

SEVEN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS

Skill Building Book Tips

You can read *Dear Mr. Blueberry* in a way that highlights Communicating, a Life Skill that promotes Executive Functions. This Life Skill is much more than understanding language, speaking, reading and writing. It is the skill of **determining what you want to communicate** and **realizing how our communications will be**.



TIP:

Emily writes her teacher during summer vacation that she thinks she sees a whale in her pond, and she loves whales very much. She asks for information on whales because she thinks this whale might be hurt. Her teacher, while giving her information in a series of letters, tells her again and again that there is no way a whale could live her in pond.

Ask your child:

- “How does Emily react to her teacher’s insistence that a whale couldn’t live in her pond?”
- “How does the teacher deal with Emily’s belief that she is seeing a whale?”



SKILL:

To understand a disagreement among others, your child has to **put aside his or her own ideas and try to see the perspectives of others**, an **Executive Function** skill. When you help your child learn **how to deal with disagreement**, you are helping him or her become a better communicator.



TIP:

Emily uses letters to her teacher as a way of gaining more information about whales. Ask your child what else Emily does to find out about whales.



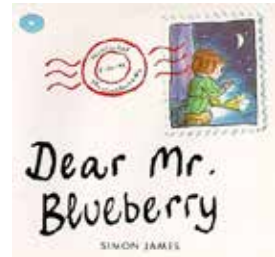
SKILL:

One of the purposes of Communicating is to find answers to questions you might have. By asking your child questions and having conversations about books and characters, you are helping your child think about Communicating in new ways. This back and forth interaction is what researchers call “Take-Turns Talk.” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something and the other responds. The importance of these everyday interactions to brain-building is a key finding from child development research.

Dear Mr. Blueberry

By Simon James

During vacation time, Emily and her teacher, Mr. Blueberry, write letters to each other about the whale that Emily sees in her small pond. It’s an engaging story with a charming blend of reality and fantasy.



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TIP:

As you read *Dear Mr. Blueberry*, point out words that may be new to your child, like “migratory” or “shrimplike.” You can talk about what the words mean or look them up together.



SKILL:

Using **rich and diverse language** promotes Communicating.



TIP:

You can ask your child to whom he or she would like to write a letter. Together, plan and write a letter.



SKILL:

Writing letters is fun and helps your child think about what he or she wants to say and thus, to **practice** the skill of Communicating.

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These tips sheets were developed by *Mind in the Making*, in collaboration with First Book. *Mind in the Making* and Vroom are programs of the Bezos Family Foundation. Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need. Visit: www.fbmarketplace.org.



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MIND in the Making
The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs