"Tic-Tac-Toe" is appealing and challenging for children because successful play requires the use of strategies.

**Materials Needed**
A Tic-Tac-Toe board game; written rules; and ten markers, five of one color and five of another

**Developmental Value of "Tic-Tac-Toe"**
- Children have the opportunity to develop spatial reasoning by figuring out how to place three marks in a line, vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. Often young children can think only of vertical and horizontal lines and only later begin to notice the diagonal line.
- Children coordinate different perspectives (decentering*).
- Children have the opportunity to figure out spatial strategies (blocking, 2 way set-ups) in the context of turn taking.
- Children have the opportunity to think about the opponent's actions and take into account the next possible move.

**Suggestions for "Tic-Tac-Toe"**
- Three markers can be placed in a line in eight ways. We recommend that you have drawings of those patterns on the paper for children to see. For example, we put the eight patterns below the written rules of the game (see the reverse side).
- Young children typically play games first as if the games are cooperative. A competitive attitude emerges only when children are able to take the other's perspective and think about opposed intentions. Therefore, if two children each make a line and announce “We both won!” do not correct them. The desire to "win" gives children the impetus to reason about strategies that will outwit their opponents. By responding to children in a casual, matter-of-fact way, the teacher can promote the attitude that winning a game is not as important as having the fun of cooperating to play.

* Decentering: Most young children tend to think of only one point of view or aspect of a problem at a time. Decentering happens when the child is able to think of more than one point of view at the same time. Social decentering involves being able to see things from another's point of view and to reconcile those different points of view. In Tic-Tac-Toe, for example, a child who focuses only on his or her line, and does not notice the opponent's play, is not decentering.


**Tic Tac Toe**

**Rules**
1. Decide who goes first.
2. Decide who gets each color.
3. Take turns putting a marker in a space.
4. The first person to get three in a row wins.