



# SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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## Suggestions for Working With Children with Disabilities

- Children with disabilities are more LIKE other children than they are unlike them.
- Get them involved in activities that are familiar to them. This will help boost their confidence in themselves, staff and other children.
- If they do not feel comfortable or are hesitant about playing a group game, they can act as an official or cheerleader until they feel more comfortable to become more involved.
- Modifications to the games should focus on the child's abilities rather than their disabilities. As their ability level improves, you can modify the games to suit.
- Modification of game rules should not be discouraged, as long as all children's needs are reflected, not just the child with disabilities. The rules shouldn't be changed so much that the other kids feel that it is no longer an appropriate game for them to play as well. This calls attention to the camper with a disability rather than just being another player.
- Reduce the size of the play area that is being used.
- Reduce the amount of time or periods that the children are playing for.
- Lower the nets or hoops in the games.
- Increase the number of players on each team so the child is responsible for less playing area.
- Use soft, lighter-weight balls that will not travel as far when hit, kicked, punched or thrown.
- Create rules that reduce the amount of force that other players can use on the ball or other equipment.
- Introduce rules that will slow the pace of the game for all the campers. Instead of running, the kids have to walk or skip to the ball.
- Create rules that the players have to kick or throw the ball to a certain number of players before they can make a goal, giving the child more time to get to a base or a chance to catch the ball.
- Have the campers use different body parts to play the game than the original rules call for.
- Make the boundaries clearly visible.

### **Equipment That Will be Useful for Your Client**

- Lightweight plastic bats, balls, rackets, and frisbees can usually be manipulated with one hand.
- Large, partially inflated beach balls are effective with children who have motor or visual disabilities. They are easy to grasp and hold in two hands.
- Soft fleece balls or yarn balls are great to hold because their fingers sink into the ball. It also doesn't travel too far when hit or thrown.
- Equipment fitted with special grips or handles (bowling balls, fishing poles, racket).
- Decrease the air pressure in the ball so it is easier to hold and will travel shorter distances.
- Play in areas that have taller grass so it will slow the balls movement.

## Personality Characteristics of an Individual on the Autistic Spectrum

### Personal:

- Has difficulty with abstract concepts and thought
- Has a preferred routine or item that they are comforted by
- Are sensitive to the tiniest stimuli in the environment
- Has difficulty organizing information and routines
- Shows increased levels of anxiety
- Has difficulty regulating and controlling emotions
- Easily escalate to a meltdown if they cannot regulate emotions
- Has a strongly preferred special interest

### Social:

- Has difficulties taking the perspective of others
- Fails to directly answer questions
- Unable to understand idioms, metaphors or comparisons
- Not understand sarcasm or jokes
- Be a literal thinker and interpretation of words
- Has difficulty recognizing and interpreting facial cues, body language, gestures and voice inflection.
- Has difficulty recognizing and interpreting others emotions
- Talks about unusual subjects with others
- Finds it easier to answer questions with choices as opposed to open ended questions.
- Unaware of subtle customs within an environment
- Not realize there are other choices than the ones given
- Appears oblivious to common sense routines and occurrences
- Converses with self or imaginary other people
- Tends to see the world from only their point of view.

### Structural:

- Prefers structure and sameness
- Needs explanations for transitions and changes in the schedule
- Likes to anticipate and predict steps in the routine
- Prefers advanced warnings about steps in a process, changes in routines and upcoming transitions.
- Has difficulty retaining and following verbal instructions
- Needs cues on how to transition from one place or activity to another
- Prefers visual directions or instructions instead of verbal ones
- Needs to be asked one question at a time
- May excel greatly in one area but shows deficits in others.

## How School Learning Is Impacted

Limited attention span: They may miss information that was presented because their thoughts were elsewhere. Because of the lack of awareness, they could miss information that they will lack to seek it out later.

Challenges knowing what to focus on and what to ignore: They may focus on one small piece of information that was presented. When they fixate on this, they miss the rest of the information that continues to be presented.

Problems with reading comprehension masked by their word-recalling skills: When asked a question, they can recite information that they have read. The challenge arises in drawing inferences, sequencing events, understanding cause and effect, interpreting character information, and using prediction and other problem solving skills. They may be able to repeat information word for word, but be completely unable to understand what that it means.

Lack of understanding of teacher expectations and other unwritten rules: The child may talk out in class then the teacher expects them to be quiet. They may answer a question that the teacher has presented to the class instead of waiting to be called on. When the teacher says that they cannot ask questions during an exam, they do not understand that they can ask to get up and ask to sharpen their pencil.

Poor organizational skills: they may answer a math problem wrong because they could not organize the problem on the page. They may not line the numbers up correctly in order to do the math operation. They may also have problems organizing thoughts and creating an outline to write a paper.

