



# Activities Guide for Kids with Disabilities



# Introduction

Every parent looks forward to doing things together with their child. One of the biggest thrills of being a parent is watching the fun and happiness your child experiences from learning new activities.

An important part of being a kid is about being active. Through participation in play, games or activity, kids learn to associate movement and mental stimulation with a sense of joy. But it can be a little confusing understanding how to manage this if you're the parent of a child with a physical disability.

However, it is important to try and break sedentary behaviour (SB) patterns and get them active, both mentally and physically.

It can be challenging to get your child to participate in some regular games or activities, but that doesn't mean it has to be challenging to help them get active in other ways. We've put together a list of different games you can play together, either at home or out and about, that are both super fun and help them get safely moving with confidence.

# Chapter 1: Before you start!

We've been careful to select activities that are suitable for a range of different physical disabilities. But it's important to remember that you know your child and their level of mobility better than anyone, so you can still scale an activity however you want in order to suit your kid's individual needs.

## **What kind of physical activity should I be aiming for?**

Gross motor skills such as running or jumping will be more or less problematic depending on the individual. However, the numerous health benefits of even modest physical activity for individuals with a disability have been shown in numerous research studies. Movement with a low to moderate physical intensity, which raises the heart rate and the metabolic rate for between 30 - 60 mins is ideal for helping your child get the most from being more active.

Some of the activities listed might require a little more planning than others, but we have picked things that shouldn't be too difficult for you to organise without spending too much time making arrangements beyond everyday family fun and games. Most rely on ordinary household items you probably already have. And don't forget to bring the most important piece of equipment for any game: your imagination!

# Chapter 2: Choosing the Right Activity

The emphasis shouldn't be on things your child can't do, but everything they can do. The process of selecting an activity should be done together with your child. You can try to make the discussion the first part of the game itself; by talking about all the fun things you will be doing together. This can begin building up the excitement and anticipation for your kid, along with giving an opportunity to set realistic expectations for you both.

**You should try to focus on creating positive feelings that include:**

- sense of belonging or acceptance
- sense of accomplishment
- sense of growth or development
- sense of mastery (competency)

While you need to help get them active and having fun, if you pick something too demanding or difficult, this could negatively affect their experience. You can always pick something easier to start with, and then build up to more challenging games as their confidence and abilities grow. The aim is simply to make them feel that being active and moving around is just as normal for them as anybody else.

The activities are graded by the amount of equipment needed and the level of activity on a scale from 1-3, with three being the highest level. Don't worry if the game seems too challenging at first, with a few modifications you can make every activity on the list suitable for your child!

# Chapter 3: Activities You Can do at Home

We've provided a mixture of games and activities that can be done either from a sitting or standing position, so there is something suitable for people who use wheelchairs, standing and walking aids or other devices. If your child is able to use their device outside then some items on the list will be just as exciting indoors or out!



# Water Balloon Races

This is a game that can be played by both non-wheelchair users and wheelchair users alike. Simply fill some balloons with water and divide your participants into teams over a short relay course. You have to carry the balloon to the finish line before passing it to your team-mate. Wheelchair users carry the balloon in their lap.



# The Seated Obstacle Course Race

Seat the participants at the table and give them each a straw, three dried peas, a bottle of water and their favourite snack. You should line the dried peas in a row in front of each player. The aim is to blow each pea off the table using the straw, one after the other, then drink the water, before eating the snack.



# Potato Golf

On a table, set cups or other dishes spaced around 30-60 cm apart. Using a small spoon, players must toss small bits of potato into the 'holes' with as few a 'strokes' as possible. Just don't forget to clean up afterwards!





# Treasure Hunt

Hide different objects around a room (or rooms if you need a bigger space). Then give your teams a piece of paper and a pencil. They have 20 mins to find and write down each item. Teams get one point for each correct answer.



# Hold a Laughter Olympics

The goal is make the other players laugh however you can! Pull silly faces, make stupid noises, see who has the funniest laugh or the best laugh. As long as everyone's funny bone is well and truly tickled.



# Hold a Puppet Show

Find some hand puppets and put on a show to fire their imaginations. You can build a stage from an old cardboard box and let them try the hand puppets as well, so they can join in with the experience. Test out silly voices and try dreaming up new characters and adventures together.



