Tell me..." This type of remembering exercise isn't just good memory training, but also helps work through experiences more effectively.

# 7. Finding the mistakes

These pictures show the various seasons, but some mistakes have crept in as you can see. Your child will find things in each picture which don't match the respective seasons.

Show your child the pictures

either individually or (more difficult) one after the other for a short period of time, and then ask him or her which season is being depicted and which elements do not belong to that particular time of year.



8. Chinese whispers

This well-known game is particularly funny with a group of players. Whisper a sentence in the first person's ear. Don't speak too loudly, but say the words clearly enough so that he or she can really understand. The sentence

should now be whispered from ear to ear.

Let's see who has remembered what! It's always exciting and funny to hear what comes out at the end. The last player can start the next sentence as a consolation.

#### 9. Homework recall

Even though children don't get much homework when they start school, make the homework book an important part of your child's school bag from the very beginning. Give your child a special little book for this purpose in which he or she can note everything down. Prepare the book so that even school starters can use it quickly and easily. How

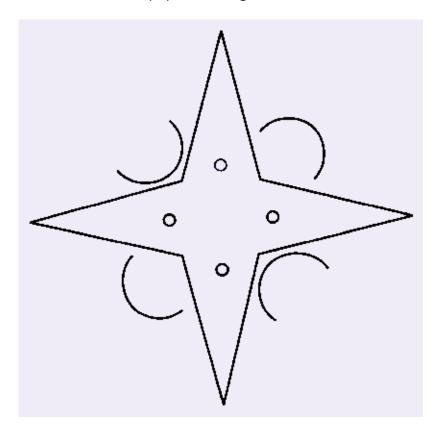
about using symbols for children who have just started school – a pencil for writing, a dice for arithmetic and an eye for reading?

Draw a week's worth of symbols into your child's homework book before each school week starts. Then all he or she has to do is add a page number and a task number. A tick can be used to mark which homework has been completed, making it easier to keep track. If everything goes to plan, give your child a colourful sticker for their books or a funny stamp. In the case of older pupils, why not write down the individual subjects (English, Maths, General Knowledge, Religion) in different colours. Ideally, your child should prepare his or her homework book for the coming week each Friday after school. This is a good way to practise time and work management!

# 10. Drawing shapes

Enlarge this shape on a special sheet of paper. Show it to your child for a short period, before turning it over and letting him or her try to copy the shape in as much detail as possible on the back of the paper or

on another sheet. If this doesn't work the first time round, show the shape again (for 5 seconds) and let your child correct or add to his or her original drawing after you've covered it again



# 11. Describing mental images

Pictures are another effective memory aid. It's far easier to remember dry facts if you imagine them descriptively and vividly in your head. Practise vivid thinking with your child. If he or she is small, you can make story times more visual and colourful, painting a figurative picture with the words you use. Your child will then automatically recall these pictures when trigger words are said.

what it is. Alternatively, one player should say letters and words to another player, who should respond by spontaneously listing everything which occurs to him or her, i.e.: the letter "S" looks like... a snake. The traffic sign for "give way" resembles... a triangle.

Names can also be turned into pictures, such as Mr. Beechwood is the man... under the beech tree. Alternatively, you can construct entire picture chains.







You can motivate older children to think up their own association chains by turning this into a game. Write some words and situations on slips of paper. Then let your child choose one of them. He or she should now try and describe the word on the paper as vividly as possible, so that fellow players can guess

12. Learning on the run

Whether the task is to study the times tables or learn a poem or vocabulary – let your child try it "on the run". Draw a giant figure eight in chalk on your terrace or outside, or make the same shape on the carpet using a piece of string. This is the "race track". Start out with a trial run,

e.g. without learning anything. After all, your child has to be familiar with the course! After a few rounds, encourage your child to learn out loud. He or she should maintain an even walking speed and not stop if the brain comes to a standstill.

13. Memory aid

Help your child choose something he or she would like to use as a memory aid. It doesn't always have to be the famous knot in the hanky! Perhaps your child has a small cuddly toy or a beautiful stone which could perform this task for him or her. Important: the memory aid has to fit in your child's (trouser) pocket, and it has

to be able to listen well. Since your child will have to tell it the information it has to remember loudly and clearly beforehand, preferably two

or three

14 Pack your suitcase

This exercise is not about packing food for a journey, but rather those things one would usually take on holiday. Practise packing a suitcase with your child or children or his or her friends. Ask them all to name things they would like to take on holiday one after the other. When the next player's turn comes, he

or she must repeat what has been said by the other players before adding another item to the list.

Those who forget part of what has already been said must miss a round.

They can then join in the game in the next round once they've regained their confidence.

