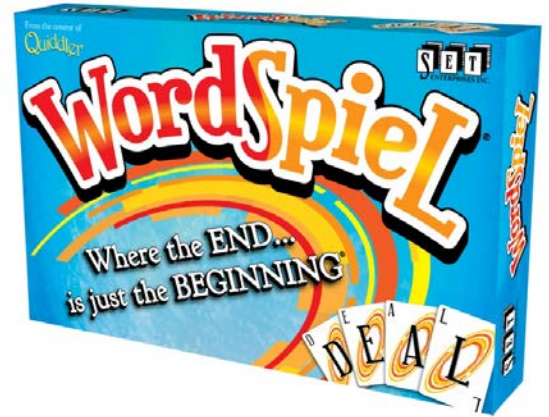


WordSpiel OT Skill Connections

WordSpiel is a game mainly played for fun and entertainment. The fact that it teaches, strengthens and exercises an abundance of skills makes it one of the best possible tools for Occupational Therapy. Because it is fundamentally a game people enjoy, WordSpiel inspires an intrinsic motivation and desire to “play”. The repetition of playing again and again encourages progress and success.



WordSpiel Strengthens

- Cognitive Development
- Visual Perception
- Physical Development
- Social Development
- Emotional Development

Ages: 8 to adult

Players: 2 to 6

About WordSpiel

WordSpiel is a simple yet dynamic card game that everyone enjoys! The goal is to get rid of all ten of your cards by making words. Each turn, simply start your word with the last card(s) played. Just like the name, *WordSpiel*, *Spiel* uses the **S** from *Word**S***. Use the timer or take your time, just be sure to put your best word forward. Word size doesn't matter, but ending with a tricky letter can really challenge your opponents. Each word spins off the last so the game will never be the same twice. The first player to use all of his or her cards ends the round. All other players count their remaining cards. Each card counts as one point. At the end of five rounds, the person with the lowest score wins!

How WordSpiel Develops Skills

Cognitive Development:

- **Attention:** The enjoyment of play and internal drive to win instinctively keeps players' attention throughout the game. During their 60 second turn, players exhibit heightened focus to quickly come up with the best word they can.
- **Analytical Skills & Critical Thinking:** During the game, players continually analyze and evaluate their cards to make their best words. They also analyze the advantages and disadvantages of:
 - exchanging their cards,
 - keeping the card or placing it on the end of the spiral when they are unable to play and
 - playing a longer word or keeping vowels for later turns.
- **Cognitive Flexibility:** Throughout the game, players continuously search for words and word endings amongst the cards in their hand. However, they don't know what letter(s) their words must start with until the player before them finishes his or her turn. This promotes cognitive flexibility because players must adjust their thinking to find a word that begins with the last letter(s) played.
- **Executive Functioning:** Each round players must organize, plan, strategize, use time management, working memory and flexible thinking skills.
 - **Organization & Planning:** Organization and planning are key for players to play all 10 of their cards. Players can organize by separating vowels and consonants or grouping common prefixes or suffixes. This organization helps players plan ahead, making sure they keep a balance of vowels, consonants and easier to play letters, like S, for later in the round.
 - **Strategy:** There are a variety of strategies players use when playing WordSpiel, such as:
 - ending a word with a tricky letter for the next player to play on,
 - waiting until later in the round to exchange cards,
 - keeping easier to use letters for the end of the game.
 - **Time Management:** Each turn is only 60 seconds, which promotes players to utilize the time between turns to look for possible words. This allows players more time during their turn to

- check spelling or find an alternate word in the dictionary. The timer also helps with time management by beeping twice at 10 seconds, alerting players their turn is almost over.
- **Working Memory:** Players need to remember the rules and goal of the game as well as recalling previously played words so they can use them again.
- **Problem Solving:** Players find ways to succeed with what might originally seem like a bad hand of cards. Say the hand doesn't have enough vowels, the player can take this opportunity to find words that use mostly consonants or using common abbreviations like rd (road) or tsp (teaspoon) that don't use any vowels. What if the hand has too many vowels? This is a perfect time to get creative and look up Hawaiian words that are comprised mainly of vowels. There are many ways to exercise problem solving skills and turn what might seem like a bad hand into a good hand after all.
- **Vocabulary Development & Decoding Skills:** Players sort and group letters together recognizing commonly used prefixes and suffixes, and frequently used letter patterns. They expand their vocabularies when finding new words to play in the dictionary as well as learning from words others play.

Visual Perception:

- **Visual Perception:** Players build their abilities to see, interpret and analyze the jumble of letters they are dealt. Continually developing the visual information into words strengthens players' visual perception.
 - **Visual Memory:** Looking up words that use specific letters they have in their hands or remembering previously used words improves players' visual memory.
 - **Visual Sequential Memory:** Players practice their visual sequential memory each time they remember the sequence of letters to spell a word.

Physical Development:

- **Bilateral Coordination:** WordSpiel helps with symmetrical and asymmetrical integration as well as crossing the midline.
 - **Symmetrical Integration:** Shuffle the cards using the *riffle* technique—where half of the deck is held in each hand with thumbs inward and the cards are released by the thumbs so that they fall to the table interleaved. This type of shuffling and using both hands to hold all the cards at the beginning of each round improve symmetrical integration.
 - **Asymmetrical Integration:** There are many opportunities for asymmetrical integration while playing WordSpiel: holding the deck with one hand while dealing with the other, holding cards in one hand while laying down a word with the other, holding the cards in one hand while organizing them with the other.
 - **Crossing the Midline:** Have players hold their cards in a fan with one hand and use the other hand to organize, move individual cards and lay down their words. This exercises crossing the midline multiple times during the game. If the player can't hold a fan of cards, have them lay their hand of cards on the table on their left side and only use their right hand to move the cards.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Playing WordSpiel helps strengthen *finger isolation, in-hand manipulation, hand arches, pincer grasp* and increases overall *dexterity* and *motor planning*. These skills are consistently used when shuffling the cards, dealing cards to each player, flipping over the top card to begin the game, starting and stopping the timer, holding 10 cards, using a dictionary to find a word, putting down cards to make a word, spiraling the cards around the deck and counting cards at the end to tally scores.
- **Sensory Processing Skills:** The ability to see and process the last letter(s) played in order to make a word and the ability to hear and process the 10 second warning beeps versus the time's up beeps both help the players further develop their sensory processing skills.

Social Development:

- **Social Skills:** Playing WordSpiel provides multiple opportunities for learning and exercising proper social skills such as: *verbal and non-verbal communication, taking turns, following*

rules, sharing, listening, using appropriate words, coping with losing and proper behavior when winning.

Emotional Development:

- **Confidence:** As players repeatedly play WordSpiel their cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills continually develop increasing their overall self-confidence. This increase in confidence shows while playing the game and extends to all other areas of life.
- **Intrinsic Motivation:** Playing WordSpiel is enjoyable so players are intrinsically motivated to play again and again. This repetition is key to developing skills. The intrinsic motivation to win triggers players' desires to learn new words and remember how to spell them so that they can use them again.
- **Mood Enhancement:** WordSpiel offers children and adults a way to improve or maintain essential skills in a fun and positive way. The enjoyment of playing and the feeling of success every time a player lays down a word enhance moods. It's purposeful play that impacts each player's environment and mindset in a very positive way.
- **Self-Esteem:** Playing WordSpiel increases players' skills and abilities, which builds their confidence, improving their overall self-esteem. A strong, positive self-esteem directly relates to players' abilities to think and cope with challenges throughout their lives. It is the foundation of success and happiness.