

Toy Tips: Ideas and Options for Children with Special Needs



Team of Advocates for Special Kids

Laura Simmons-Martinez, Technology Project Director

Play is a vehicle to learning....



- Play is how kids grow; it's what they do!
- All children need opportunities to discover and actively explore the world around them.



Early Skills Promoted By Play Include:

- Cause/Effect
- Choice Making
- Object matching
- Picture/object association
- Construction
- Categorization/sorting
- Pre-math and literacy



Toy Adaptation

When you notice a child having some difficulty using a toy it may be time for some **simple adaptations**. There are many simple adaptations to assist your child in getting the most out of play.

What are Switches?

A switch works like an on/off button. Connecting it to a battery-operated toy or electrical appliance lets a person safely and easily turn the item on or off.

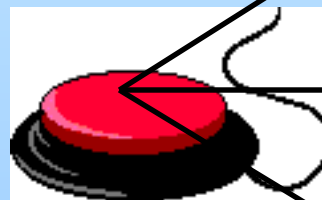


How Switches Work

1. User controls switch with any movement



3. Target is activated

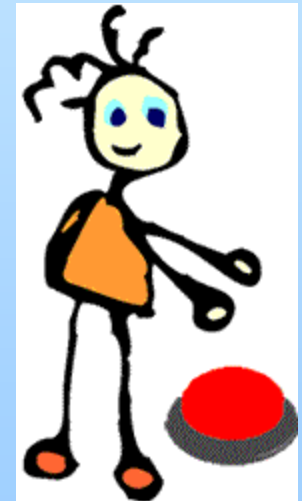


2. Switch Access



What's an adapted toy?

- A switch adapted, battery operated toy is a toy that has been modified so that a child with a disability can press a switch and activate the toy, instead of using a standard battery operated toy's on/off button.
- Many different types of toys can be adapted for use by children with differing abilities.





How Do I Switch-Adapt a Toy?

- **Battery Interrupters** transform any battery operated toy into a switch toy
 - AAA, AA, C and D battery run toys



Adapting Books, Puzzles, and more!

- Almost any kind of book or puzzle can be adapted for children with special needs. The best types of **books** are ones with sturdy pages such as “board books”. There are many ways to make a book more accessible such as adding “page turners”, tactile objects, or adding symbols along with simplified text. Here are some examples:

Adapting Books:

