

Let's Play!

**AFFORDING CHILDREN ACCESS TO PLAY WITH
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTS**

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Play Interactions Video

| <i>Play Interactions</i> | Allison | Dominic |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Intrinsically Motivated | | |
| Active | | |
| Make Up Play (Language + Creativity) | | |
| Initiate Play (Start and Stop when they want) | | |
| Have Fun!!! | | |

Toy Characteristics

Key concepts for the best choice toy:

The best choice

- is FUN!
- is age appropriate
- is intuitive
- is accessible
- is flexible, expandable use
- is novel
- is safe
- is affordable



Toys alone are not enough; parents, peers + supportive environments promote new ways to play.

Toy Characteristics

Sensory:

- Sound: Does the toy make sound? If so, is the sound potentially calming, or louder and potentially arousing? Is the sound potentially startling? Is the tone of the sound harmonic or brassy? How long after activation does the sound continue? Can you control the length of this?
- Visual: Does the toy have attractive features? If the visual features are lights, how are they activated? How bright are they? Are they linked to sound? Can they be disconnected from sound?

If the visual features are due to bright color and/or contrast, are they simple or complex? Do they have a pattern that is meaningful to the child? Is the pattern “busy” or “quiet”? Do the visual features invite touch?

- Touch: What does the toy feel like? Is it soft, hard, sleek or smooth, rough, tickly, cuddly? Is there vibration? Is the touch likely to be startling? Does the touch promote grasp? release? Does the feel of it encourage active exploration? If so, with the whole hand or with isolated finger movements?

Access/Activation

- How is the toy activated?
Does activation require minimal movement, or more, on the part of the child? What movements are required? What body parts can activate the toy?
- Are there multiple parts to the toy which need to or can be activated?

Are these multiple parts inter-related such that all must be activated to make the toy interesting? Alternatively, the multiple activation points may provide the toy with some variety.

- Does the toy have handles or knobs which the child must use?
Are they of an appropriate shape and size for this child? If they are not, can they be easily adapted?
- Where must the toy be positioned for activation?
Can position be adapted to meet the needs of the child?

Physical:

- Size: Small toys may be inaccessible to children with unrefined hand skills, or limited motor control; large toys may be inappropriate for placement on a lap tray, table or small bench. What are the physical characteristics of this toy?
- Construction: How is the toy put together? Is it stapled or glued? What is it made of: wood, plastic? These factors may influence the safety, weight or durability of the toy/device.
- Stable: Is the toy stable by itself? Does it require one hand to stabilize it while the other hand manipulates it?
- Safe: Can the child use the toy safely? In any position?
- Versatile: Does the toy provide some variety in and of itself that may promote use of the toy in more advanced ways as the child develops skills?

Toy Characteristics Activity Worksheet

Toy _____

Sensory

- Sound Loud? _____ Buzzer? _____ Calming? _____
Soft? _____ Musical? _____ Exciting? _____

Long? _____ Short? _____ Volume Controlled? _____
- Visual: Colorful? _____ Simple? _____ Complex? _____
High Contrast? _____ Invite Touch? _____

Lights? _____ Blink? _____ Steady? _____
Linked with Sound? _____
- Touch: Soft? _____ Hard? _____ Smooth? _____
Rough? _____ Novel? _____

Vibration? _____ Arousing? _____ Soothing? _____

Inviting? _____ Hand? _____ Fingers? _____
Feet? _____ Mouth? _____

Access/Activation

- How is the toy activated? (i.e. switch, button, lever) _____
Type of body movement? _____

1 or 2 hands? _____ Strength? _____ Accuracy? _____
- Multiple Parts? _____ Related? _____ Sequential? _____
- Handles or knobs on toy? _____ Appropriate shape and size? _____
- Preferred play surface for toy? _____

Physical Space

- Does the size of the toy limit where the child can play with it?

- Does it “fit” the child’s size and play space?

Play Stage

- What play stage does the toy primarily address?
- How can it be used for other play stage purposes?

Case Study: Tommy

Tommy is a 27 month old child who lives with his parents and an older brother and sister. He is diagnosed with athetoid cerebral palsy which significantly limits his motor and communication abilities. He has a special chair which helps him to sit up but he doesn't like to stay in it too long. He prefers using his right hand and arm; they seem to be under his best control. He is able to hold onto toys when they are placed in his right hand, and can bat at them. He can and does make sounds to get attention, but the sounds are loud and not always specific or appropriate (i.e. screaming). Tommy is working to communicate with these sounds, and at times is able to indicate preferences for things like videos, food and his favorite toys, loud trucks. His eye control is good and can at times serve his communication needs as well. Tommy likes toys that make sounds.

