

## Karma Skill Connections for Teachers

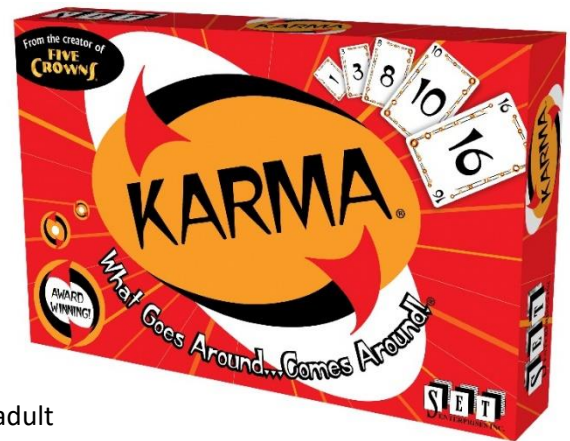
Karma is a game primarily played for fun and entertainment. The fact that it teaches, strengthens, and exercises an abundance of skills makes it one of the best possible tools for your classroom. Because it is fundamentally a game people enjoy, Karma inspires an intrinsic motivation and desire to “play.” The repetition of playing again and again reinforces the skills that lead to success.

### Karma Strengthens

- Cognitive Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Intrapersonal Skills
- Physical Development
- Academic Connections

Ages: 8 to adult

Players: 2 to 6



### About Karma

Karma is playfully competitive and infectiously fun! Race to get rid of all your cards by playing a card of equal or higher value. Use your Karma Cards to avoid picking up the discard pile. There are four types of Karma Cards — Five or Below, Give the Pile to a Friend, Bottoms Up, and Play a Table Card — you play them like wild cards, but be sure to use them wisely because in this game...What Goes Around...Comes Around! In Karma, there are multiple winners. You never really know who’s going to lose until the very last card. The dramatic ending calls for an instant rematch! Doing a large group activity? Combine two games and play with up to 12 people!

### How Karma Develops Skills

#### **Cognitive Development:**

- **Analytical Skills:** When there is a draw pile, players must keep at least three cards in their hands. Because they draw new card(s) each turn and can’t predict what card they will follow, players must continually analyze their cards to figure out which is best to play. A good strategy towards the end of the game is for players to evaluate what cards other players have, so they can play their cards accordingly and not be the last player left with cards.
- **Attention:** The enjoyment of play and drive to win instinctively keeps players’ attention throughout the game. Because Karma is a game of strategy, it is important for players to divide their focus between what cards other players have played and picked up, as well as what cards have been removed from the game. Karma is fun, so players repeatedly practice this skill, which is crucial for development.
- **Cognitive Flexibility:** While playing Karma, you never know what card your opponents will play. Opponents could go high and try to force you to pick up the discard pile or they could play one of four Karma cards. Players need to consider multiple strategies and be flexible when their turn comes.
- **Creative Thinking:** Most players think it is best to play the lowest card they can on their turn. Although this is often true, there are times when players need to change their thinking. For example, there are times in the game when it’s more advantageous to play a higher card.
- **Critical Thinking:** The dealer deals three cards face-down to each player that players may not look at. Then they deal six cards to each player. Players then must sort and evaluate those six cards, using existing knowledge of game strategy and new information they may have of their opponents. From that players must determine the best three cards to place face-up on the three face-down cards. These cards will be played after all the hand cards are gone. Determining which cards will be most helpful at that time requires critical thinking.
- **Higher-Order Thinking:** A large part of the strategy in Karma is determining what cards to play and when. Cards are played in three phases: first, hand cards, then face-up table cards, and lastly, face-down table cards. Players must analyze cards in their hands, as well as compare what cards other players have placed face-up in front of them. This will help players organize their own cards to be the most effective during play.