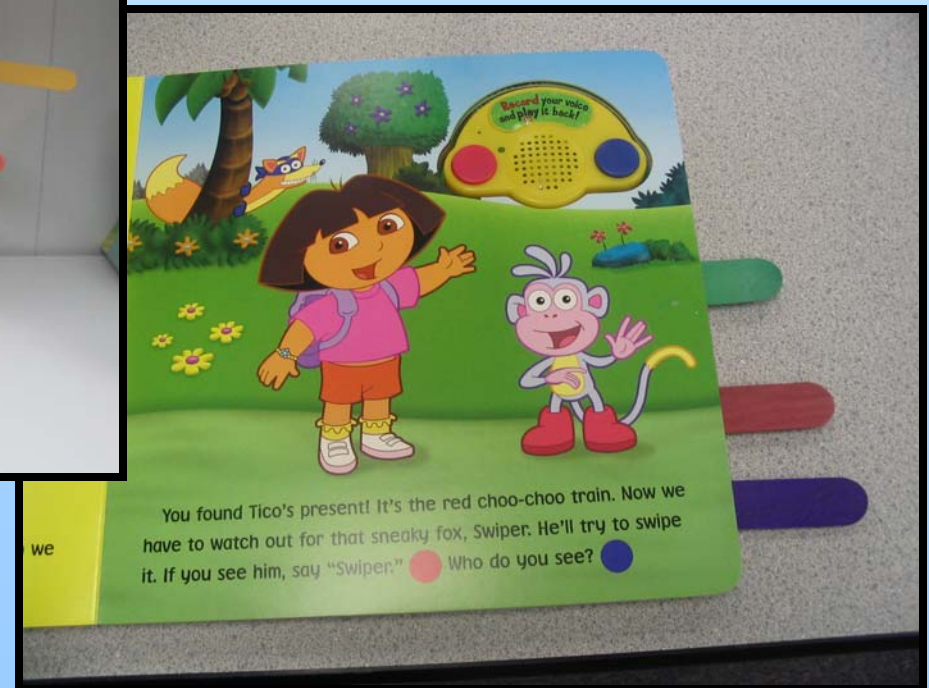
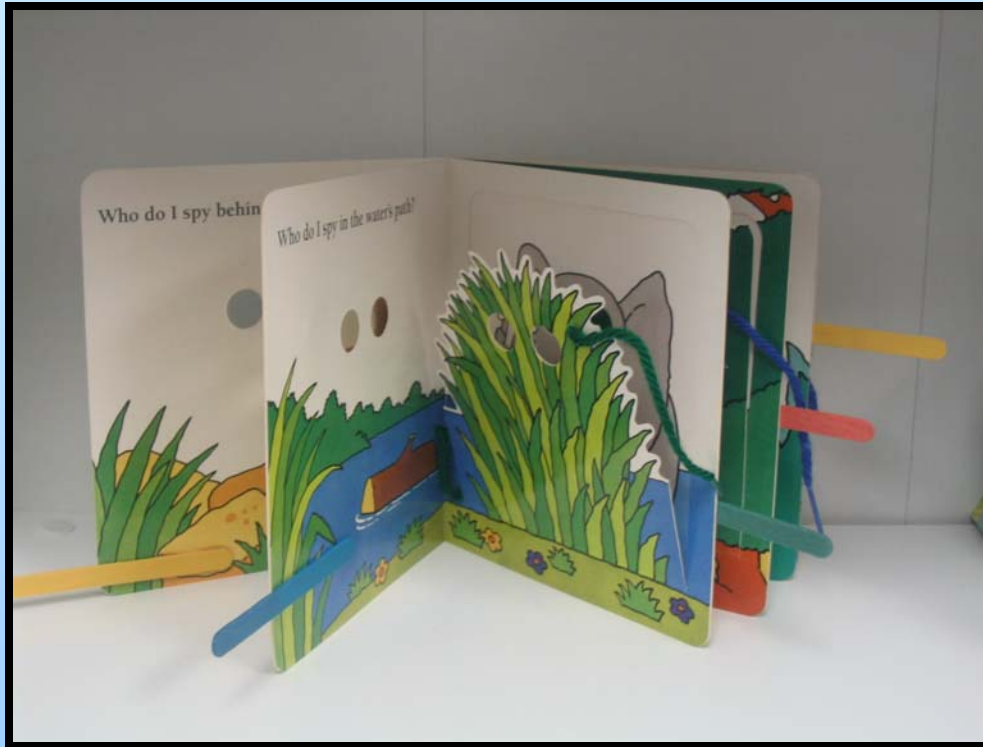
- Add extenders to help turn pages.
- Create bookstands to assist in viewing books.
- Use commercial software to scan books and provide access with single-switch or assisted keyboards.
- Use bungee-type cords or straps to secure books to wheelchair trays or bookstands.
- Tell it again!



Adapted Book Examples: "Page Fluffers"

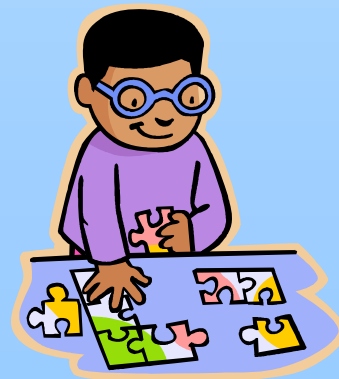


Adapted Books: Page Turners



Adapting Puzzles

- Starting with a wooden puzzle, add a large “handle” by using knobs for drawers, pvc piping, small toys or objects that you have around the house. It doesn’t have to look great, it just needs to get the job done. Here are some examples of ways to adapt puzzles:



Puzzle Adaptation Ideas:

- ***Easy grip*** - Choose puzzles with small or large knobs or add your own knobs from a hardware or craft store. For small knobs, clip the points off push pins, then glue them on with super glue.
- ***Got a feeling*** - Choose puzzles you can do by touch: form boards or puzzles with textures. Do it yourself by gluing on textures or drawing on the pieces with puffy paint to outline the major parts of the picture.

Adapted Puzzles



Home-adapted puzzle pieces

Pre-adapted puzzle



Arts & Crafts



- Adapted Scissors
- Larger crayons, markers, etc.
- Look for different handles: rounded, stubby, long, etc. Stick the handle through a foam ball, make a T-shaped grip from PVC pipe, or add a Velcro wrist strap. (This can work for paint brushes, markers, etc.)

