Spark on the Go

Free Family Starter Pack: 10 Screen-Free Rescue Games, a Dragon Dinner Play Mat & a One-Page Phone Cheat-Sheet

For parents and caregivers of children ages 3–5



No bags to pack. One tiny mission at a time.

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WELCOME & CONTENTS

Ten real-life games to try this week.



Whether you are waiting on restaurant booths, rolling through the produce aisle, sitting in a quiet clinic, buckled in for a drive or stirring pasta at five o'clock, play does not need a craft bin. Here are ten favorite games—two from each chapter of Spark on the Go—plus a printable play mat and a one-page phone sheet you can screenshot today.

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SAFETY & CONNECTION COME FIRST

Meet hunger and tiredness before starting a game. Keep children buckled in moving cars (drivers never read pages), stay well clear of hot stoves and knives in the kitchen, and pause immediately when called in a waiting room.

STARTER SAMPLE · RESTAURANT RESCUE

Start with what is already on the table.



MISSION 01 · WATER GLASS & PAPER NAPKIN

Ice-Cube Scientists

"Look at the tiny drops forming outside our cold cup. Where did that water come from?"

Touch the cool glass together, then place one small ice cube on a folded napkin if available. Guess whether the cube in the cup or the cube on the napkin will shrink faster, and check back every few minutes.

Builds: Observation, cause-and-effect prediction and sensory vocabulary.

MISSION 02 · CLEAN SPOONS, FORKS & NAPKINS

Silverware Pattern Parade

"Watch my row: spoon, napkin, spoon, napkin. What comes next in my parade?"

Line up four clean tabletop items left to right and invite your child to add the next piece. Trade jobs so your child invents a secret pattern—like fork, fork, packet—for you to finish.

Builds: Repeating AB and AAB patterns, left-to-right tracking and turn-taking.

Safety note: Keep hot drinks, sharp knives and breakable glassware well out of reach; clear space together the moment a server approaches.

Developmental notes: 1, 2 | Sources on p. 10

STARTER SAMPLE · GROCERY STORE DETECTIVES

Give your child a real job.



MISSION 11 · NO SUPPLIES · WHOLE TRIP

Tiny List Team

"You are in charge of three things on our list today: apples, milk and tortillas. Repeat them with me!"

Touch three fingers as you name each item. Halfway through the store, ask your list keeper which items are already in the cart and which finger still needs its match.

Builds: Working memory, meaningful responsibility and pride in helping.

MISSION 12 · PRODUCE DEPARTMENT

Rainbow Produce

"Let's see if the produce section has every color of the rainbow hiding in real foods today."

Spot one red, orange, yellow, green and purple fruit or vegetable—even ones you are not buying today. Notice shades together: lime green versus dark broccoli green.

Builds: Color categorization, descriptive vocabulary and curiosity about whole foods.

Safety note: Keep children seated properly in the cart or walking right beside your hand; let adults handle glass jars, raw meat packages and heavy cans.

Developmental notes: 1, 4 | Sources on p. 10

STARTER SAMPLE · WAITING ROOM WONDERS

Two hands, two chairs, quiet magic.



MISSION 21 · ZERO SUPPLIES · SILENT

Finger Flash

"Watch my hand—I'm going to peek out some fingers super fast and hide them again! Did you see how many?"

Hold up 1, 2 or 3 fingers for one second, then tuck them behind your back. Preschoolers love recognizing tiny amounts at a glance without counting—then flashing fingers back for you to guess!

Builds: Subitizing (instant quantity recognition to 3–4) and visual attention.

MISSION 22 · ZERO SUPPLIES · LAP SPACE

One Tiny Change

"Take a picture of my hands with your eyes... now close them! Open—what tiny thing changed?"

Start obvious: roll up one sleeve cuff, tuck one thumb inside your fist, or cross your ankles. Keep changes gentle and visible right in your lap, then close your eyes so your child gets a turn.

Builds: Visual working memory, detail observation and joyful anticipation.

Safety note: Use family hands and lap space rather than shared clinic floors; when called back, smile and say: 'Let's pause right here and finish in the car!'

Developmental notes: 1, 2 | Sources on p. 10

STARTER SAMPLE · ROAD TRIP FUN

Eyes out the window, ears wide open.



MISSION 31 · BUCKLED · ZERO SUPPLIES

Turn-Signal Beat

"Listen—our blinker just started clicking! Can you tap your knees right on the beat until it stops?"

Every time the car signals a turn or lane change, let your backseat co-pilot match the click-clack rhythm on their knees—then freeze the instant the blinker clicks off!

Builds: Rhythmic timing, auditory focus and stop-on-cue self-control.

MISSION 32 · BUCKLED · HIGHWAY OR TOWN

Cargo Guessers

"Look at that giant white box truck beside us. What secret delivery do you think is riding inside?"