- **Left Brain - Right Brain Connectivity:** Karma requires the use of both sides of your brain. During play, the left-brain is processing numbers and doing low level math to determine what cards are necessary for play on each turn. Meanwhile, the right-brain is processing numbers, trying to determine opponents' play and allowing all this processing to go on simultaneously. Physically, whether the player is left-handed or right-handed, the act of holding the cards in one hand while drawing or discarding with the other hand requires the use of both hemispheres in the brain. This is excellent for brain development or rehabilitation.
- **Logic & Reasoning:** During game play, players must use logic and reason to help determine what actions other players may take during the game. In addition, they must determine when it is a good time to use any Karma cards a player may possess. Some Karma cards help the one playing them, like the "Play a Table Card," which allows a player to play one of their table cards, even if they haven't played through their hand cards. Other Karma cards affect the next player, like the "Bottoms Up" card, which brings the bottom card of the discard pile up to the top, or the "Five or Below" card which requires the next player to play a five or below. The most powerful Karma card, "Give the Pile to a Friend" card affects anyone at the table. This card allows the player to give the whole discard pile to the player of their choice, even someone who doesn't have any cards left. Reasoning when is the best time to use these cards is critical.
- **Memory:** During play, long-term memory allows players to access prior knowledge of numbers and strategy, while working memory allows the mind to connect prior knowledge to new information – rules of play and the special Karma cards - and encode this information for processing.
- **Metacognition:** An excellent activity for kids after playing Karma is to reflect on their step by step strategy as they played. Learners who engage in metacognitive thinking can monitor and regulate their learning and as a result assume greater responsibility for their progress.
- **Multiple Intelligences:** This hands-on group play game allows players to strategize and win using multiple learning styles. The bodily-kinesthetic learner enjoys being hands-on while playing, whereas the logical-mathematical learner enjoys thinking about the numbers and strategy. Interpersonal learners enjoy the group play and because each player oversees their own hand, intrapersonal players feel comfortable as well.
- **Organization & Planning:** Organization and planning are key to avoid being the last player with cards. Players tend to organize numerically and then by Karma Cards. This helps players plan, making sure they keep easier-to-play cards, like higher numbers and Karma Cards, for later in the game. It also allows them to move through their cards faster by playing doubles and triples of identical cards on their turn.
- **Problem Solving:** Karma requires players to analyze their cards while setting up their hand. This process of ordering, comparing, and contrasting what a player has been dealt are critical steps to solving the problem of how to get rid of all your cards. There are multiple winners in Karma since the goal is to not be the last player with cards. Solving this problem starts the moment the cards are dealt.
- **Strategy:** There are a variety of strategies players use when playing Karma. Many players change their strategies throughout the game. Some strategies used are:
  - choosing to pick up the discard pile when it contains Karma Cards,
  - waiting to play Karma Cards and high number cards,
  - playing identical cards at the same time,
  - playing identical cards one at a time,
  - keeping track of cards that have been played,
  - keeping track of cards in the discard pile, and
  - choosing who to give the pile to when the "Give a Pile to a Friend" Karma Card is played.

### Interpersonal Development (Social Skills)

- **Collaborative Learning:** Karma is an easy game to learn and for ages 8 and up. A method of helping younger players gain confidence while playing is to team them up with another player, who can be of a different skill level or age. When players come together collaboratively to play as a team, confidence is built and teamwork skills improve.
- **Peer Assessment:** Each time a card is played in Karma, players are assessing whether that player has followed the rules. Play is relatively easy—when it is your turn, play a card that is equal to or a higher number than the top card on the discard pile. Players may play any Karma card they possess when it's their turn. They must follow the order of play – hand cards, then face-up table cards, and lastly, face-down table cards. Following the rules during play is important because in this game there isn't just one winner.

- **Social Learning:** Karma is a fun and interactive game which gives extroverted and introverted players a chance to be social in a structured situation. During the game, players will learn social behavior by observing other players' behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors. These behaviors are modeled repeatedly during play which requires players' attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, all part of Social Learning Theory.
- **Social Skills:** Karma is so much fun that players won't even realize the social skills they are using to interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language, and personal appearance. Players learn to listen to others, follow the rules, ignore distractions, take turns, stay calm during play, get along with others, and be responsible for their behavior.
- **Teamwork:** Karma is for ages 8 to adult and is easy to learn so even the young can play with the old. Even though it is an easy game to learn, sometimes when younger players are playing for the first time it is helpful to play as teams until players can play on their own. This manner of introduction gives young players confidence in the rules of play so that they can play successfully by themselves in the future.

