



TABLE-TOP GAMES – ‘ADDED VALUE’ AFTER SCHOOL

They’re fun, they’re rumbustious, they’re a laugh a minute. Better still, as part of after-school activities, table-top games (board games and action games) can help consolidate what children have been learning at school. Never underestimate the value of table-top games.

Teachers have used board games in the classroom for many years. While the games themselves can never be a substitute for traditional teaching methods, they can help reinforce learning, especially when fun is not the sole aim of play.



Translate this to the after-school activity club. Children are winding down after a day’s hard graft - or revving up to release some of their untapped energy. They need diversion, stimulation, friendship, interaction with peers and adults, and activities that challenge them to the limit of their capabilities and knowledge.

Table-top games fit this bill perfectly. ‘Table top’ includes board games, which generally have an intellectual dimension, and action games that tend to be more

physical. Both are equally valid staples of the after-school club games cupboard, and both have aspects that consolidate classroom learning and teach valuable life skills.

Face-to-face versus online play

From media reports, it might seem that today’s children are completely addicted to games they can play on their tablets or phones. Independent research carried out in May and October 2016 on behalf of Drumond Park, one of the UK’s leading developers and manufacturers of table-top games, found that almost 9 in 10 children aged between four and nine years old (85%) prefer face-to-face play to online games. This includes 89% of girls and 81% of boys. Further, 86% of children surveyed said playing table-top games was one of their favourite forms of play, and 32% particularly enjoy the competitive element of play.

Their parents, meanwhile, reported that playing table-top games increased their children's attention span and ability to focus. More than two thirds (68%) of mothers reported this, while a similar number of mothers (67%) said playing table-top games was beneficial to their children's decision-making skills and made them feel they had an equal chance of winning. Some 60% of parents said the games improved listening skills and the ability to follow instructions.

The research also revealed that children absolutely love it when adults play table-top games with them. Around 75% agreed that playing board and action games let them spend time with their parents.

Educational element

A predisposition to enjoy table-top games can make it easier to engage children in the educational aspects of play, with the added bonus that they won't realise they are learning, yet will have an opportunity to 'show what they know'.

Table-top games can be a microcosm of a child's world, where they get to experience plenty of fun, but also to exercise their competitive spirit, to feel what it's like to win or to lose and gradually learn to accept that both of these are a normal part of life. They will be able to rely on their own judgement and skills, or get to work in teams - all while learning how to play fairly and within the rules.

From as early as four years old, table-top games can enable children to start recognising colours, shapes and numbers. The games test and develop fine motor skills as the children manipulate the play pieces around the board and identify the ones they need from among several options.



Word games, such as Drumond Park's **Wordsearch Junior** (age 4+), develop vocabulary, spelling and comprehension – perfect for supporting children during Key Stages 1 and 2. This particular game is a fun-packed race to find patterns, pictures (balls, animals, foods, etc.) and simple words on lots of different circular word search grids, which become more advanced as the child progresses.

Drumond Park's new action game **Crazy Claw** (age 5+), a table-top version of the arcade game, requires dexterity to manoeuvre the claw to grab and hold one of the balls bubbling about within the box. Then comes the excitement of opening the ball to see whether the circular toy token inside matches one of the three toys pictured on the player's card!



Drumond Park's new **Dig In!** (age 8+) enhances sorting and matching skills, as everyone 'digs in' to the pot to find the right shape and colour they need to complete their collection. Each card has pictures of six very recognisable items - an ice cream, dog, plane, rabbit, boat, scissors, starfish, teddy - on it; each one a particular colour. Players have just 15 seconds to rummage through the contents of the bowl and find all their objects.



As children grow and mature, they will start to enjoy games that enable them to use what they have learned in school. Some games require counting skills; those which academic studies have shown to be most valuable in supporting classroom learning require children to 'count on' - that is, to add a number thrown on a die to the number they had before, rather than starting again from one. Then there are games that require the application of logic and deduction, and those that test problem-solving - all valuable learning and life skills.

Handling emotions

Emotions can run high in the rough and tumble of game play. Yet through play, children will experience a range of new or unfamiliar feelings - from frustration and disappointment, to the elation of winning - and gradually learn, or can be shown by an adult or peers, how to handle them appropriately. They also start to appreciate the value of patience as they wait their turn, as well as listening skills and maintaining perspective if they don't win every time. They will be better able to follow instructions and begin to think independently and rely on their own judgement.

Having a range of games for children to play during their after-school hours can provide them with invaluable experiences that go way beyond what might at first glance appear possible from each game. Like children, games should never be taken at face value - and you will never cease to be amazed at what you can learn from them.

For more information on the Drumond Park range and stockists, visit www.drumondpark.com

Notes for editors

Research method

Research was carried out on behalf of Drumond Park Games by Censuswide in May and October 2016. Two sets of 1,000 parents with children aged 4-9 years answered online questionnaires.

Toy market *Information supplied by the NPD Group*

The UK Toy Market (including table-top games) is the biggest in Europe, with retail sales in 2015 standing at £3.28 billion. Over the past three years combined (2013, 2014, 2015) both the total Toy market and the Games element of the Toy market have grown by fairly close percentages, i.e. 11.02% for the total Toy market and within it, 12.96% for Games.

UK sales of Children's and Family Games increased substantially last year, up by 11.4% over 2014, reflecting the enduring popularity of board and action games. It may also indicate that parents are coming to believe that families 'who play together, stay together' and are often turning to table-top games in preference to screens and tablets for younger children.

The estimated total number of parents in the UK with at least one child aged 4-9 is 6,225,000 (Source: Office of National Statistics, 2016)

For more information or pics, or to discuss promotions
for any Drumond Park products, please call
Ms Ray Hodges on 01344 227888 or email ray@langshotcomms.co.uk