Mix real guesses (bananas, bicycles, mail) with delighted nonsense (ten thousand bouncy balls, a swimming pool for penguins). Notice clues like freezer vents or company pictures on the side.

Builds: Observational inference, imagination and conversational turn-taking.

Safety note: Children stay buckled at all times in motion. The driver never reads cards, hands items back or turns around—choose oral games and save movement for safe parked stops away from traffic.

Developmental notes: 1, 2 | Sources on p. 10

STARTER SAMPLE · DINNER'S ALMOST READY!

Safe kitchen treasures at a nearby table.



MISSION 41 · 3 STUFFED TOYS, NAPKINS & PLASTIC CUPS

Table for Teddy

"Teddy and two friends are coming to dinner! Can you set one napkin, one cup and one spoon for each guest?"

Hand over three cloth napkins, three empty plastic cups and three blunt spoons at the kitchen table. Matching one item to each guest is real preschool math disguised as warm hospitality.

Builds: One-to-one correspondence counting and caring pretend play.

MISSION 42 · 5–8 SAFE SPOONS & SPATULAS

Spoon Sorters

"Our utensil drawer got all mixed up—how many ways could you sort these safe spoons into teams?"

Gather wooden spoons, silicone spatulas, measuring spoons and soup spoons (no sharp edges). Watch how your child groups them—shiny vs. colorful, tiny vs. giant—then ask them to explain their rule!

Builds: Flexible sorting by changing attributes (size, material, color).

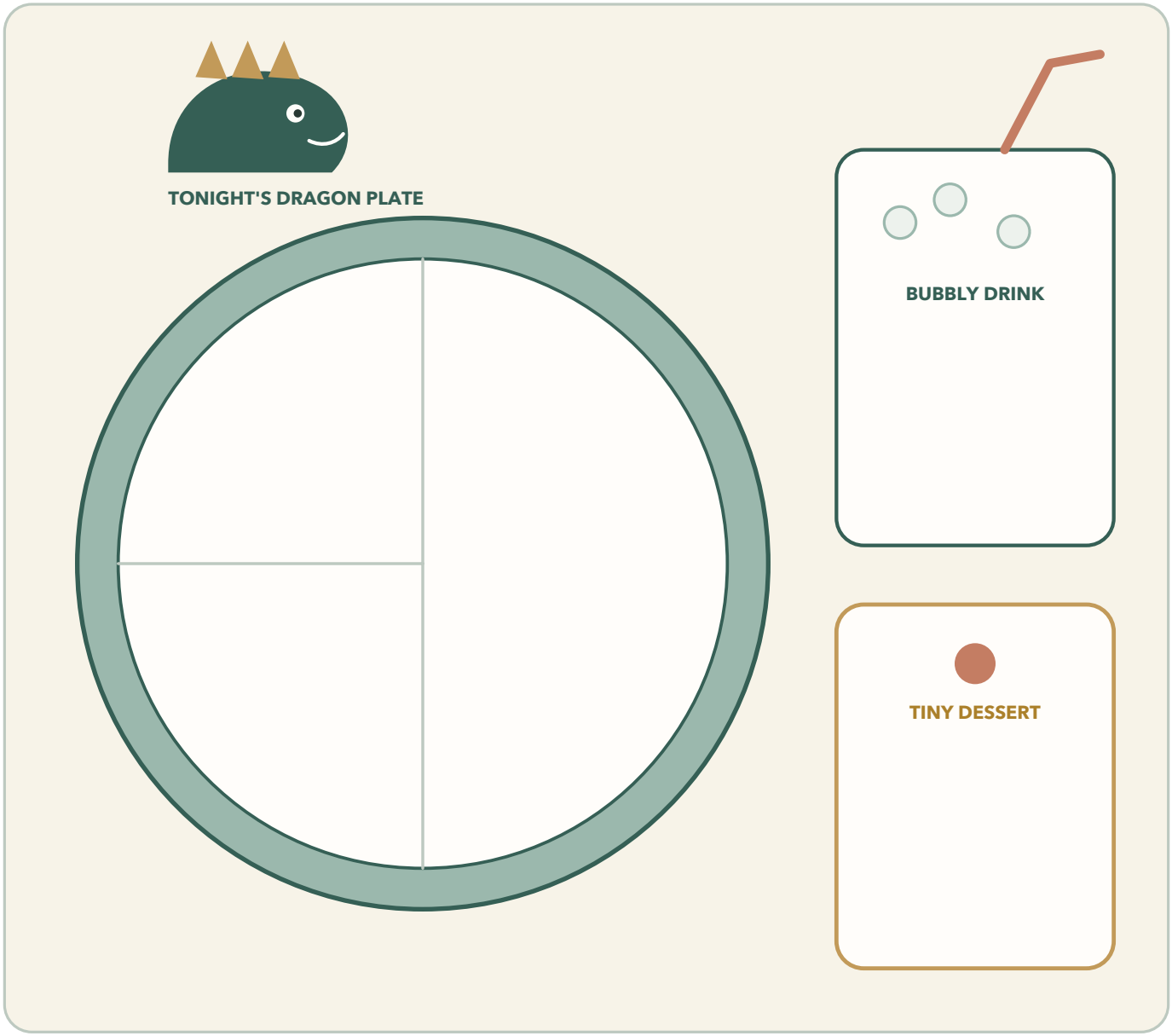
Safety note: Set up play at a table or floor spot well away from hot stoves, ovens, steam, sharp knives and hanging cords. Use only cool, clean, unbreakable items large enough not to pose a choking risk—and offer a small crunchy vegetable or water first if hunger is driving five-o'clock meltdown.