Early Childhood Participation Tool for AT Decision Making

Environment _____

| ROUTINES/ ACTIVITIES | WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW? | WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN. | HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL? | AT SOLUTIONS/ INTERVENTIONS |
|--|---|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Bath Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get in+ out • playing • washing | He hates water in his face. Not sitting alone (almost)- slides under. Parent needs to support entire time. Likes balls; can grasp | To enjoy the water; to be able to play more and have fun. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He will sit with less parental support. • Toys will stay within reach. • He will initiate play. | |
| Outside Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bubbles • Sand Pit • Go for a walk | Outside in an umbrella stroller. Likes to go on walks, but otherwise, sits and watches the other kids. Likes bubbles + sand play. | Be able to choose between 2 activities and to participate on some level. | He will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sit by himself • choose an activity • use sand tools • use bubble blowers | |

Early Childhood Participation Tool: AT OPTIONS

Environment _____
Routine _____
Activity _____

| AREAS TO CONSIDER | AT OPTIONS | | |
|---|------------|--|--|
| MOVEMENT SUPPORTS (POSITIONING + MOBILITY) | | | |
| INTERACTION WITH MATERIALS SUPPORTS | | | |
| COMMUNICATION SUPPORTS | | | |

Early Childhood Participation Tool for AT Decision Making

Environment _____

| ROUTINES/ ACTIVITIES | WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW? | WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN. | HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL? | AT SOLUTIONS/ INTERVENTIONS |
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| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Early Childhood Participation Tool: AT OPTIONS

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Guidelines to Promote Play Opportunities for Children with Disabilities

All children need successful opportunities to play and interact with toys and others. Because disabilities present barriers to play for some children, we need to identify strategies that will help children to circumvent these barriers and benefit from play itself. The following guidelines see the adult role as play partner and facilitator. Keep in mind that play is active, directed by the child and is fun!

Getting Ready for Play: Positioning Supports

In “getting ready” for play, make sure that children have the necessary physical supports so that their efforts can focus on playful interactions. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the most comfortable position for the child?
- Does the child have more than one positioning option for play?
- Do you need to consider options that allow the child to be mobile in the play environment? (If the child is not mobile you will need to consider additional methods to allow for choice making in play)
- Are additional supports necessary to help the child comfortably maintain positions? (Remember you want the child to spend his/her energy on playing not maintaining a position)
- Is the child positioned so that play partners and materials are situated in his/her line of vision?

Getting Ready for Play: Communication Supports

In “getting ready” for play, make sure that children have the necessary communication supports to be a play partner. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How will the child make choices/decisions during play?
- Include interactive play phrases (“it’s my turn”; “Yeah “You go first”; “Come and see”).
- Should alternatives beyond verbal communication be considered? (eye gaze, picture boards and/or simple voice recordings can be considered)

Getting Ready for Play: Social Supports

Children benefit most from playing with other children. There are several things to do to ensure success:

- Bring children to parks, centers and other places where children play as frequently as possible
- Provide your child with the supports she needs for playing in a group. This can include practicing appropriate phrases, words to songs and expectations of game/play “rules” (e.g. turn taking)
- Role playing provides familiarity to help the child interact with other children. For example, provide structured props and routines to “play” store, library and zoo with your child.

Selecting Toys for Children

Select toys for children that motivate, are easily used and are flexible enough to be used in different ways. The less defined a toy is, the more room for imaginative play!

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What features of a toy does the child seem to enjoy (visual, sounds, textures)?
- How does the child respond to these features (visual, sounds, textures)? Can you adjust these features or turn some off? (Observe the child's reaction to different toys. Remember that although some toys may be very "interesting" to a child, too much stimulation can actually overwhelm a child and become another barrier to play)
- What movements are required to access or activate the toy? Do these required movements match the child's abilities?
- How much strength is required to activate the toy?
- Can the toy grow with the child or be used in different ways or different positions?

Adapting Toys for Success

Set up the play environment for children – they may need different supports to maximize fun and minimize frustration. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Can the child reach the toy? (If not bring it closer with links or a tray.)
- Do you need to make the toy more stable so that it stays in a certain position? (Consider using non-slip material or add Velcro to the bottom of the toy)
- Does the toy move? Will it "get away" from the child? (Consider confining the toy so it stays in reach. You can use containers or boxes)

Play Strategies

Below are additional strategies that may assist in facilitating children's abilities to be successful players!

