

Learning to Make Things Happen: How Children Learn Cause-and-Effect

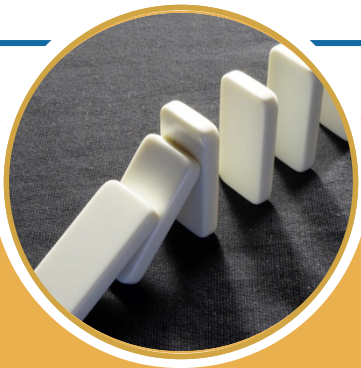
In the first year of life, babies make predictions about what things cause other things to happen. By preschool, children are proficient at learning about causes and their effects.



The Take-Home

Learning to use cause-and-effect information is an important part of a child's development. It enables children to take control of their world. Children don't need special tools or toys to learn about cause-and-effect. Instead, adults can help children learn by identifying and talking together about causes and effects they notice.

Want to
Learn
More?



Science Says

- Children learn about cause-and-effect from their own trial-and-error and by watching the actions of others.
- Even in an imperfect world, when things work some, but not all of the time, children still learn about cause-and-effect.
- Cause-and-effect relations also occur in social interactions. Figuring out how to cause people to change their behavior is important for children's social development.



Try it at Home

- When you flip a switch, turn a key, or notice causes or effects in the world - describe them! For example "Let's turn on the lights! What happens when we flip this switch? The lights turn on!"
- Ask toddlers to help push elevator buttons, or pull bus cords, and talk about what happens when they do.
- With older children, ask children to predict causes and effects. For example, "what will happen if we push the tower?" Then talk about what actually happened, "what caused the tower to fall over?"