### 15. Internal TV

Those used to visual thinking can use this exercise to make entire picture chains. Let your child "stage" school material like this: "Imagine you have a TV in your head, which is currently showing an exciting film about the development of frogs. What picture sequence can you see?" Your child can then recall material learnt in biology class as film scenes:

Scene 1:

"Frogs spawn in a ditch with lush greenery;

Scene 2:

"Lots of little tadpoles flit through the water";

Scene 3:

"Tadpoles with arms and legs";

Scene 4:

"The tail falls off";

Scene 5:

"A little frog sits on a stone in the sun".

16. Making mnemonics

"I before e except after c.". Those who have learnt this sentence are as unlikely to forget it as they are the mnemonic which guarantees a reliable weather forecast for the next day: "Red sky at night, shepherd's delight, red sky in the morning, shepherd's war-

ning". It's worth encouraging your child to start a collection of mnemonics. This doesn't only have to include famous ones, but personal ones, maybe even rhyming ones made up by your child. These are certainly the most valuable kind.

# 17. Shopping list

Lists or word sequences are easier to remember when they're set in a visual context. To practise this, give your child the following task: "The shops are about to close. You have to run and get a few things for me from the supermarket. But I can't write them down for you, as I haven't got any paper. So you'll have to remember them.

I need pasta, cream, washing-up liquid, candles, lettuce and the TV magazine.

Think up a story featuring all these things, so you don't forget any of them while shopping."

The following story could result:

Mum's lighting a candle on the dinner table this evening. We're having pasta with cream sauce and lettuce with tomatoes. After washing the dishes with some washing-up liquid, we'll read the new TV magazine together."



#### Coaching tips

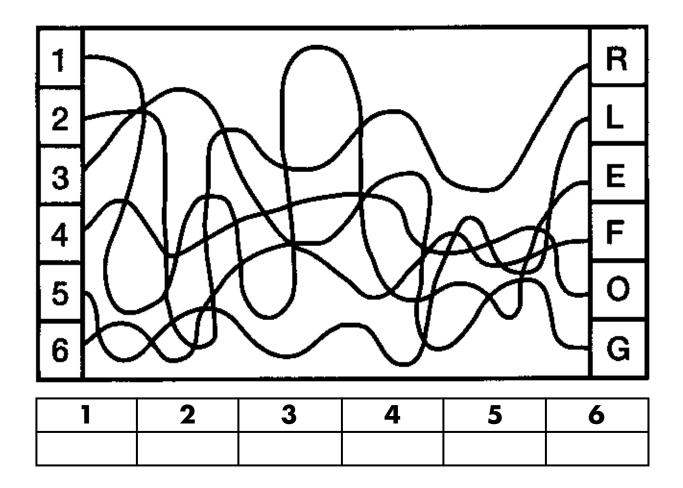
- Rituals and routines are excellent everyday memory aids. Children who clean their teeth every morning after breakfast will eventually remember automatically and won't need reminding. And children who always pack their satchels for the next day after finishing their homework are bound to forget less.
- When you want to tell your child something important, put your hand on his or her arm or shoulder, or touch him or her lightly. This small movement helps your offspring to switch to "absorb" instead of "deaf" mode. The chance that your message will reach the child and that the task in question will be carried out thus increases.
- Sometimes your child just needs to collect him- or herself. After this, he or she recalls that important task. The "finger trick" is helpful here: tell your child to put his or her fingertips together. Can he or she feel the pulse between the individual pairs of fingers? If the child feels regular pulsations in all five pairs, the brain is awake. Now your child can ask his or her brain: what should I be remembering?
- Cross-over movements get the brain up to speed. This makes learning and remembering easier too. Your child should stand up and touch the right knee with the left hand and the left knee with the right hand, as if he or she were walking on the spot for around one minute. This also works when seated at a desk. But take care if children don't feel happy doing this, the task may be too difficult for them. In this case, they certainly shouldn't do this exercise.
- Label all your child's belongings with name tags, and preferably with your telephone number too. This increases your chances of getting them back. Because your child is bound to forget something at some point.
- Trust is good, but control is better. Check your child's belongings regularly – bags, gym clothes, jackets, hats, gloves. If something's not there, then you can ask your child quickly and go in search of the missing object together. The earlier you discover the loss, the more likely it is that your child will remember where it could be.