Adapted Art Supplies



- www.dickblick.com
- www.sammonspreston.com
- www.theraproducts.com



Blowing Bubbles

- Insert the battery adapter into the battery compartment of your bubble blower and plug the switch into the battery adapter.
- Leave the bubble blower ON.
- Place the switch so your child can use it easily.
- Have FUN!!!



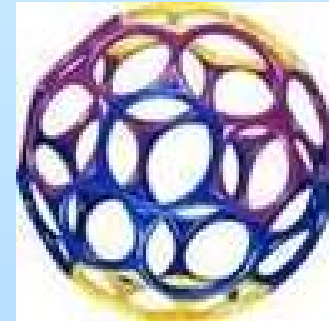


What is Universal Design?

- Universal design is a philosophy for designing products and systems that are usable by people with the widest possible range of functional capabilities.
- All potential users are considered during inception of the idea, and in the design and marketing of the product.

UD toy features are broadly defined to include:

- ✓ Multiple ways of Presentation
- ✓ Multiple ways of Use
- ✓ Multiple ways to Play



“By selecting toys with UD features we support the ability of all children to play “just like any other kid”.

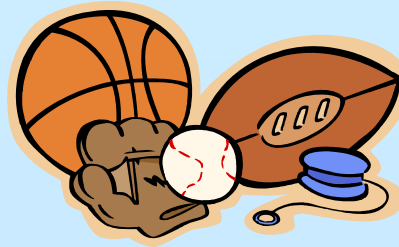
Source: <http://letsplay.buffalo.edu/phprint.php>



Seven Principles of Universal Design

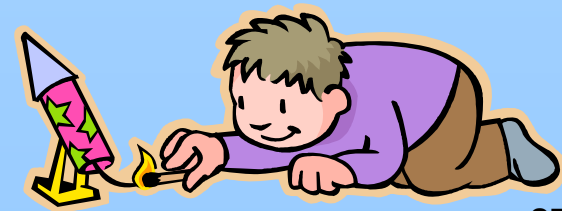
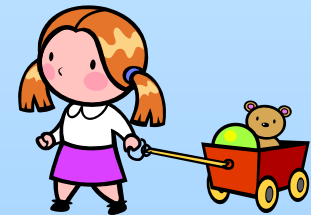
- 1. Equitable Use:** The design is useful and marketable to any group of users.
- 2. Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- 3. Simple and Intuitive Use:** Use of the design is easy to understand.
- 4. Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user.
- 5. Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintentional actions.
- 6. Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably.
- 7. Size and Space for Approach and Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach and use.





Types of Toys for Specific Disabilities????????????

Here are some GENERAL guidelines.....



Social Development

- School-age kids are generally very social. **Sport and physical activities** like rope jumping, ice/roller skating, riding kid ride on toys, and playing hide-and-seek will not only aid their physical development, but can also be used as a learning ground to become social.



Early Elementary School Kids

- (6-9 years old) also love pretend play. This type of play is open-ended and good for stimulating their imagination, as well as enhancing their **language and social development**.
- So next time you go shopping, look for kid toys which support pretend play, such as: dress-up sets, dolls, stuffed animals, toy kitchen sets, action figures, plastic animals, hot wheels, etc.

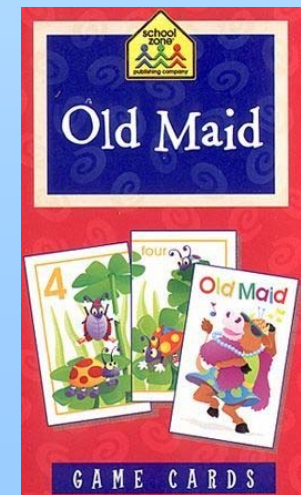






Cards and Board Games

- Another way to enhance social capabilities of kids. This kind of game can be played at home with family members, at school with peers, during parties or travels.