Difficulty processing auditory information with reliance on visual information to learn: Learns little information from the teachers lecture. It is especially difficult when they use metaphors and idioms, sarcasm, complex humor, and information that uses complex structure and content.

Motor and processing issues that may result in slower work rate and less production: They will focus on forming the letters or numbers, causing them to usually finish their work last, and with fewer words.

Problems completing homework: Parents may indicate that their child needs downtime at home, they do not understand their homework, there is too much time required for homework, and the student completes their homework but never turns it in.

# Activities for Children on the Autism Spectrum

## Video-Taping Interactions

**Target behavior:** Social interaction

**Materials needed:** Video camera and other children

**Activity:** Record the child interacting with other children in the group in different situations. Later go through the video with them and narrate the interactions as they happen. Comment on both their, and the other children's actions and social cues. Any scenarios that occur during the play time, good or bad, can be addressed. It will help them assess their own actions and emotions and understand the reactions in others.

**Example:** Two children are playing with blocks. Point out to the child that when the child does not go over and ask the other children to join them, they will continue to play by themselves because they don't know that they want to play with them. You can then ask "what can you do next time you want to play?"

The other children got upset when you smashing the block tower they were working on. You may ask "what do you think that they would have done in the same situation if one of the other children did that to you?"

## Review of Social Interactions

**Target behavior:** Social interaction

**Materials needed:** possibly paper and a pen

**Activity:** Have the child review a social interaction they just had when they made a social error. Take the child out of the situation and sit them down in a quiet area to calm down if they are overly excited. Ask them the following questions:

- What situation just happened?
- What was the social error they made?
- Who was hurt in the situation?
- What can be done now to fix the problem?
- What they can do in the future to prevent the problem from happening again?

If they are a more visual learner, you can write these questions down on a piece of paper, and have the child fill it out.

Help the child through the process. If they are unable to remember what happened or need help finding out what went wrong in the situation, explain it to them. This is not meant as a punishment, just a way for them to evaluate situations that occur in social environments, and to figure out how they can prevent social errors from occurring.

**Example:** Mary and Jim are playing a game. Your child goes over to the area with the intention of playing with them, and ends up smashing all the pieces from the board. The other children get mad and begin to yell.

Pull the child aside and ask them the questions:

*What situation just happened:* listen to what your child has to say, but also explain to them what the situation looked like to the other children.

*What was the social error they made:* Point out to them what went wrong in the situation.

*Who was hurt in the situation:* Explain how Mary and Jim were hurt by his/her actions because they wanted to play their game, and he went over and messed up the work they had done so far and made it impossible to continue playing.

*What can be done to fix the problem:* Tell the child that they can go back over to the area, apologize to Mary and Jim, and ask if they can reset the game with them.

*What can they do in the future to prevent the problem from happening again:* Next time they want to play, they can go over to Mary and Jim and ask them

what they are playing and ask if he can join in too, remembering that they need to follow the rules of the game.

## Visualizing Reactions

**Target behavior:** Controlling emotions and reactions

**Materials needed:** pictures or drawings

**Activity:** Explain to the child that there are certain reactions that they have when they begin to get upset. Make visuals of these actions by drawing or printing out pictures of these actions. Explain to them verbally and visually what they should recognize when they are getting upset. Tell them that when they realize they are beginning to feel this way that they can either inform a teacher of their feelings or remove themselves from the situation to calm down.

**Example:** When the child gets nervous or upset, they begin to jiggle their feet and chew their nails. Draw or print pictures of someone doing these actions. Explain to them how they need to recognize that they do this, and how to react when they begin feeling this way.

## Calming Exercises

**Target behavior:** Controlling emotions and reactions.

**Materials needed:** Nothing

**Activity:** Sometimes a child playing with a favorite toy, or hearing a certain song, or feeling a certain type of material can help them calm down from being overwhelmed. The problem is that comforting item or action may not always be available. So teach them the following exercise to soothe themselves as an alternative.

- 1) Take three long breathes.
- 2) Stretch their arms over their head, back down, and up again.
- 3) Rub their hands together and count to three.
- 4) Rub their thighs and count to three.
- 5) Take another long breath.

The actions can be modified to the child, but it is a way to get them to concentrate on another activity and distract themselves from being upset. Also it stretches their muscles, gets them to center themselves, and activates different senses in the process.

