

Skill-Building Book Tips

7 Essential Life Skills

Discover *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's 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 in her 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 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 help him become a better communicator.

Tip

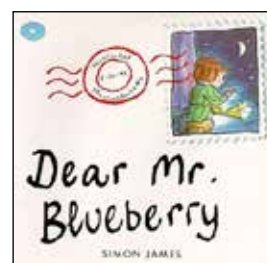
Emily uses letters to her teacher as a way of gaining more information about whales. Ask your child what else Emily does to find out about whales.

Skill

One of the purposes of Communicating is to find answers to questions. By asking your child questions and having conversations about books and characters, you’re helping him 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.” Talk about what the words mean or look them up together.

Skill

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

Tip

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 wants to say and thus, to **practice** the skill of Communicating.

These tips sheets were developed by *Mind in the Making*, in collaboration with First Book. 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.**