



## rules, schmoos

**K**ara Reardon, 5, of Leander, TX, loves to play Old Maid, but if she draws the losing card, she'll try to put it back. "And at the end, if she has the Old Maid card, she'll try to get you to take it," sighs her mom, Stacy.

Preschoolers often try to change the rules in their own favor, whether they're jumping to the last space of the board game or demanding a dice-roll do-over. While it's tempting to allow your child the advantage, it can send the message that she has to win to have fun. To help her refocus:

● **downplay the end result** Play a game to a time limit rather than the end, so there isn't a winner, suggests Edward Christophersen, Ph.D., clinical psychologist at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, MO.

● **make changes permanent** If she wants to switch the rules in the middle of the game, write down the new directions and agree to play it that way the next time.

● **focus on skill-building** When playing a game that takes know-how, such as jacks, encourage her to try it again and again without competing, says Christophersen. "That'll show that practice should be just as fun as the game itself."

—Ann Muder