

THIS WEEKEND'S FAMILY ACTIVITY

The Hype Factory

GAME

SKILL: DISTINGUISHING EVIDENCE-BASED REASONING FROM EMOTIONAL OR TREND-DRIVEN THINKING

45-60 MINUTES

RECOMMENDED AGE RANGE

Ages 10-14, because this age group is old enough to grasp cause-and-effect in markets while being at peak susceptibility to hype and social influence

WHAT YOU NEED

Index cards or small slips of paper (at least 20)

Two markers in different colors

A timer or phone

A simple "bank" of play money or poker chips, or just a tally sheet on paper

The Allbirds headline printed or pulled up on a phone

ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01** Before the game begins, one player (start with a parent) secretly writes five "story cards" in one marker color — each describing a company making an exciting-sounding pivot with no proof behind it, like "Taco stand announces it is pivoting to rocket fuel" — and five "evidence cards" in the other color, describing companies with real results, like "Bakery reports three years of growing sales and opens second location." Shuffle all ten cards face-down.
- 02** One at a time, flip a card and read it aloud. Every other player has 20 seconds to decide silently: invest 3 chips, invest 1 chip, or pass. No one reveals their choice until the timer goes off, then everyone shows their hands simultaneously.
- 03** After all ten cards are played, the dealer flips each card over to reveal its color — story or evidence — and players collect their chips only on evidence cards. Story card investors lose what they put in.
- 04** Pause here and bring out the real Allbirds headline. Read it together and vote: story card or evidence card, and why? Talk through what information is actually confirmed versus what is just hoped for, and notice how the 700% jump happened before any of the deals were even finalized.
- 05** Play a second round, but this time kids take turns writing the cards themselves — which forces them to think carefully about what separates a real signal from a compelling pitch, and usually sparks the best conversation of the whole game.

THE DEEPER LESSON

The Allbirds story is a perfect real-world example of how markets can reward a narrative before anyone checks whether it's true, a dynamic that's becoming more common as AI-related hype drives fast, emotional investing decisions. When kids physically lose chips on a story card, they feel the consequence in a low-stakes way that a lecture never quite delivers. The goal isn't to make them cynical about exciting news, but to give them the habit of asking "what do we actually know versus what are we just hoping for" before the crowd decides for them.

CONVERSATION STARTER

"If you saw a headline that said a company's stock went up 700% in one day, what would be the first three questions you'd want answered before you decided whether that was exciting news or a warning sign?"

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