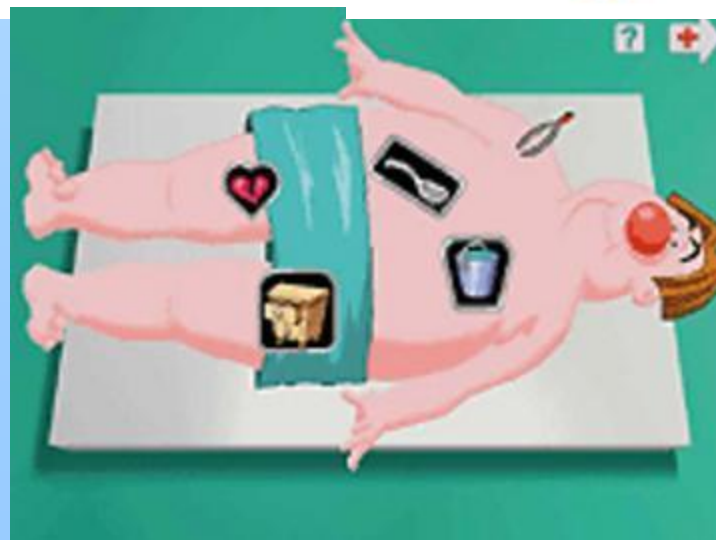
The following games help encourage eye hand coordination:

- Battleship
- Booby Trap
- Candyland
- Chutes and Ladders
- Clue Junior/Clue
- Connect Four
- Cookie Cop
- Don't Break the Ice
- Elefun
- Guess Who
- Hungry Hungry Hippos
- Jenga



Game Suggestions continued...

- Kerplunk
- Manacala
- Mousetrap
- Mr. Bucket
- Mr. Mouth
- Mr. Potato Head
- Operation
- Perfection
- Rebound
- Rummikub
- Simon
- Topple



Games for Everyone!

Keep it simple - If a board game is too hard, change the rules! Make your own game with fewer cards, choices and spaces.

A special touch - Add texture to dice, spinners and board games using puffy paints, wikki sticks, adhesive craft foam, fabric, sand paper, or Velcro. Putting fuzzy Velcro dots on each space and scratchy Velcro dots on pieces helps them stay upright and give kids a multi-sensory way to count spaces.



Feed the Bunny, by Lakeshore Learning www.lakeshore.com

Physical Disabilities:

- Physical disabilities affect the motor systems, which in turn limit a child's ability to move, stand, sit, or reach. Features to look for when purchasing toys for children with physical disabilities include:



Features should include:

- ◆ Construction that provides body support
- ◆ Large buttons or simple levers that don't require complex motions to activate
- ◆ Enlarged handles for easier grip/grasp
- ◆ Attachment straps (to attach to hand or play surface)
- ◆ Ease of maneuverability by an adult
- ◆ Sustained action with sufficient time for a child to refocus on activated movement
- ◆ Simple cause and effect activity
- ◆ Rubber, non-slide bottoms or suction cups to aid stability
- ◆ Adjustable height to meet the child's needs (Basketball net, t ball)

Visual Impairments

- Visual impairments affect a child's ability to see clearly in order to gather and understand information from the world around. When choosing toys for children with visual impairments, the following features are important:



Features should include:

- ◆ Varying auditory cues, vibrations and noises (music boxes, tape recorders, toy instruments)
- ◆ Different textures and shapes
- ◆ Distinct scents
- ◆ Open ended activities (flannel board with shapes, numbers, letters, activity sets)
- ◆ Bright, high contrasting colors
- ◆ Tactile exploration and interest (squeeze toys, cuddly toys, balls, water toys.)
- ◆ Imaginative and creative play (cook sets, tool sets, dolls and puppets.)
- ◆ Large or easy to activate knobs and handles.
- ◆ Realistic and familiar sounds and objects



Fuzzy Puzzles

- Unique puzzles with lively graphics and a wonderful variety of textures to explore. Raised pieces are easy to remove and manipulate.



Hearing Impairments

- Hearing impairments affect a child's ability to gather understand information from the environment and may range from less than normal hearing to a full loss of hearing. Toys with the following features often work well for children who have hearing impairments:



Features should include:

- **Objects with bold, contrasting colors that stimulate visual interest and exploration**
- **Tactile interest and exploration (clay, puzzles with textures, cuddly toys)**
- **Differing scents and smells (scented balls or clay)**
- **Variety of sensory stimulation, like lights, vibrations, and sounds.**
- **Amplified and/or adjustable voice and music levels**
- **Varying sounds and vibrations**
- **Textures that invite exploration with the hands**
- **Scented items that heighten sensory awareness**



Learning Disabilities

- Simple design (puzzles with one color background, picture books)
- Short game duration
- Concrete as opposed to abstract pretend play (puppets of real people or animals, pretend play food)
- Clear cause and effect (electronic toys that say a letter rather than music or word, toys with immediate responses)
- Simple instructions
- Versatility (varying levels)
- Repetition





