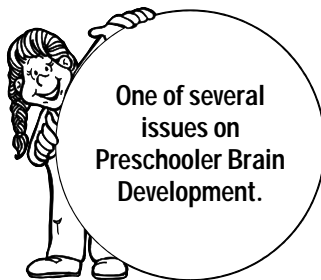


## Self-Regulation

The children are getting ready to go outside to play. After putting on jackets, children are supposed to line up at the door and wait quietly. A few run around excitedly. But, Noah wants to be the first to get a swing, so he puts his jacket on and is first in line at the door. While waiting, he keeps his back to the door, making sure he cannot see the playground, which would be too exciting. In this day-care setting, childcare providers often help children to follow the rules and routine. Noah, however, acts with little guidance. Noah shows his developing sense of self-regulation.



Green Light,” “Red Rover,” and B-I-N-G-O. These games teach children restraint. For example, you can only move when the light is “green.” In B-I-N-G-O, a child has to learn NOT to sing the omitted letter.

At age three, most children cannot successfully play “red light, green light.” They can’t stop themselves from “going” whenever any light comes on. By age 5, most children can control themselves, giving a different response for the red light than the green light. In the same way that your child has to inhibit his actions in these games, your setting limits and creating routine and structure helps your child learn what behaviors are acceptable and not acceptable.

**Self-regulation** is actively maintaining a behavior to achieve a goal, without external instruction or motivation. Self-regulation is necessary for a person to have self-control, the ability to inhibit actions. It’s stepping back to think about the situation instead of just focusing on the goal.

Self-regulation is a person’s self-control of behavior, emotions, and thoughts. The preschooler’s emerging self-regulation reflects young child’s transition from helplessness to competence. Providing experiences, support, and encouragement assist a child to learn to self-regulate.

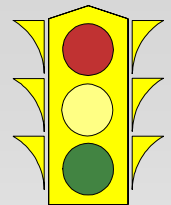
Preschool children vary widely in their ability to delay gratification or inhibit a behavior. The development of self-regulation is related to experiences a child has. As a parent, you are able to help your child learn how to develop self-regulation.

### Teaching Impulse Control

One of the most useful things you can do to teach impulse control is to play games such as “Red Light,

#### “Red Light, Green Light”

1. One of the children acts as the “stoplight” and the other children are the “cars”. The cars line up about 25 feet away, while facing the stoplight.
2. The stoplight then turns around with his or her back to the cars and says “green light”, at which time the cars start moving forward. Without any warning the stoplight then suddenly yells “red light” and turns around quickly. If the stoplight sees anyone moving, that child then returns to the starting line.
3. The fun part is the cars have to decide if they are going to move forward fast and risk getting caught or move a short distance and then stop so they don’t get caught.
4. As soon as someone reaches the stoplight the game is over and the person who made it all the way gets to be the stoplight for the next game.





## B-I-N-G-O Clapping Song

There was a farmer had a dog,  
And Bingo was his name-Oh.  
B-I-N-G-O! B-I-N-G-O! B-I-N-G-O!  
And Bingo was his name-Oh!

There was a farmer had a dog,  
And Bingo was his name-Oh.  
CLAP-I-N-G-O!  
CLAP-I-N-G-O!  
CLAP-I-N-G-O!  
And Bingo was his name-Oh!

There was a farmer had a dog,  
And Bingo was his name-Oh.  
CLAP, CLAP-N-G-O!  
CLAP, CLAP-N-G-O!  
CLAP, CLAP-N-G-O!  
And Bingo was his name-Oh!

There was a farmer had a dog,  
And Bingo was his name-Oh.  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP-G-O!  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP-G-O!  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP-G-O!  
And Bingo was his name-Oh!

There was a farmer had a dog,  
And Bingo was his name-Oh.  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP-O!  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP-O!  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP-O!  
And Bingo was his name-Oh!

There was a farmer had a dog,  
And Bingo was his name-Oh.  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP  
CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP  
And Bingo was his name-Oh!

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## Self-Regulation and Compliance

You might interpret your child's disobedience as a willful act of defiance or a moral failure. Sometimes this may be true. But a child's development of self-regulation may suggest a different interpretation. Instead of seeing your child as unruly, you might see it as an inability to inhibit action or delay gratification. Teaching self-regulation is a very

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different response than punishing a child. Self-regulation is the aim, not forced compliance. It's something at which children slowly improve.

Delay of gratification is a behavior that begins to emerge around the age of 3 ½. It's a learned skill. Noah, mentioned earlier, was able to delay gratification by keeping his attention away from the playground. Many preschoolers are not able to come up with strategies to distract themselves like Noah. Parents can help a child learn to delay gratification by setting limits, while allowing some flexibility within boundaries. Children who experience permissive parenting are less able to delay gratification.

Tips for fostering self-regulation skills:

- Provide guidance in problem solving, including planning and organizing activities. You might suggest, "If you think ahead what you are making, the blocks will be easier to place."
- Model self-regulation yourself. State your thoughts out loud. "I want to get a snack, but first I have to clean the table." Or "I wish our group could go first, but I know if we wait patiently, we will get our turn."
- Support your child with routine and structure. "It's six o'clock and time for supper. Wash your hands and come to eat." The more impulsive your child, the more likely to be bothered by changes in routine.
- Ask for self-control, but not too much. If your preschooler can't wait 5 minutes, then don't ask for it (which would force failure). But once your child can wait 5 minutes, then expect all 5 minutes, or even 5 1/2 minutes.

Benefits of learning to self-regulate behavior continue throughout life, including: being better liked by peers, having more self-confidence and self-esteem, being more independent, having better cognitive and social skills, doing better academically, being better able to handle stress and frustration during adolescence, and career success in adulthood.

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