## Reviewing and Planning for Activities and Changes

**Target behavior:** Adjustment to changes in scheduling.

**Materials needed:** paper and pencil

**Activity:** Sit down with the child in a quiet area. Give them a pen and paper. Explain to them the activity that is going to happen next. Have the child write out any information about the following scenario that they need to know. Who is going to be there, what they are going to be doing, when the activity starts and finishes, what they are expected to do, and so forth. Also explain to them that there are things that might change during this activity and have them write them down as well. This helps them to understand beforehand what is going on, and that there may be differences in the activity from the original plan.

If the child is too young or cannot write like this, you can ask them to draw a picture of what it will be like, and verbally communicate together what will be expected.

**Example:** Birthday party at a Friend's house: "I am going to my friend Mark's house for a birthday party. When I arrive at 2:00pm I may see other children from my school and other people that I will not know. Mark will definitely be there. While I am at the party I will eat cake, go swimming in the pool, and watch Mark open his birthday presents. It may be noisy because of the other children playing. If I feel overwhelmed I will tell Mark's Mom and then go to a quiet room to calm down for a while. My Mom will pick me up at 6:00pm. If she is early she will sit and watch me play so I don't have to leave before the end. Before I leave I will tell Mark "thank you for inviting me" and "Happy Birthday"."

## **Emotional Charades**

**Target behavior:** Understanding verbal, facial, and body language.

**Materials needed:** A few other children and a quiet area to play in.

**Activity:** Have each child stand up in front of the other children and act out predetermined emotion or action. They can use verbal or silent cues depending on the age and ability of the children. Continue acting until a member of the group guesses what is being conveyed. If your child is not answering in time, or the other children seem to be taking control of the game, ask them to please sit back and let your child take a guess.

**Example:** The children can interpret emotions by showing happy faces, sad faces, angry and so forth. They can make common gestures with their bodies such as nodding their heads back and forth to symbolize “no”, waiving “hello”, or motioning “come here”.

## **Learning How to React During Play Time**

**Target behavior:** Understanding others reactions.

**Materials needed:** a board or card game, and possibly other children.

**Activity:** Play a game with the child. When something occurs during the game, show them through your own actions the types of reactions that they can see for that situation. Explain what reactions are socially acceptable and how they can choose to modify negative emotions.

**Example:** While playing Go Fish, the child wins a game. Explain to them two ways of reacting to the situation. Pretend to get angry and throw cards and yell. Stop and explain that this would be a bad way to react, and have them say why. Talk about how that made them feel, and how others would feel the same way if they reacted like that. Then, show them the positive reaction of congratulating the child on winning and shaking their hand. Ask them how they felt in that situation as opposed to the other. Talk about how you they can do that next time they play a game with other children.

## Emotional Pictures

**Target behavior:** Emotion/facial recognition

**Materials needed:** pictures of people feeling different emotions, and cards with those emotions written on them.

**Activity:** Have the child place the emotion card on the picture of the person feeling that emotion. Teach them facial recognition of what people look like when they are feeling that way. This acts as a visual and a verbal anchor to learn this information.



HAPPY



SAD



SCARED



ANGRY



CONFUSED

## **Social Interaction Catch**

**Target behavior:** Conversational turn-taking.

**Materials needed:** A ball

**Activity:** While you are holding the ball, begin a conversation with the child. When it is their turn to speak, pass them the ball. In order to pass the ball to someone else, they must first initiate in the conversation, then allow the other person to speak. Pass the ball back and forth and talk about topics that they enjoy and also ones that other children might bring up. This teaches them that it is ok to talk about their favorite topics, but also to learn to talk about other children's interests as well. If they hold on to the ball for too long, explain that they have held the ball for long enough and that someone else should have a turn to talk as well.

This iterates the “taking-turns” idea and gives them a visual to imagine while having conversations with other children.

## Writing Down the Unwritten Rules

**Target behavior:** Understanding unwritten social rules.

**Materials needed:** A journal.

**Activity:** It is very difficult for a child with autism, who can take words literally, to be able to understand unwritten rules in the community. An example would be the rule of *never talking to, or accepting a ride from a stranger*. A bus driver is a stranger, but they are allowed to accept a ride from and talk to them. The cashier at the grocery store is a stranger, but it is alright to begin small talk with them, but it is not ok to divulge personal information about yourself.

In order to help the child realize the many different situations that arise, they can keep track of the situations that they have already come across that day. Have them write down what they did, why, and how the other person reacted. Have them also write down what they can do next time if they used a wrong social skill or to expand upon correct ones that they did. Explain that everyone makes social mistakes, and that there will be other opportunities to correct their actions.

If the child does not like writing, you can also talk with them about this, or you can have them draw a picture.

If they are unable to recall something that occurred that day, you can go over a scenario with them and ask them how they think they should react.

**Example:** The child was in the school library that day. The woman who was checking out his book asked him how his day was going, and he refused to respond because she was a stranger. You can tell them that the woman at the desk is someone that they are allowed to talk to, and what they can say to her the next time they see her.