# Sing Karaoke Together

You don't need to sing like a rock star to have fun singing karaoke. A great workout for the lungs and the vocal chords. You can see who would make the best lead singer in your band! Most games consoles have karaoke games you can use and you could even include some dancing if people want to get their groove on. Did someone say it's time for a dance off?



# Build a Sense Box

Take a small plastic box or tray and fill it with different things like shaving foam, sand, coffee beans or even toothpaste. Encourage them to play around and feel for the different textures and sensations.



# Create a Texture Scrapbook

Get an empty scrapbook and together fill it with different items, like wallpaper, sandpaper, bubblewrap, dishcloths etc. Now they can play with the various textures and materials whenever they want!



# The Tin Can Game

Set up some empty cans or drink bottles a short distance away, say just over a meter. Give each one a different points value and then players have to try and hit the various targets to get points. They don't have to knock them over, just hit them, with each turn consisting of two throws. As the game progresses you can move the targets further away to make it harder and more exciting.



# The Smelly Socks Game

Probably best not to tell Mum the real name of this game! But despite that, it's not quite as gross as it sounds. Take some cotton wool balls and scent them with whatever you can think of - lemon juice, tomato ketchup, coffee or tea etc - and then once the cotton wool is dry, stuff it into some old socks and play 'guess the smell'!





# Chapter 4: Activities outside the home

While it's possible to do loads of cool and fun things at home, sometimes you just want to get out of the house and explore the world! Just like any family outing, a bit of careful planning makes sure you will all have heaps of fun:



# Swimming

Swimming is a brilliant activity to organise if you want to take part in something that allows for a bit more intensity. When swimming the body is supported safely in the water, while at the same time providing resistance. It's an excellent way of developing stamina and working all the major muscle groups, particularly in the arms, shoulder, chest and back.



There's loads of different games you can play in the water - here's a few to get you started:

- underwater humming - guess the tune!
- the mirror game - copy your partner's every move
- the over-and-under game - stand in a line and pass an object like a ball or a pair of goggles along the line, but alternate going over and under each person and then go back down the line
- stepping stones - see how many steps you can take to get from one side of the pool to the other

# Ten-pin Bowling

If you have a bowling alley close by, it can be great fun for all the family. There is a range of adaptive equipment available to help children with different physical impairments to join in, so everyone gets a turn. Just make sure your kids don't beat you!



# Frisbee Golf

You can play a 9-hole or 18-hole course depending on who's participating, as well as choosing to play indoors or out. Each hole can be set up from easy to difficult to make by altering the distances or using obstacles, depending on the ability level of whoever's playing. Count how many throws each player takes to get the frisbee into the target, and choose whether to play as teams, individuals or just for fun.



# Wheelchair Basketball

It's one of the most popular participation sport for people with disabilities. The game's played on a regular court with a ten foot hoop (just over three meters). The scoring and most of the rules are the same, with just a couple of tweaks to account for the players being in wheelchairs rather than standing. It's one of the fastest and most exciting games your kid can play!



# Chapter 5 - Setting Goals for an Activity

Once you've chosen an activity or two, it can be helpful to set out some goals for your child, especially if it's something you plan on doing regularly. It can be something as simple as 'having fun together as a family', but you can also help your child identify longer term goals as well if appropriate. Some examples could be:

- make new friends
- improve specific motor skills
- learn greater independence
- learn to be part of a team
- improve stamina and aerobic fitness
- remember the rules of the game
- complete a specific action (like take a penalty kick or hit a target when throwing a ball)
- interact with peers, either with or without a disability

By talking with your child, you can find out what it is they expect to learn or gain from taking part in the planned activity, and you can set goals they're comfortable with. It will give them great motivation to keep going if they're able to see their progress.

# Conclusion

Of course there is loads of others games and activities that you can ask your kids if they want to try beyond what we have listed here. The games you play will be based on both your child's level of physical ability, as well as what you want to achieve in the activity. There will be games you can adapt to suit your needs and circumstances. With a little planning and creativity, you should be able to not just be a more active, but have non-stop fun as a family, whatever it is you're doing!

Do you have any questions about **helping aids**?

We are here to help

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