- Let the child be the leader; do what he does! Children really like the "power" this gives them. Peek-a-boo is a great game to try this with. Waiting (and anticipating) their initiation is very rewarding.
- Take turns with the child; give the child plenty of time to respond. Children may need longer to process what is happening and to figure out "what's next".
- Offer just one toy at a time or gradually add related toys. For example, adding a car to crash into blocks when building, or a ball to push through a tunnel can expand play to new dimensions and encourage new explorations.
- Set up play by pairing children with 2 roles: bubble blower + popper; filler and dumper with buckets; chooser and gluer with art materials, etc.
- Share play with small groups of children: play dough + pizza cutters, rollers; making rainbows with one set of markers; build a castle with 1 set of blocks, etc.
- Cooperative vs. competitive play: parachute play, musical mats (remove a mat instead of a child), etc.
- Pretend and fantasy play result in higher levels of play as it demands the combination of language, cognition, and creativity. Playing with puppets or dolls is a good way to begin. Being "silly" by changing voices and exaggerating facial expressions can be very motivating and exciting to a child.

Play Strategies for Switch Toys

The following ideas are ways to expand play if children are using switches for play.

- When using switches for play, think beyond simply cause and effect or making the toy stop and go. Consider using the toy action to:
 - Facilitate communication (vertical toys work well) – try putting picture symbols in various places within the toy’s movement pattern. Have the child stop when they get to what they want to say.
 - Promote pretend play by creating “Spatial Adventures”:
 - “Make sure the pig doesn’t fall into the swamp” (off the table)
 - Use the toy to do something else:
 - Knock the blocks down
 - Go up the ramp to push the cup over to feed the fish
 - Get into the box and hide!
 - Meet the frog in the pond
 - Add props to the toy
 - Carry a cookie to a friend (tray on back of toy)
 - Include other kids and have a race!
 - For Communication: Use single message switches as an interface to enhance play with language; this is especially helpful in promoting pretend play and social interactions:
 - “Help me! Help me!”
 - “Catch me if you can!”
 - “I’m coming!”

Have fun!



Play Resources for Children with Special Needs

enet
1081 10th Avenue East
Minneapolis, MN 55414-1312
(800) 322-0956
<http://www.ablenetinc.com/>

**Access first
PO Box 3990
Glen Allen, VA 23058
(888) 606-6769

*Achievement Products, Inc.
P.O. Box 9033
Canton, OH 44711
(216) 453-2122
<http://www.specialkidszone.com/>

**Adaptivation, Incorporated
224 S.E. 16th Street, Suite 2
Ames, IA 50010
(800) 723-2783
<http://www.adaptivation.com/>

Antoni Toys and Products for the
Physically Challenged
232 S.E. Oak Street Ste. 103
Portland, OR 97214
(800) 826-8664

Best Toys, Books, & Videos for Kids
Exceptional Parent Library
(800) 535-1910
<http://www.eplibrary.com/toys/>

**Beyond Play
1442-A Walnut Street #52
Berkeley, CA 94709
(877) 428-1244
<http://www.beyondplay.com/CATALOG/ADA1.HTM>

Blind Children's Fund
4740 Okemos Road
Okemos, MI 48864-1637
(517) 347-1357
<http://www.blindchildrensfund.org/>

Child Craft
PO Box 3239
Lancaster, PA 17604
(800) 631-5652
<http://www.childcraft.com/>

Childsworld/Childsplay
135 Dupont Street
P. O. Box 760
Plainview, New York 11803-0760
(516) 349-5520
<http://www.childsworld.com/>

*Chime Time (Sportime)
2440-C Pleasantdale Road
Atlanta, GA 30340-1562
(800) 477-5075

*Communication Skill Builders, Inc.
3830 E. Bellevue
P.O. Box 42050-CS5
Tucson, AZ 85733
(800) 866-4446

Community Playthings
Box 901
Rifton, NY 12471-0901
(800) 777-4244

Constructive Playthings
1227 East 119th Street
Grandview, MO 64030-1117
(816) 761-5900
<http://www.constplay.com/family/default.htm>

**Crestwood Company
6625 N. Sidney Place
Milwaukee, WI 53209-3259
www.communicationaids.com

Discount School Supply
<http://www.discountschoolsupply.com/>

Discovery Toys
Contact local education consultant
(800) 426-4777
<http://www.discoverytoysinc.com/>

**Don Johnston, Inc.
P.O. Box 639
1000 N. Rand Road, Bldg. 115
Wauconda, IL 60084
(800) 999-4660
<http://www.donjohnston.com/>