## Telephone

**Target behavior:** Listening and Communication skills

**Materials needed:** A group of children and a quiet area

**Activity:** Also known as “Whisper Down the Lane”. In this game the children need to sit in a circle. One child starts by whispering a sentence or phrase they made up to the child next to them. That child then whispers what they heard to the child next to them. Each child is only allowed to whisper the message once. When the last child in the circle hears the message, they then say it out loud to the group. Generally the message has been changed by the end of the circle due to the fact that the children are only allowed to say the message once while telling the child next to them. It can be funny to the group at the end when the sentence is changed into something completely different than what it began as. It’s a great way for all the children to have fun and learn communication skills.

## **Beaded Animals**

**Target behavior:** Hand-eye coordination

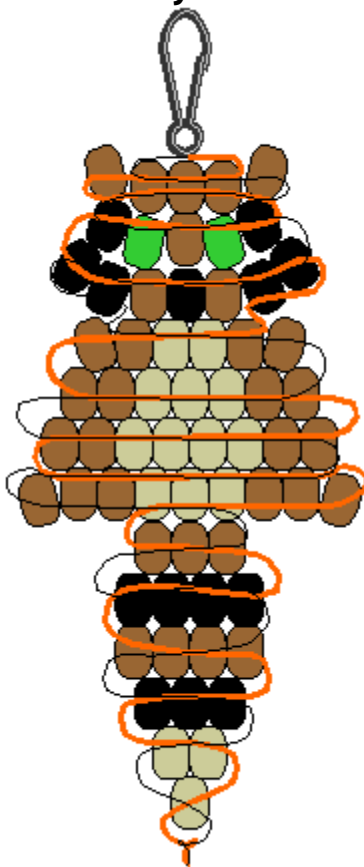
**Materials needed:** Beads and string (as listed in instructions below)

**Activity:** The child will learn to use hand eye coordination to complete a task, as well as make an easy craft. You can use the ideas listed, or can look up the pattern of their favorite animal online. The instructions can all be changed to match the child's favorite color.

If looping the string back through the beads is too advanced or complicated for the child, you can also have the child put the beads on the string in the correct color order, and then assist the child with the string.

**Example:** Listed below.

## Raccoon Pony Bead Pattern

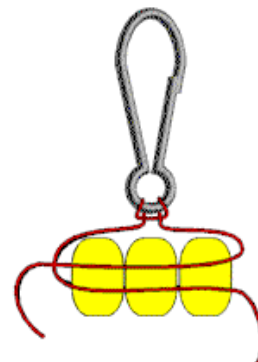


### **You need:**

- 2 Lime Green Pony Bead
- 14 Black Pony Beads
- 15 Tan Pony Beads
- 34 Brown Pony Beads
- 4 Feet Hemp
- 1 Lanyard Hook

### **Instructions:**

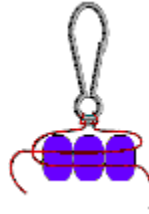
Fold your cord in half to find the center. Use a half hitch (see detail below) to secure it to lanyard hook. Lace beads using pattern at right as a guide. Finish by tying off with a double knot.



## Tie Dye Lizard Pony Bead Pattern

### **You need:**

- 3 Red Pony Beads
- 2 Black Pony Beads
- 101 Misc Pony Beads
- 2 Yards Satin Cord
- 1 Lanyard Hook



### **Instructions:**

Fold your ribbon in half to find the center. Use a half hitch (see detail above) to secure it to lanyard hook. Lace beads using pattern at right as a guide. Finish by tying off with a double knot.

### **To make front Legs:**

Lace beads 1-7 on one lace. Do not pull tight. Loop lace around and go back through beads 3 and 4, then through bead 1. Skip bead 2. Repeat for other legs.

### **To make back Legs:**

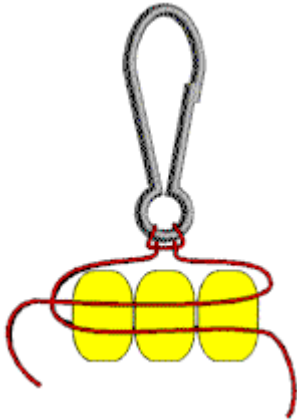
Lace beads a-h on one lace. Do not pull tight. Loop lace around and feed back through beads d & e, then b & c, skip bead a. Repeat for other leg.