# APPENDIX MASTER COPIES

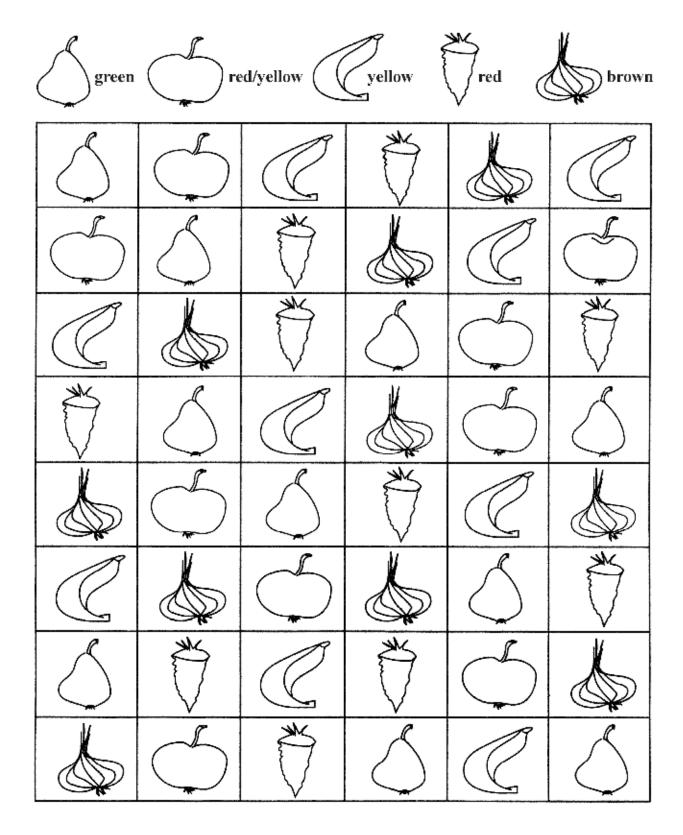
This appendix contains master copies so that some exercises can be repeated. We recommend that you also copy the checklists (page 4), in order to gauge your child's success after a specific training period.

We hope you enjoy completing the exercises with your child, and wish you every success.