Speech and Language Delays

- Social interaction or group play (board games, walkie talkies, blocks, play phone)
- Pretend play activities that are similar to daily life (mini kitchen appliances, cooking, etc.)
- Concrete or familiar concepts and ideas (dolls)
- Responses/interaction required (karaoke, computer read along books)
- Creativity (art projects)
- Matching or pairing games

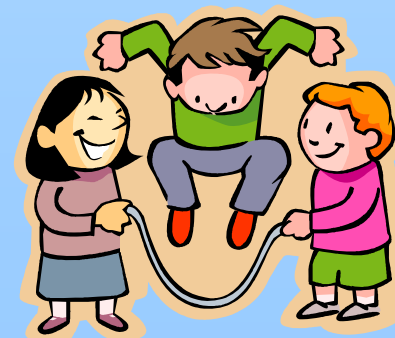


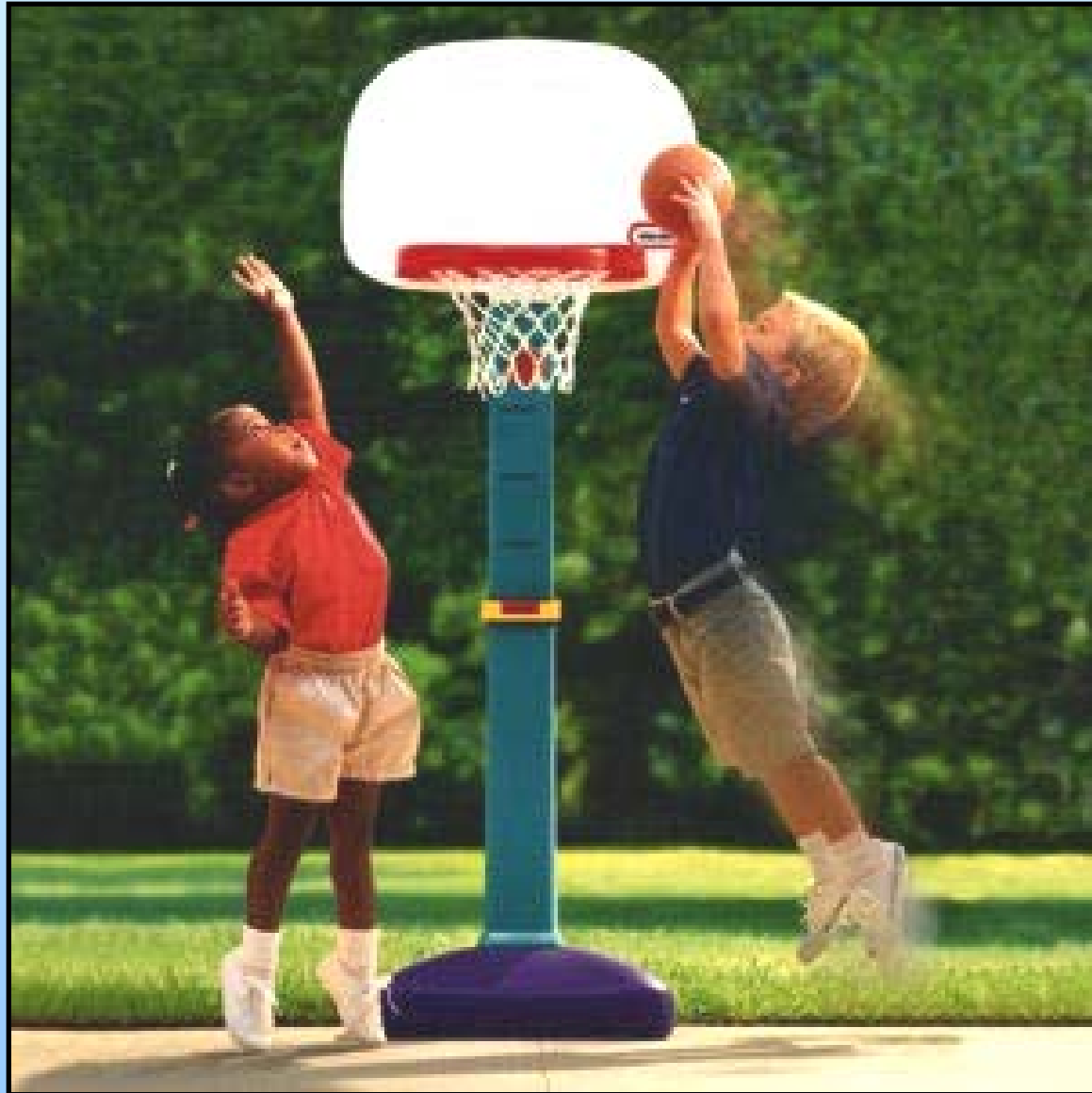




ADD/ADHD

- Bold and contrasting colors that stimulate visual interest and exploration
- Controllable or adjustable sound levels (radios, walkie talkies)
- Open-ended activities with no right/wrong way of doing (sponge painting sets)
- Partnering toys (basketballs, board games)
- Physical activities (roller blades, street hockey, basketball toys.)





Autism

- Singing and rhythm activities to encourage social skills (talking keyboard, talking magnets)
- Fine motor skills (flash cards or magnetic play sets)
- Realistic pretend play (animal puppets, battery-operated animals)
- Problem solving activities (matching games)
- Turn taking activities





Sit N' Spin, by Playskool

- **Toys for gross motor development are a good bet: Sit and Spin and bicycles**

Many children with autism enjoy a Sit and Spin by Playskool because they crave the spinning motion, and this is a way for them to satisfy this need safely and appropriately







Some Personal Favorites:

*Please keep in mind, that I am not endorsing any of these toys. I simply like them for varied reasons! Here they are, in **NO PARTICULAR ORDER....***

Tangle Toys!!!



www.tangle.com

Tangle Toys!!!



- The Magic is in the Motion!
 - There are many color options with a junior size available for the smaller child. Fun for adults, too!

Helps with:

- Fine Motor Skills
- Fidgeting
- Attention
- Anxiety
- Behavior
- Range of Motion



www.tangletoys.com

"Fidget-friendly Toys Engage Brain In Automatic Tasks"

- Tangles are Brain Tools because they can enhance attention through movement. Learning that involves lectures, presenting new ideas, review, directions, closing statements, etc is considered "passive learning."