## Turtle

### **You need:**

- 10 Lime Green Pony Beads
- 22 Green Pony Beads
- 1 Yard Satin Cord
- 1 Lanyard Hook



### **Instructions:**

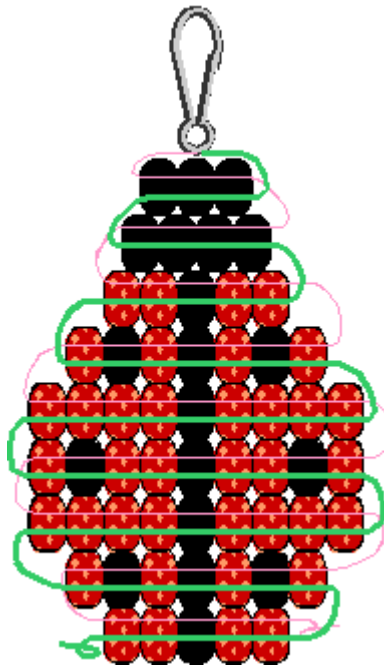
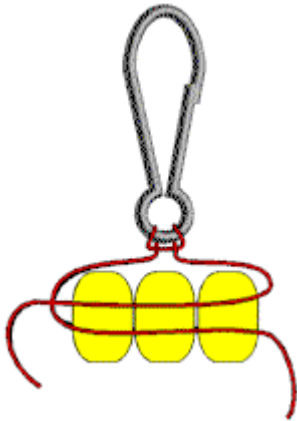
Fold your cord in half to find the center. Use a half hitch (see detail below) to secure it to lanyard hook. Lace beads using pattern at right as a guide. Finish by tying off with a double knot.

# Lady Bug

- 20 Black Pony Beads
- 38 Red Pony Beads
- 2 Yards Satin Cord
- 1 Lanyard Hook

## **Instructions:**

Fold your ribbon in half to find the center. Use a half hitch (see detail below) to secure it to lanyard hook. Lace beads using the pattern above right as a guide.



## Uno

**Target behavior:** Color and number recognition.

**Materials needed:** An Uno game or a regular deck or cards.

**Activity:** Play the Uno game by following the instructions. You can adapt a regular deck of cards to play Uno by having the child use the numbers and shapes on the cards instead. If there are some cards in the Uno deck that you feel would be difficult to enforce (such as reverse, or draw 2 or 4, or skip) then you can remove them from the deck. You can add them back in later once the child gets used to the idea of the game. Have the child announce both the color and number of the card before they find a matching one, and announce what card they are putting down. This is a great way to help them to recognize the numbers and colors, but also learn good sportsmanship, turn-taking, and have fun all at the same time.

## **Matching and Go-Fish**

**Target behavior:** hand eye coordination, memory, number and color recognition.

**Materials needed:** Deck of cards

**Activity:** Place the cards face-down on a table or floor, depending on where you are playing. Have the child turn the cards over two at a time and find matches for each of the cards. If they are not able to do this you may also start with all the cards face-up, or they can also flip over the cards, and then leave them facing up. You can also only put down half the deck, making sure that all the cards being used have a match being played.

Once all the cards have been matched, you may gather them and deal them out to play a game of go-fish. Deal 5 cards to the child and yourself. They may begin by asking if you have a card that they have in their hand (such as a black 5 or a red Queen).

You can also adapt this game by using Uno cards if the shapes (heart, spade, diamond, and clover) on the regular deck of cards confuses the child.

Other children may also join in on the game so they can learn taking turns and social skills.

## **Breaking Down Tasks**

**Target behavior:** Decrease anxiety over tasks.

**Materials needed:** Whatever materials you will need to complete the activity you choose.

**Activity:** A lot of times tasks that are completed consist of multiple steps. In order to help the child become less anxious about the task, you can break it down into individual steps so it seems easier to complete. You can have them assist in only a few steps to begin with, and as they are able to accomplish them, they can then do more steps on their own. With enough repetition, they will gain the skills they need to complete the task correctly and be less frustrated.

**Example:** Doing the laundry:

1. Sort the clothes into darks and whites.
2. Carry one load to the washing machine.
3. Select the water temperature and cycle on the washing machine.
4. Measure and pour the correct amount of detergent in.
5. Load the clothes into the washing machine.
6. Start the washing machine.
7. Once the clothes have been washed, move them to the dryer.
8. Put a dryer sheet into the dryer with the clothes.
9. Start the dryer.
10. Once the clothes are dry, remove them from the dryer.
11. Fold the clothes.
12. Put the clothes away where they belong.

## Visual Prompts

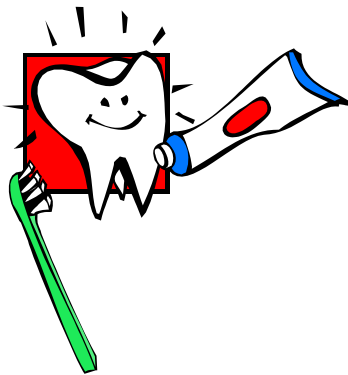
**Target behavior:** Process actions that need to be completed for a task.