Developmental notes: 2, 4 | Sources on p. 10

PRINTABLE PLAY MAT 01 · RESTAURANT RESCUE

Dinner for a Friendly Dragon

Draw or scribble what our hungry little dragon is ordering tonight—something crunchy on the big plate, something bubbly in the cup, and a tiny dessert surprise!



Made by: _____ Date: _____

Adult tip: Write down your child's exact food names beside their marks ('lava noodles', 'moon berries') to show that their words matter.

SCREENSHOT OR PRINT

Ten rescue games on one page.



Save a photo of this page to your phone's Favorites album so a calm game is always two taps away.

Restaurant Rescue: Ice-Cube Scientists – Touch the frosty cup and predict whether ice melts faster in water or on a napkin.

Restaurant Rescue: Silverware Pattern Parade – Line up spoon-napkin-spoon-napkin and take turns extending each other's pattern.

Grocery Store Detectives: Tiny List Team – Assign three real list items on three fingers for your child to remember and spot.

Grocery Store Detectives: Rainbow Produce – Spot red, orange, yellow, green and purple fruits or vegetables in produce.

Waiting Room Wonders: Finger Flash – Flash 1, 2 or 3 fingers for one second and guess how many without counting.

Waiting Room Wonders: One Tiny Change – Close eyes while one person changes a tiny detail—a tucked thumb or rolled cuff.

Road Trip Fun: Turn-Signal Beat – Tap knees to match the car's turn-signal clicks—and freeze the second it stops!

Road Trip Fun: Cargo Guessers – Spot a closed delivery truck and guess what real or silly cargo rides inside.

Dinner's Almost Ready!: Table for Teddy – Set one napkin, one plastic cup and one spoon for three stuffed-animal dinner guests.

Dinner's Almost Ready!: Spoon Sorters – Sort safe wooden, plastic and measuring spoons by size, color or handle shape.

Want all 50 missions, 10 printable mats and 5 setting phone sheets? See page 10!

KEEP THE PLAY GOING

Loved these ten? Get all 50 missions.



COMPLETE DIGITAL EDITION · COLOR + LOW-INK PDFS ($9.95)

Spark on the Go — Complete 44-Page Guide ($9.95)

Unlock all 50 non-overlapping screen-free missions across all five settings, 10 illustrated printable play mats, and 5 one-page phone quick-sheets by Dr. Michelle Peterson.

Get the complete edition ($9.95) at sparkacademymorton.com/spark-on-the-go/

ALSO FROM SPARK EDUCATION

- **365 Invitations to Play ($14.95)**: 429-page home play library across 52 themes – sparkacademymorton.com/365-invitations-to-play/
- **Preschool Parenting Scripts ($4.95)**: Warm words for transitions, big feelings & bedtime – sparkacademymorton.com/preschool-parenting-scripts/
- **Complete 5-Resource Family Collection ($24.95)**: All 5 guides, save $23.80 – sparkacademymorton.com/parent-resources/

PRIMARY DEVELOPMENTAL SOURCES CITED IN THIS STARTER PACK

1. Executive Function Activities for 3- to 5-year-olds (Center on the Developing Child | Harvard University) – https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Executive-Function-Activities-for-3-to-5-year-olds.pdf

2. Math Preschool (Office of Head Start · Early Learning Outcomes Framework) – https://headstart.gov/school-readiness/article/math-preschool

3. Literacy Preschool (Office of Head Start · Early Learning Outcomes Framework) – https://headstart.gov/school-readiness/article/literacy-preschool

4. Fostering Competence for Success (Marie L. Masterson | NAEYC, Young Children) – https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/spring2021/fostering-competence-success

5. What Will We Make? Using Process Art to Spark Preschoolers' Development (Loretta Fernando-Smith | NAEYC, Teaching Young Children) – https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/winter2023/what-will-we-make

6. Child-Directed Play (Seattle Children's) – https://www.seattlechildrens.org/health-safety/parenting/child-directed-play/

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