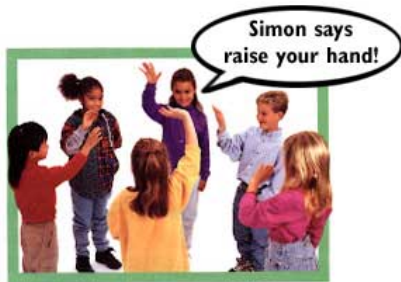


## Research Spotlight

### Research Methods Class – The Bear & Tiger Game

Students in Dr. Anna Fisher's Developmental Research Methods class will start the semester with a lab entitled **The Bear & Tiger Game**. They will work in pairs and small groups to conduct a study of young children's response inhibition. Response Inhibition is the ability to suppress actions that are inappropriate in a given context. This important ability develops rapidly between 2 and 5 years of age. For example, a 2-year-old child usually has a much harder time than an older child refraining from grabbing a toy s(he) likes without asking for it first. A number of different tasks have been developed to assess response inhibition in children, but it is not always clear **why** children struggle with response inhibition under different task demands. One common method of assessing response inhibition is a version of the popular "Simon Says" game. In this game, a verbal command (such as "touch your nose") should be performed only if the game leader precedes the command by saying, "Simon Says ..."; if the game leader does not say "Simon Says" before saying the command, the command should not be followed. Young children find this game very challenging. Use the following link to learn the game if it is new to you so you can try it at home and see for yourself!



<http://activitiesforchildrenandteens.blogspot.com/2013/09/simon-says-fun-and-silly-commands.html>

One issue that remains unclear is what role demonstration plays in children's difficulty with the game. Specifically, if a game leader not only gives a command verbally but also demonstrates the action, children's tendency to imitate may encourage them to respond without attending to whether the leader said, "Simon Says". In this study, students in the Research Methods course will involve children in playing a version of the **Simon Says** game – the Bear & Tiger Game. In this game, children will be instructed to always follow simple commands given by a 'nice' Bear but to never follow commands of a 'naughty' Tiger. For some of the children, the experimenter will only say the command verbally but, for other children, the experimenter will demonstrate the action in addition to giving each verbal command. The evidence gathered in this study will help us better understand the mechanisms of response inhibition and task conditions that can facilitate performance on response inhibition tasks. Discovering that demonstrating the action affects children's performance in a response inhibition task may help teachers and parents by giving them tools to make games like Simon Says more challenging for older children and less challenging for younger children so that they can provide an optimal level of task difficulty to children of different ages. Stay tuned for what these budding researchers learn!