**Materials needed:** Pictures

**Activity:** Find an action that the child needs help remembering. You will then break the action down into steps so they can easier complete it. Then print out pictures of each action and place it in an area where they do it. It helps work with the child's visual learning style to remember what they need to do.

**Example:**

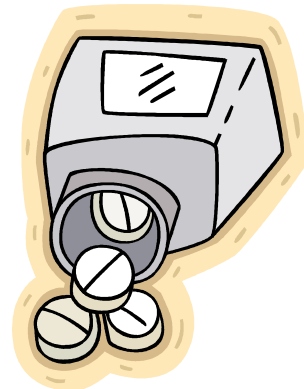
**Before going to bed:**



Brush your teeth



Change into your pajamas



Take your medicine

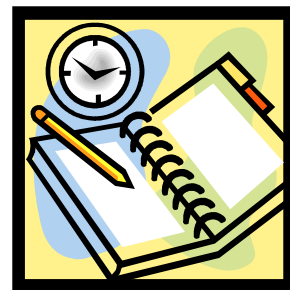
**When answering the phone and taking a message:**



Say Hello



Ask for their name



Write down their phone number

## Communication Methods

**Target behavior:** Communication

**Materials needed:** An activity or object that the child enjoys.

**Activity:** In order to encourage the child to communicate with you and others more, you need to increase the difficulty of obtaining that activity. This way they will need to communicate to others their wants, increasing their skills.

### **Example:**

- If the child has a favorite movie to watch, place that movie in a place where it will be out of reach. Have the child verbally communicate with you, or use other method of communication to describe what they want.
- If they enjoy a certain food, place that food into a more difficult container to access, such as a glass jar.
- If the child has a favorite activity to do, but they cannot do it by themselves, pause before you help the child. Have the child communicate with you and ask you to help them.
- During daily routines, such as getting dressed in the morning, leave a step out. Place all their clothes out except from one thing, such as their socks. Wait until the child notices and communicates with you that something is missing and what it is that they need from you.
- When they child is playing with a toy that has multiple pieces to it, start by giving them only a few pieces. Wait until the child communicates that they need more pieces, and then give them a few more.
- Offer the child things that you know they do not want. That way they will need to practice their communication of “no”.
- When the child is going to take a bath, leave their socks on. See if they notice what is wrong, and have them communicate this to you.
- Hide something that the child will usually use. If they eat French fries with ketchup, and they usually go to the fridge to get the ketchup, hide it someplace else. That way they will have to communicate with you to ask you where it is.
- Instead of asking the child what they want to play, simply stand in front of the toys and stay silent. Have the child communicate to you what they would like to play more.
- Instead of simply giving them something that they always choose, offer them a choice. Offer them their favorite game or food and another choice, and let them communicate to you which one they would like to have. Either through verbal communication or you can place the items in front of them and have them physically choose.

## **Big/Little Game**

**Target behavior:** Size differentiation.

**Materials needed:** Assorted materials of differing sizes.

**Activity:** Gather different sized items, preferably items that the child is familiar with. Place two items out in front of the child, and ask them which one is bigger and which one is smaller.

To make the game more complicated you can put out more than one item. Also you could put out several items and have them place them in order from smallest to largest.

**Example:** You can use an apple and a grape, favorite toys, a regular sized deck of cards and a large deck, books, etc. Get creative and try to use different items each time to keep the game challenging and fun.

## Cookie Cutters

**Target behavior:** Shape differentiation.

**Materials needed:** Cookie dough and cookie cutters.

**Activity:** You can bake cookies with the child and they can be as involved as they can manage. First, roll the dough out onto a table. You or the child can cut the dough out into shapes. You can start with simple shapes such as circles, squares, triangles, and can move up to more complex shapes such as flowers, fish, birds, etc. Have the child communicate what the shapes are, and also what other shapes they would like for you or they want to cut out.

## **Spaghetti Shapes**

**Target behavior:** Hand-eye coordination and shape recognition.

**Materials needed:** Cooked spaghetti and a clean area to play on.

**Activity:** Boil the spaghetti until it is soft. Drain the spaghetti and rinse with cold water until cool. Have the child make shapes out of the spaghetti. You can tell them to make a shape, they can make whatever shapes they choose, or you can have a race with them and make a shape together. You can even use multiple pieces of spaghetti and make an entire picture. It is an interesting texture to they will have a great time exploring with this new material. If you use a brightly/dark colored surface to play on such as an art map or cooking sheet, the colors will contrast more and they will be able to see the spaghetti easier.