**Dragon Fly Toy Company
291 Yale Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3M 0L4
Canada
(800) 308-2208
<http://www.dragonflytoys.com/>

**Enabling Devices
385 Warburton Avenue
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706
(800) 234-6006
<http://www.enablingdevices.com/>

Environments, Inc.
P.O. Box 1348
Beaufort, SC 29901
(843) 846-8155
www.eichild.com

*Flaghouse - Special Populations
150 No. MacQuestern Pkwy.
Mt. Vernon, NY 14222
(800) 793-7900

Fisher-Price
<http://www.fisher-price.com/us/>

*Funtastic Learning
206 Woodland Road.
Hampton, NH 03842
(800) 722-7375
<http://www.fantasticlearning.com>

Toy Industry Foundation
-Guide to Toys for Children who are
Blind or Visually Impaired

-Let's Play - A Guide to Toys for
Children with Special Needs- 2004
Fun Play, Safe Play
(800) 851-9955
<http://www.toy-tia.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Parents/Publications/Publications.htm>

Invo Tek Corporation
700 W 20th St., ENRC
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(800) 576-6661

**Jesana, Ltd.
979 Saw Mill River Rd
Yonkers, NY 10710
(800) 443-4728
J.L. Hammett Co.
P.O. Box 9057-Hammett Place
Braintree, MA 02184-9057
(617) 848-1000
<http://www.hammett.com/>

**Kapable Kids, Inc.
P.O. Box 250
Bohemia, NY 11716
(800) 356-1564

Kaplan: Infant & Toddler
PO Box 609
1310 Lewisville-Clemmons Rd.
Lewisville, NC 27023
(800) 334-2014
<http://www.kaplanco.com>

Kids and Things
Box 7488
Madison, WI 53707
(800) 3561200

Lakeshore Learning Materials
2965 E. Dominquez
Carson, CA 90749
(800) 421-5354
<http://www.lakeshorelearning.com>

The Language of Toys: Teaching
Communication Skills
Exceptional Parent Library
(800) 535-1910

One Step Ahead
P.O. Box 517
Lake Bluff, IL 60044
(800) 274-8440
<http://www.onestepahead.com>

Oppenheim Toy Portfolio
40 E. 9th St. Ste. 14M
New York, NY 10003
(800) 544-8697
<http://www.toyportfolio.com/>

**ORRCA
444 East Main Street
Suite 101
Lexington, Kentucky 40507
(859) 226-9625 <http://www.orcca.com>

People of Every Stripe
P.O. Box 12505
Portland, OR 97212
(800) 282-0612

Perfectly Safe
7245 Whipple Ave. NW
North Canton, OH 44270
(800) 837-KIDS (5437)
<http://www.perfectlysafe.com/>

Radio Shack
300 One Tandy Center
Fort Worth, TX 76702
<http://www.radioshack.com/>

Right Start
Right Start Plaza
5334 Sterling Center Dr.
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(800) 548-8531
<http://www.rightstart.com/>

Sensational Beginnings
PO Box 2009
987 Stewart Rd.
Monroe, MI 48162
(800) 444-2147
<http://www.sensationalbeginnings.com/>

**Southpaw Enterprises Inc
109 Webb Street
Dayton, OH 45403-1144

(800) 228-1698
www.southpawenterprises.com

Sportime Abilitations
One Sportime Way
Atlanta, GA 30340
(800) 850-8602
<http://www.abilitations.com/index.jsp>

*S&S Worldwide
P.O. Box 517
Colchester, CT 06415
(800) 243-9232
<http://www.snswwide.com/>

** Switch Kids, Inc.
8507 Rupp Farm Drive
West Chester, OH 45069-4526
(513) 860-5475

**TASH, Inc.
Unit 1-91 Station Street
Ajax, Ontario, Canada L1S3H2
(800) 463-5685
<http://www.tashinc.com/>

**Technical Solutions – Australia
<http://www.tecsol.com.au/Toys.htm>

**TFH (USA) Ltd.
4537 Gibsonia Rd.
Gibsonia, PA 15044
(412) 444-6400
http://www.tfhusa.com/us_home.html

*Therapy Skill Builders
55 Academic Ct.
San Antonio, TX 78204-2498

**Therapy Toy Shop
PO Box 59, West Brunswick
VIC 3055. Australia
<http://www.therapytoyshop.com/switch.html>

Toys R Us
Differently-abled Amazon.com / Toys 'R
Us website
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/browse/-/642868/002-2698126-8708841>

Toys to Grow on
PO Box 17

Long Beach, CA 90801
(800) 542-8338
<http://www.toystogrowon.com/>