

# Skill-Building Book Tips

## 7 Essential Life Skills

Turn into a detective to read *Edgar Allan's Official Crime Investigation Notebook* in a way that highlights Critical Thinking, a Life Skill that promotes Executive Functions. This Life Skill is the ongoing search for **valid and reliable knowledge to guide beliefs, decisions and actions.**

### Tip

Edgar is careful about how he gathers information about the disappearance of Slurpy (the fish) and other stolen items. He observes, interviews people, asks questions, takes notes and develops theories. Talk with your child about the process Edgar used to try to solve the mystery:

- “What clues did Edgar use to try to solve the mysterious disappearance of so many things from his classroom? What clues did his classmates use?”
- “Their teacher Mrs. Herschel reminds the children that a shoe print near the crime doesn't mean that the shoe print belongs to the criminal. Which clues were most effective? How about Edgar's conclusion that eyeballs never lie?”
- “Can you step back and describe the process the children used to solve the crime?”
- “Who did you think the thief was as you read this book? Why?”

### Edgar Allan's Official Crime Investigation Notebook

By Mary Amato

*Edgar Allan's Official Crime Investigation Notebook* begins with the theft of a fish in Edgar's fifth grade classroom and a poem left as a clue. Other thefts and mysterious clues follow, that Edgar often in competition, sometimes in cooperation with his classmates, become passionate about solving.



### Skill

When you talk about the character's actions in solving the mystery, you are pointing out the **decision-making process used to gather information** to think critically, including **creating and testing theories**, which call on **Executive Function** skills.

### Tip

Mrs. Herschel says, “I suggest we keep our minds open. Use your powers of observation. Consider all of the possibilities. Remember the culprit is sometimes the opposite of who you'd expect.” Talk with your child about a time he or she thought something was one way and then—after getting more information—came to a new conclusion.

### Skill

By connecting your child's personal experience to the lessons from this book, you are reinforcing the importance of seeking more information to get the best results. This is very important in Critical Thinking, which is the **search for valid and accurate information.**

# Skill-Building Book Tips

## 7 Essential Life Skills

- The back-and-forth conversation you have with your child 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.

### Tip

In the beginning of the book, Edgar doesn't feel very good about himself. He writes, “I am a failure. I am giving up.” By the end of the book, much has changed and he says, “THIS IS THE LIFE!” He writes that even his older brother looked at him with respect. Ask your child:

- “What led to Edgar's changed feelings? How do you feel when you try something really hard and keep going?”

### Skill

The pursuit of knowledge can affect our feelings about ourselves. Talking with your child about why **self-directed learning can be so powerful** broadens his understanding of learning.

### Tip

The teacher Mr. Crew writes, “A Poem is a Gift.” He also makes the point that “every poem is a mystery waiting to be solved.” By the end of the book, the children are writing and appreciating poetry more. Ask your child:

- “Did this book change your views about poetry?”

This book is written on many different levels. The names of the characters have meaning; for example, Edgar Allen is named after a famous poet. Take a look at the bonus mystery questions at the end of the book and explore them with your child.

### Skill

**Answering one question often leads to pursuing other questions.** You are helping your child understand this through your discussion.

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](http://www.fbmarketplace.org).**