- On average even adults can only concentrate for 20-30 consecutive minutes at a time. However, during passive learning when students are allowed to manipulate small fidgets, such as, a Tangle, it enhances learning by incorporating movement.

Measure Up Cups, by Discovery Toys

- Introduces important preschool concepts like size, sequence, volume and color.
- Later, they'll mold stamp and sort with these colorful cups that have animal shapes on each one.
- Uniquely designed cups are volumetrically correct, introducing and reinforcing math concepts. The contents of cups 3 and 4 really do fill cup 7!



Hammer Away


by Discovery Toys

- Gross Motor
- Eye Hand
Coordination
- Problem Solving
- Thinking Skills



<http://www.discoverytoysinc.com/>

Discovery Toys Can Help!

A Link to Learning for Children with Autism 

Understanding autism, selecting the right toy to help, and understanding how to use it.

Discovery Toys has interfaced with the famous Princeton Child Development Institute to develop their Autism Support Project. It's goal is to deliver a rich educational experience by understanding the most commonly shared learning difficulties for children with autism and matching their products to support learning.



<http://www.discoverytoysinc.com/>

Mr. Potato Head, by Hasbro



- Fine motor skills, observation skills, sorting, body parts, colors, problem solving, creative thinking, imagination, and much more!!!

Star Wars Potato Heads!



Darth Tater, Spud Trooper



Luke Frywalker



Artoo-Potatoo

Other Potato Head Toys....



Optimash Prime
(Transformers)



Spider Spud



Sports Spuds



Holiday Spuds

Sidewalk Chalk





Furr Ballz



- Fuzzy, furry funny friends who love to spend time with you.
- Pick them up and throw them, drop and flop them, they really come alive.
- They sing, dance and rock and roll around.
- Recommended for the teen user or older children.

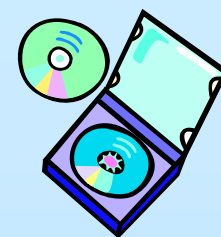
www.enablingdevices.com

10 Tips to Consider When Buying Toys:

1. Opportunity for multi-sensory appeal / stimulation
2. Easy method of activation
3. Setting in which toy will be used
4. Opportunities for success
5. Current popularity among other kids
6. Promotion of self-expression
7. Easy adjustability
8. Suitability for the child
9. Safety and durability
10. Potential for appropriate social interaction.