## Slinky Play

**Target behavior:** Hand-eye coordination

**Materials needed:** A slinky

**Activity:** Have the child play with the slinky in both hands. As simple as this activity seems, it helps greatly with hand eye coordination. The back and forth rhythmic movement can be very calming for the child as well. You can also have the child hold one end of the slinky, and you hold the other on the other side of the room. Have the child move the slinky up and down and to the sides. They can explore how the slinky moves through the air when they move it a certain way. You can also let the slinky go, and the child can explore how the slinky curls itself back into shape.

## “I Spy” Slinky

**Target behavior:** Following eye-gaze.

**Materials needed:** A Slinky.

**Activity:** While standing in a room, you can begin to play “I Spy” with the child. Hold the slinky up to your eye. Then stretch the slinky out in a direction towards an object in the room. The child then needs to follow the direction of the slinky and guess what you are looking at. This helps them to be able to follow eye-gaze by following where slinky is pointing at. Then they may repeat the process by doing it themselves and you need to find the object.

## **Rolling the Ball**

**Target behavior:** Turn-taking, waiting, and watching others actions.

**Materials needed:** A ball and a flat floor.

**Activity:** Have the child sit on the floor while you sit across from them. Simply roll the ball back and forth to each other. You can also throw it or bounce it to one another depending on the abilities of the child.

The back and forth passing teaches the child to take turns. You can also hold on to the ball for a few seconds to help the child learn how to wait. Also pretend to throw the ball without actually throwing it to teach the child to pay attention and watch the actions of others.

You can also do this activity with more children by either passing it around in a circle, or you can choose to randomly throw the ball to each child, making sure that everyone is getting even turns. This gets your child to watch and respond to the actions multiple people. You can even have the children call out the names of the person they are going to pass it to, so they can use verbal skills. If they cannot remember the names of other children, just have everyone yell out a word such as “zing” or “buzz” before they pass it.

## **Ping-Pong races**

**Target behavior:** Hand-eye coordination, physical control of materials.

**Materials needed:** Straws and Ping-Pong balls.

**Activity:** Put a Ping-Pong ball on the end of a cleared table or on the floor. Have the child use a straw to blow across the floor in a straight line and across a “finish line”. Once they understand the concept, you can change the rules of the game to fit their abilities.

**Example:**

- Have them blow the ball from a starting point to the finish line and then back again.
- Have them blow the ball to multiple points around the room.
- Verbally tell them to blow the ball faster or slower so they can communicate during the game.
- You can race the child so that they gain a sense of competition.
- Try and have them blow the ball into a cup that you have laid down on the floor.
- Try blowing two balls at the same time.

## Connections

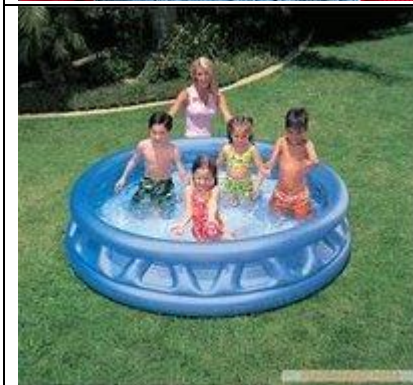
**Target behavior:** Pairing actions to descriptions.

**Materials needed:** Photos and a descriptive sheet.

**Activity:** Take or find pictures of people completing an action. Then write a description of the action on the paper. Have the child match the picture to the description. To make this game more challenging you can have the description begin the sentence, and have the picture complete the idea.

**Example:**

<p>The boy is eating a sandwich.</p>	<p>The girl is playing dress-up with her friends.</p>	<p>The children are on the swing.</p>
<p>The dog is playing with a toy.</p>	<p>The friends are riding their bikes.</p>	<p>The Mom is cooking dinner for her family.</p>
<p>The baby is crying.</p>	<p>The cat is taking a nap in the window.</p>	<p>The teacher is reading a book to her class.</p>
<p>The children are playing in the pool.</p>	<p>The boy is playing with his toy cars.</p>	<p>The grandfather is reading a book to his grandkids.</p>



## **Spinners and Textures**

**Target behavior:** Hand-eye coordination, exploration of textures and materials.

**Materials needed:** Spinner/top, baking pan, various materials such as tin foil, flour, sand, sprinkles, etc.

**Activity:** Instruct the child to spin the spinner on an empty baking sheet. They can lift the tray and move it around to see how the spinner moves across the area. They can also place materials (flour for example) onto the tray. Here, they will be able to see how the spinner moves on the tray when it leaves a trail. Also they different materials will have different effects on the trail it leaves behind, the noise it makes, and the way the material moves on the tray. The child will also enjoy the different feelings of all the materials being used.

