Create. Test. Improve!

Create an Obstacle Course

When you want to make something, you can use a three-step process: create, test, improve! This computational thinking skill is a creative way of thinking that can help children solve problems in more organized ways. Try the ideas below to practice this skill with your child.

Total time needed: 20–30 minutes

Watch the Story

Making a Racket
Playing Whack-It

Ask your child:
- Why do you think the monkeys were losing the game?
- What did the monkeys do to improve the way they played?
- Tell me about a time when you lost a game. Why do you think you lost?

Do the Activity

Create an Obstacle Course

Follow the directions on the next page to design an obstacle course. Here are some suggestions for things to use:
- Chairs, tables, other furniture
- Towels, blankets, pillows
- Baskets, buckets, cardboard boxes
- Other household items

Watch the Music Video

Make It Better

Watch the monkeys sing as they create a musical instrument, test it out, and then improve it. That’s what you did when you made your obstacle course!

Read a Book (Optional)

We’re Going on a Bear Hunt
By Michael Rosen
Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury

Ask your child:
- What obstacles did the family face on their bear hunt?
- Since they can’t go over or under the obstacles, what do they do?

For AHA! Island videos and activities, visit: ahaisland.org
Username: aha
Password: island
Create an Obstacle Course

Design an obstacle course that has things to climb on, jump over, or crawl under. Use these three steps: create, test, improve! You can use these steps to make almost anything!

1. Tell your child that she’s going to create an obstacle course. Explain:
   - An obstacle course has things you can climb on, jump over, or crawl under.
2. Find an open space, inside or outside. Ask your child:
   - What can we use around the house (or outdoors) to make an obstacle course?
3. Create it! Help your child try out her ideas.

TIP: Creating obstacles
Anything can be an obstacle! Chairs can be hills to climb, towels can be rivers to jump over, and a box can become a tunnel to crawl through.

Test!

1. Tell your child:
   - Let’s test our course to make sure the obstacles are working, and that they don’t fall over when you try them.
   - I wonder if some of the obstacles are too easy or too hard?
   - How do you think we can test our obstacle course?
2. Have your child think of a way to test the course.

TIP: Challenge friends or family
Who do you predict will complete the obstacle course the fastest? Gather your family or a group of friends to test it out and see.

Improve!

1. Depending on the test results, ask:
   - Which obstacles are not working the way you want them to?
   - How can we improve the obstacle course?
   - Can you think of ways to make it even more fun?
2. Keep making improvements and testing them out.
3. When your child is satisfied with the obstacle course, remind her of what she did:
   - To make the course, you created, tested, and improved it. You can use these three steps to make almost anything!