Software Ideas for All Abilities



Early Learning :

- **Living Books (or storybook software)**
 - Just Grandma & Me
 - Sheila Rae the Brave
 - Green Eggs & Ham
 - Arthur's Teacher Trouble
- **Edmark Early Learning Series**
 - Bailey's Book House
 - Millie's Math House
 - Trudy's Time and Place House
 - Sammy's Science House
 - Stanley's Sticker Stories
 - Travel the World with Timmy

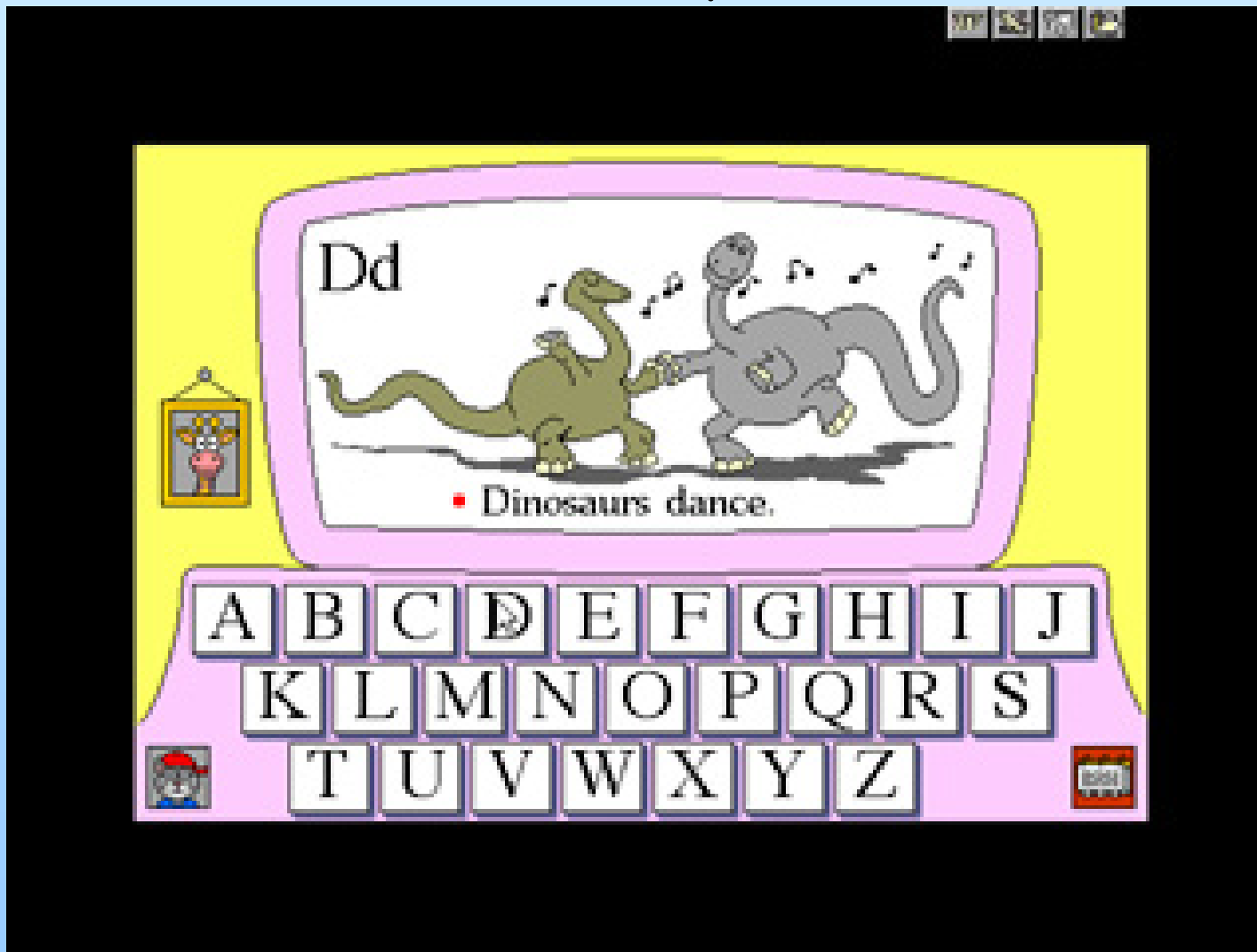


Living Books Example: Just Grandma & Me



Bailey's Book House

Example:



Software Suggestions for Children with Autism:

- Laureate Software:
 - Creature Chorus
 - Nouns and Sounds
 - Words and Concepts
 - Language Links
 - First Words
 - Language Linka



Software Ideas Continued...

