

Card Towers Together - Levels A - B

PLAY

To support early cooperation, fine motor exploration, and emotional regulation through a simple, hands-on building activity that values participation and shared experience over outcomes. The aim is to work together to build a card tower, one level is a win, two levels is awesome!



Learning Intentions

Students are working towards:

Exploring objects using their hands in a shared activity

Participating alongside others with adult support

Experiencing persistence and encouragement during a simple challenge



Success Criteria

Students demonstrate success when they:

Engage with the cards by touching, holding, or placing them with support

Remain involved when the tower falls, with reassurance

Respond to encouragement from peers or adults in their own way



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Duration: 3 - 5 minutes (can be repeated across sessions)

Objective

To support early cooperation, fine motor exploration, and emotional regulation through a simple, hands-on building activity that values participation and shared experience over outcomes. The aim is to work together to build a card tower, one level is a win, two levels is awesome!

Players

1 - 2 students with an adult, or small groups of 2 - 3 students
(Group size adjusted based on regulation and support needs)

Materials

- A deck of playing cards or uno cards.
- Table or flat surface at accessible height
- Optional visual supports: "build," "fall," "try again"

Setup

1. Place cards on a stable surface within easy reach of students.
2. Seat students comfortably, ensuring clear personal space.
3. Show a simple model of placing one card.
4. Use calm language to explain that the tower may fall and that is okay.
5. The teacher demonstrates and builds a card tower.

Gameplay / Activity Steps

Step 1: Explore and Place Cards

- Students are supported to:
 - Hold a card
 - Touch a card
 - Place a card flat or upright
- Adults may use hand-over-hand support if appropriate.
- Adults narrate actions, for example, "You are placing the card."

Step 2: Build Together

- Students take turns placing one card at a time, with adult prompting.
- Turn-taking can be flexible and supported visually or verbally.
- Towers may lean against a wall or object to support success.



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Step 3: When the Tower Falls

- Adults calmly acknowledge, for example, "It fell, that's okay."
- Students are reassured and supported to continue. Discuss being resilient.
- Emphasis is placed on staying calm and trying again.

Step 4: Finish and Pause

- After a short time, adults signal the end using a visual or verbal cue.
- Students are praised for participation and effort rather than the height of the tower.

Celebration

- Gentle clapping
- Smiles or thumbs up
- Verbal praise, such as "You tried," "You stayed," "You helped"

Reflection

Using visuals, gestures, or AAC, prompt gently:

- "Did you like building?"
- "Show me happy or okay."
- "Did we build together?"

Teachers may narrate reflections if students are not yet able to respond.

Sensory-Specific Learner Variations

For sensory-seeking learners:

- Use heavier or textured cards
- Allow pushing cards into place
- Add a brief movement break between rounds

For sensory-sensitive learners:

- Reduce card quantity
- Use slower pacing
- Allow observation before participation
- Provide a quiet, uncluttered building space



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AAC and Communication Supports

- Provide AAC buttons such as “build,” “again,” “help,” “finished”
- Use visual turn cards (my turn / your turn)
- Accept all communication modes including eye gaze, pointing, switches, or vocalisation
- Adults consistently model AAC language during play

Notes for Inclusion

- Participation may include observing, touching, or placing one card only
- Adults may scaffold all steps of the activity
- Falling towers are treated neutrally to support emotional safety
- Celebrate persistence, presence, and shared engagement
- Keep routines predictable and calm