## **Noise Hide and Seek**

**Target behavior:** Use of auditory skills and problem solving.

**Materials needed:** A toy that moves, vibrates or makes noise/music.

**Activity:** Have the child either leave the room or close their eyes while you hide the toy in the room. Have the child try to find the toy by listening for the noise that it is making. After they find it, they can either play with the toy or you can take turns hiding and finding the toy.

## **Play-Dough Hide-and-Seek**

**Target behavior:** Motor skills, tactile stimulation, and problem solving skills.

**Materials needed:** Play-Dough or silly putty and small objects such as pennies, small pegs, or pen caps.

**Activity:** Prepare the play-dough ahead of time by taking the small objects and placing them throughout the play-dough. Mix it in well and make sure they are separated and all covered. Then give the play-dough to the child and have them search through and pick out the pegs.

Play-Dough is a softer material. If your child has better hand strength and motor skills you can use a material such as silly putty, which is more difficult to manipulate.

## Descriptive I-Spy

**Target behavior:** Problem solving, sequential skills.

**Materials needed:** A room.

**Activity:** You and the child will stand in a room that could be in their house, classroom, etc. Choose an item in the room that you can easily see, without touching it or saying what it is. Begin the game by saying “I-spy, with my little eye something that is...” and slowly begin to describe the object. Is it big? Red? Standing up? Low to the ground? Let the child walk around the room and try to figure out what the object is. If they find it, they can pick it up and ask you if that was the one you are talking about. If you would like to make the game harder, you can describe what you do with the item/what it does. Then you can have the child put the item back where they found it, and you can begin to take turns choosing and describing the item.

### **Example:**

Red stuffed teddy bear sitting on their bed:

“I-spy, something with my little eye, something that is...”

Red, soft, furry, about one foot high, has arms and legs, has brown eyes, is laying down, etc.

Pack of markers:

“I-Spy, something with my little eye, something that...”

Comes in a pack of 24, I use when I want to make a picture, comes in lots of different colors, I can hold in my hand, I can draw with, etc.

## **Puddle Jump**

**Target behavior:** Large motor skills.

**Materials needed:** Two ropes or sticks.

**Activity:** Find a large open area with enough room to run and jump around. It can either be inside or outside. Place the two ropes or sticks parallel to each other about a foot apart. Have the child take a running start and then jump over the gap between the two sticks. Then move the sticks slightly further away from each other and have the child jump them again. Keep moving the sticks until they can no longer jump over the gap and they land in the center. You can call the space between the sticks/ropes a river, or lava and the area outside is a safe bank. It creates a story for the child to imagine and makes the game more fun to play.

## **Line Freeze-tag**

**Target behavior:** Large motor skills, taking turns, team playing

**Materials needed:** A gymnasium or playground with basketball lines marked on the floor, and other children.

**Activity:** Explain to the child that they will be playing tag. The difference with this game is that they can only run along the lines that are marked on the floor. If they get tagged, they need to freeze in place. To become un-frozen another child needs to crawl between their legs. Then they can continue to play the game with the rest of the kids. The game can end when either all the children are frozen, or you can set a time limit such as 5 minutes.

### **Example:**

To change the game to make it more challenging or easier:

- You can have the children only run on either the red or black lines on the court.
- The kids could only run on the straight lines.
- They can run on the black lines, and skip on the red lines.
- When a kid gets tagged, they only have to freeze for five seconds and then they can start running again.
- The person that gets tagged becomes the new “it” so that more children get to play that part.

## **Ball in the Bucket**

**Target behavior:** Communication and large motor skills.

**Materials needed:** A bucket and tennis (or other similar type) balls.

**Activity:** In a large, clear area such as a basketball court or gym, place the balls scattered throughout the floor area. Instruct the child to go run out and grab a ball. Then they need to throw the balls into the bucket until all of them make it in.

To make this game more difficult and interactive, you can hold the bucket while the child throws the balls into it. You can move the bucket around to make more of a challenge for the child. They can even verbally engage and ask you to move the basket up or down, closer or further away.

## **Line Tennis**

**Target behavior:** Large motor skills, hand eye coordination.

**Materials needed:** tennis ball, string, clothes line

**Activity:** Cut a hole through the tennis ball and tie the string through it. Then tie the other end of the string to a clothes line. You can let the child hit the tennis ball with a baseball bat or tennis racket. The ball will not fly away too far or hit any houses or cars, as it will be kept in a contained environment. The child can play by themselves or you can have another child stand on the other side of the clothing line and they can hit it back and forth to each other. If you do not have access to a clothes line, a tether ball can be used in the same manner.