- Thinkin Things 1, 2, and 3
- Thinkin' Things Frippletown
- Disney Software
 - Little Mermaid (any Disney Princess)
 - Toy Story 1, 2
 - My Disney Kitchen
 - Finding Nemo
 - Tarzan



Thinkin Things, by Edmark



Disney Software



My Disney Kitchen



Toy Story Animated Storybook

What is TASK?

- Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK) is a Parent Training and Information center that serves all ages and all disabilities.



What Types of Services Does TASK Offer?

- One on one telephone advocacy
- Parent education- workshops & advocacy training
- Legal rights information
- Information & referrals
- Peer counseling
- IEP consultations
- Book lending library
- Video lending library
- TECH center



TASK's TECH Center

- Offers individuals with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who serve them the opportunity to explore adaptive computer hardware and specialized software to determine what is most effective in achieving accessibility and independence. TECH services are available to all ages and all disabilities.

TASK's TECH Center Programs:

- TECH Labs (free to members)
- Assistive Technology Evaluations
- Guided Labs and Teacher Training
- Software Lending Library (Over 1,000 titles)
- Equipment Lending Library (toys, switches, etc.)
- After School TECH Time (ASTT)
- CAMP Techie (July and August ONLY)
- Toddler TECH Time
- Catalogs, Demo Disks, Resources, and more!!!



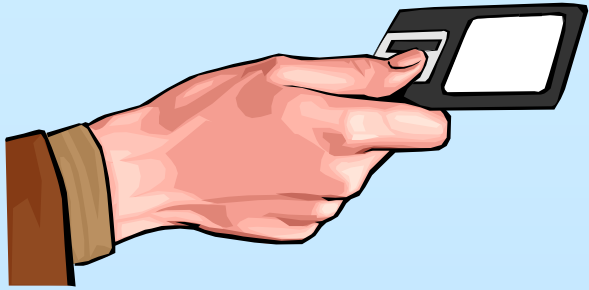
What is a TECH Lab?

- The TECH Center is available during the week by appointment, and one Saturday a month to provide hands-on exploration of adaptive technology. TECH staff is available during this 2 hour session to provide assistance and answer questions. TECH Labs are FREE to member families, and there is a \$10.00 fee for each attendee from a non-member family.

Space is limited and reservations are required.

TECH Labs- All Ages/All Abilities





Software Lending Library

- *MANY* of the software titles in the Anaheim TECH Center Software Library are available for TASK members to check out. *Members can check out up to three programs for a one month period. A \$50.00 deposit is required for each title. Members may borrow up to 3 titles per month.*
- Currently, we have over 1,000 titles in our library

There are many types of software that can supplement traditional methods of educational instruction. Including:

- **Reading: (comprehension, decoding, fluency, etc.)**
- **Writing: (outlining, concept mapping, grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.)**
- **Math**
- **Cause and Effect**
- **Early Learning**
- **Attention/Memory**
- **Auditory/Visual Processing**



Toddler TECH Time



- Offers children ages 0-5 and their parents a chance to try out assistive technology, including switch adapted toys, adaptive computer equipment, cause and effect software, and other assorted types of developmentally appropriate toys and computer software.

Toddler TECH Time (ages 0-5)



Assistive Technology Evaluations

- The TASK TECH Center offers the opportunity for children and their parents to evaluate available technology with the assistance of TECH Staff.
- These are private, customized, one-on-one assistive technology evaluations. *A written report is included.*

Please Note: AT Evaluations are offered to school districts and privately.

What is After School TECH Time?



After School TECH Time gives children and their parents a place to go to complete homework assignments or projects that require a computer. You may use our computers, the internet, our software and adaptive equipment, etc.

This time can also be used to practice your typing skills, work on your times tables, reading comprehension, etc.

Camp TECHie!!!

(July and August ONLY)



CAMP TECHIE is designed to help school aged children of all abilities reinforce their social and academic skills.



Team of Advocates for Special Kids

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Email: taskca@yahoo.com
www.taskca.org



TASK membership is \$30.00 for one year which includes our bi-monthly 28 page newsletter and FREE TECH Labs!!!

TASK TECH Center



ALL AGES



ALL ABILITIES

Ability without opportunity
is like a seed never watered.

