

Puzzles and models

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I've had a few questions recently about the photos I've posted of my grandkids putting together jigsaw puzzles. Allow me to elucidate. The jigsaw puzzle teaches many skills that are useful later in life. There are the physical skills of color recognition, shape recognition, and pattern recognition, as well as spatial orientation when finding the spot for a piece using the picture. But there are other valuable lessons as well. Patience, determination and persistence, are among these. With a little parental or sibling guidance, the skills of planning, tactics, and strategy are also in the mix. I began using puzzles to combat ADHD in some of my students and the results are positive.

To all that, I will add that another fading practice is the one of putting together plastic models: airplane, boats, frogs, it doesn't matter. To do so, the modeler must read and understand instructions, locate and recognize parts, use fine motor skills for painting and gluing, and take steps in the order in which they are instructed. Models are still available, but many are now 'snap-fit' and with very few pieces, thereby skipping the skill development phase and going right to the rewards phase. In both puzzling and modeling, the reward is tangible and improves self-esteem, which adds to confidence and self-reliance. In my view, puzzling and modeling ought to be taught in our schools at an early age.