### **Intrapersonal Development (Personal and Emotional Growth)**

- **Adaptability:** During Karma, players are faced with many uncertain situations, from the cards they are dealt to the ones their opponent plays before them, to Karma cards that can work for or against them. Players must remain adaptable as they try to determine the correct strategy in order to get rid of all of their cards. This important construct requires adaptability, particularly for adolescents who frequently face changeable experiences. Learning how to cope with changes and emotionally regulate during them is a key skill to future success.
- **Emotional Skills:** Each time a player gets rid of their cards, his or her **confidence** grows. As players repeatedly play Karma their cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills continually develop increasing their overall self-confidence. Over time each player's ability to strategize improves with each game. Excelling at something that was once difficult reinforces a **growth mindset**. Playing Karma is fun, so players are **intrinsically motivated** to play again and again; this repetition is key to developing skills. Each time a player "goes out," he or she feels a sense of accomplishment, which creates an urge to go out faster in future games. The enjoyment of playing and the feeling of success every time a hand is played successfully, or a player is successful at not being the last player with cards, is found to naturally **enhance moods**. It's purposeful play that impacts each player's environment and **mindset** in a very positive way. Playing Karma increases a player's skills and abilities, which builds their confidence and improves their overall **self-esteem** and **self-efficacy**.
- **Executive Functioning:** Karma is a great way for players to hone their executive functioning skills. Players must remain **flexible** in their choices. They need to watch opponents and use what **insight** they have of them to determine their strategy. They need to use **sequencing** to break down game play and make their best move. They must try to **anticipate** the cards that may be played. Players must use their **problem-solving skills** in order to **make the best decisions** possible.
- **Inhibitory Control (including Self-Control):** This game can get competitive, players will have to stay focused and ignore distractions. Practicing this skill helps kids regulate their emotions and keep them from acting impulsively.
- **Self-Assessment:** Karma is great for self-assessment. Before a player can go out they must reflect to make sure that their gathered cards are accurate and a good point value. If not, they need to reassess and revise accordingly.

### **Physical Development:**

- **Bilateral Coordination:** Playing Karma enhances bilateral coordination and provides opportunities to strengthen individual skills like symmetrical integration, asymmetrical integration, and crossing the midline.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Playing Karma helps strengthen **in-hand manipulation**, **hand arches**, **pincer grasp**, and increases overall **dexterity** and **motor planning**. Shuffling the cards, dealing cards to each player, flipping over cards, discarding or picking up each turn, and holding a fan of cards all build, strengthen, and refine these skills.
  - **Motor Planning:** What players do each turn frequently changes in Karma. Players may play a single card or multiple cards. They may have to draw a card or pick up the entire pile. They may play cards from their hand or from the table. If they play three identical cards, they must clear the discard pile and play again. Gameplay is situational, and the players naturally analyze their options, conceive plans, and carry out non-habitual motor acts in the correct sequence to complete their turns.

## **Academic Connections:**

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Karma is a great way to personalize learning based on the individual needs of each player. To supplement lessons on pattern recognition or any of the other skills mentioned above, allow students to have Karma as a choice in order to reinforce that skill.
- **Games-Based Learning:** Karma facilitates learning. Karma can be used at any level from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through adulthood in a variety of learning situations. It can be used to help with behavior modification or to support learning in complex domains such as evaluation or creativity.
- **Hidden Curriculum:** While players are having fun playing Karma, they won't even realize the social, behavioral, and cultural lessons they are learning by group play.
- **Informational Text:** Use our Karma instructions to fulfill the Common Core requirement with lower age groups. Students can read, annotate, jigsaw, comprehend, discuss, and teach each other how to play Karma. The assessment is built in when you see which players understand the rules and can successfully play Karma.
- **Math Skills:** During each round, players use a mathematically based strategy to help them decide in which order they are going to get rid of their cards. Players will naturally try to determine the probability of what their opponents may play. Remember, Karma has multiple winners and only one loser. You don't want to be the last person with cards.

## **Sharing is Caring**

Check out the Teachers' Corner at [setgame.com](http://setgame.com) for more ideas of how to use our games in your classroom.

Have an idea you would like to share? Please email us your ideas, worksheets, and ways to play and we will add them to the Teachers' Corner.