# Match up



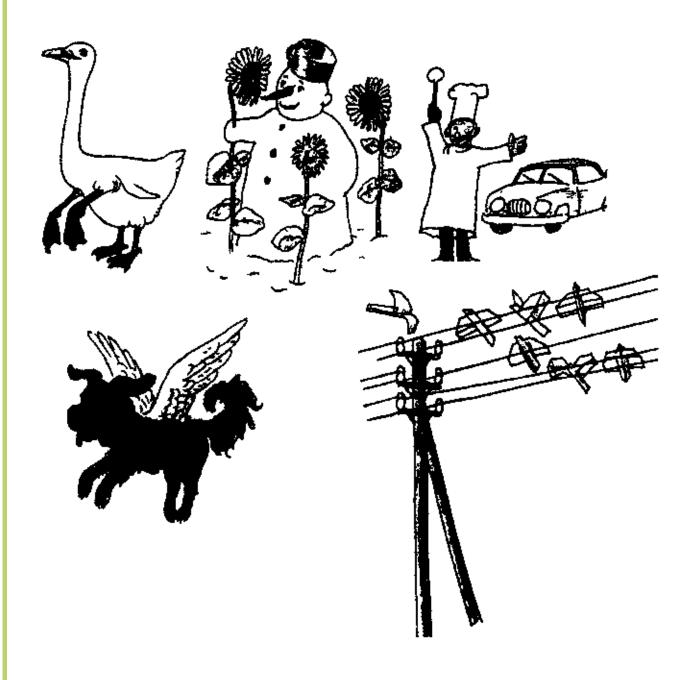
# Colouring in



### Mandala



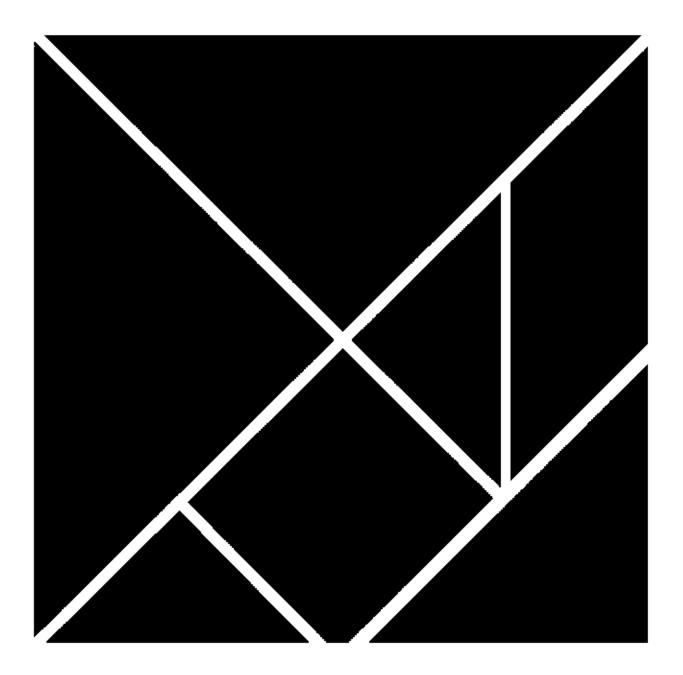
## Topsy-turvy world



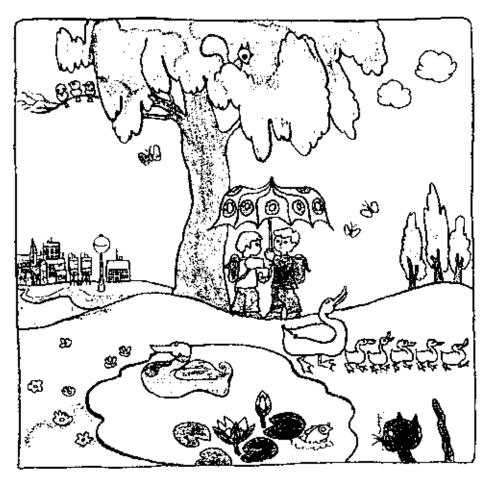
# Find the objects



### Tangram



### Spot the difference



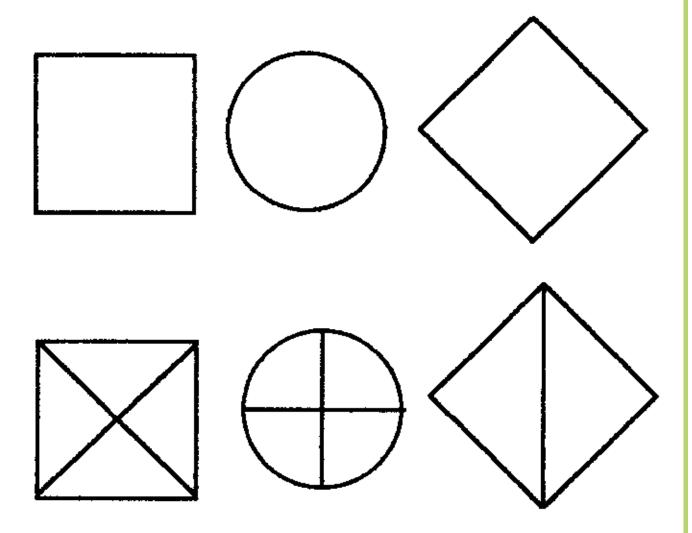


# Magic letters

# **Omitting a letter:**

omitting a letter.		
BREAK - B	BOWL - B	STAND - S
GATE - G	PART - P	TRAVEL - T
BLANKET - B	SOFTEN - S	SHARE - S
MARVELLOUS - M	DOG - G	FRITTERS - F
Write down the new v	vords in capital letters in	the spaces provided:
Adding a letter:		,
TRE - E	TRAVE - L	ILE - F
RESS - D	KUR - T	EATHER - L
INK - P	AR - T	ARDS - C
ED - B	BAND - R	FAT - E
Write down the new v	vords in capital letters in	the spaces provided:
	1	1

## Drawing shapes



## Finding the mistakes

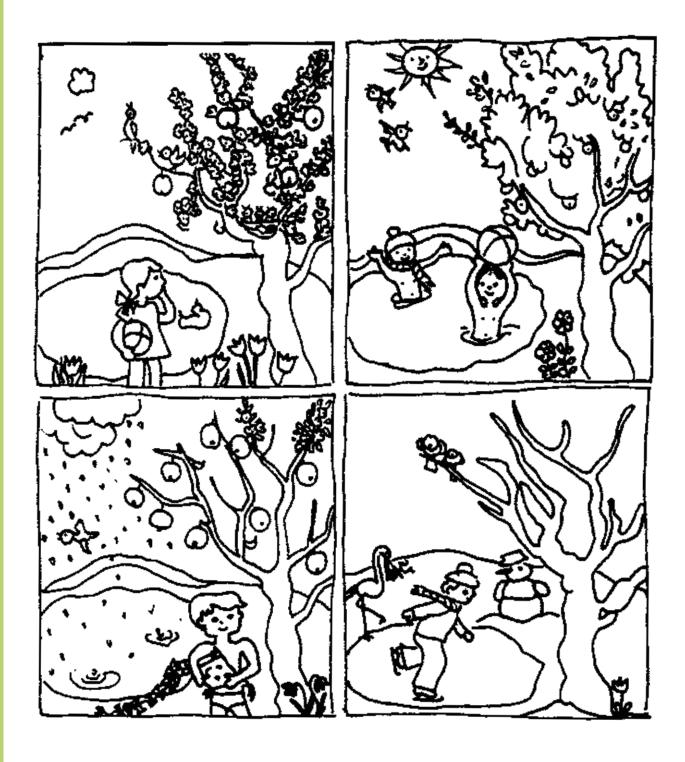


Figure tracing

