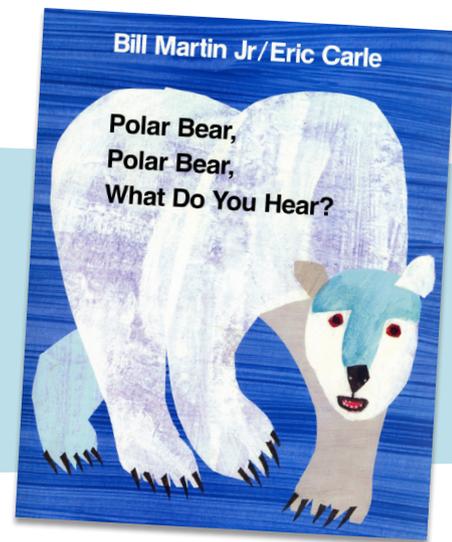


# Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?



Being able to put aside your own thoughts and feelings in order to understand the thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes and beliefs of others is called Perspective Taking.

Children are more likely to learn this life skill when adults help them understand themselves as well as understand the thoughts and feelings of others. Children who can take the perspectives of others are much less likely to get involved in conflicts.

Reading books with children can help them learn the life skills essential to everyday life success. Books like “Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?” can specifically be used to develop perspective-taking skills.

## Try these activities while reading with your child:

1.

With very young children, imitate the sounds the animals in the book make, such as roaring, snorting and hissing. When your child learns the words and sounds of this book, ask him or her to make the sound with you. You can also say the word “roaring,” and have your child make the sound.

2.

On the last page of the book, children pretend to be the animals. Have your child pretend, too. You can talk about what the animal might be trying to communicate with each sound, asking for example, “Is that a sad roar or a happy roar?”

3.

After you have read this story, use the refrain in your everyday life, saying to your child: “[Your child’s name, your child’s name], what do you hear?” Have your child listen for all of the different sounds around him or her and what that sound might be communicating—for example, “The person honking that horn seems angry.”

You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: 1) Serve & Return. Like game of ball, serve and return involves a back and forth conversation where you listen, then build on - and extend - what your child says or does to promote learning. 2) Executive Function skills are skills that are used to manage attention, feelings, thoughts and behavior to achieve goals. They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self-control. All of the life skills, like Perspective Taking, call on executive function skills, which have been found to help children thrive now and in the future.

Life skills are discussed in depth in [Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs](#) by Ellen Galinsky, president of Families and Work Institute. Mind in the Making shares the best research on children’s and adults learning. Its mission is to promote executive function life skills in order to keep the fire for learning burning brightly in all of us. Find more about Families and Work Institute’s Mind in the Making at [www.mindinthemaking.org](http://www.mindinthemaking.org).