

# Skill-Building Book Tips

## 7 Essential Life Skills

Explore *Whistle for Willie* in a way that highlights Focus and Self Control, a Life Skill that promotes Executive Functions. Children need this skill in order to achieve their **goals**, especially in a world that's filled with distractions and information overload. It involves **paying attention**, **remembering the rules**, **thinking flexibly** and **exercising self control**.

### Tip

You can ask your child:

- “What did Peter do to learn how to whistle?”

### Skill

When your child retells parts of the story, she's developing Focus and Self Control by **paying attention and remembering**. Focus and Self Control also includes **being able to practice in order to work toward a goal**. **Executive Function** skills are driven by goals.

### Tip

We all do better at achieving our goals if they are important to us.

You can ask:

- “Why did Peter want to learn to whistle?”

Wait for her response and respond to that, perhaps by asking:

- “Did Willie notice Peter when he couldn't whistle?”

### Skill

This back-and-forth conversation 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

Share a story with the child about a time when you exercised **self-control** to work toward a goal that was important to you. Or, remind your child of a time when she worked toward a goal, such as throwing a ball, saying a hard word or going to a new place. By telling inspiring stories about your child's past, you are helping her build a “can-do” self-image.

### Skill

It's important for children to understand that **working toward a goal and takes believing they can achieve the goal**.

### Whistle for Willie By Ezra Jack Keats

Many children will recognize the star of this beloved book—it's Peter from *The Snowy Day*! Here, he models both patience and practice as he teaches himself to whistle so that he can summon his dog.



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)**.