

Making a WIGGLY WORM & TOOTHPICK ART

While Waiting in a Restaurant

by Barbara Sher

Waiting is not easy for children. Their energy level can be telling them to get up and go when the moment calls for sitting and waiting. If you are at a restaurant—and even fast food restaurants may require some sitting quietly time—here are some good distractions to bring in the clowns, as it were, and have some fun.

In this game that encourages focusing and increasing your child's attention span, all you need are wrapped straws and a glass of water and you can turn a straw wrapper into a surprising creature. Get a straw and instead of pulling off the paper cover, squish it off so that it forms accordion pleats.

Then, put the straw into a glass of water. Put your finger on the top of the straw so it traps a little water in it. Hold the straw over the squished straw wrapper and pick your finger up so a few drops fall on the wrapper. The wrapper will almost magically move like a wiggly worm. After you have demonstrated, let them try doing it themselves. They will discover by experimenting that a little water makes the worm move, and too much water drowns it. This discovery will make them more aware of how much water they are trapping and what to do to get more or less water in the straw (also good for another ten minutes of quiet).



If you find you're starting to feel guilty because your child is overly enthusiastic about this game, and using too many of the restaurant's straws, change the activity. See if your child can take water from one glass and fill up another using her newly learned straw-filling skill.

Or, introduce a new game called Toothpick Art. Besides being fun and making waiting easier, it also encourages fine motor skills of dexterity and finesse and the wonderful attribute of creativity.

All you need are some toothpicks which restaurants usually have. You can make specific things such as shapes, squares, rectangles, triangles, etc. or letters that work well with straight lines, such as E, F and M.

You can also just make a design. Cooperative designs are fun with each person, in turn, adding a toothpick to make an interesting pattern or until the food finally arrives! ♥

Barbara Sher M.A., O.T.R., an occupational therapist and author of nine books on children's games. This game is adapted from Barbara's new book *THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF MOTOR, SOCIAL AND SENSORY GAMES: Using Children's Natural Love Of Play To Enhance Key Skills And Promote Inclusion*. Check out Barbara's other game books at any on-line bookstore or get a free game designed for your child at her web site: www.gameslady.com

