



Managing Transitions and Special Needs: Parents' Guide for Parents 2nd Edition - Summer 2012

Crowd-sourced Tips from Fun and Function's Award-Winning Facebook Community

Who do you turn to when you want a wealth of knowledge that will be generously shared?

The special needs community has a well-earned reputation as the best go-to network -- as you can see from this guide. Many thanks to all the families and therapists who contributed their wisdom. We also appreciate the video tips from pediatric therapists and educators throughout this guide. Please continue to share your experiences and get

invaluable support from
our [online community](#).



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What steps should a new parent take if they think their baby has special needs? Who should they contact?

Jessica Brunet Ondrejka It's important to see your pediatrician and a developmental pediatrician to explain your concerns. The sooner you address the issues your child may be having, the better success they may have in the future.

Heather Radcliff Early Intervention is crucial so contacting a place like Birth To Three is important since a medical diagnosis can take years, and if you miss the help early on, it can be much harder to get later.

Charity Glenn I think research is good to do first, then contact your pediatrician. It helps to be well informed before speaking with your doctor.

Carol McCracken Davis Everyone says talk to your pediatrician. We went to one of the best pediatricians and he kept saying my son was fine, right up until my son was 4. He'd seen my son since birth. If he would have listened or even referred me to a specialist, it would have saved me many years of heartache and my son would be so much better with therapies at an earlier age. I had no idea where else to go.

Julie Jurgens Miller You should start with a pediatrician. If the pediatrician does not take your concerns seriously, look for a Birth To Three program in your town and have your child evaluated.

Missy Wharton Have your pediatrician refer you to a pediatric neurologist to do blood and brain scans and set you up with PT, OT, speech therapy and in-home workers. We also did mental health evaluations which enabled us to start ECSE (Early Childhood Special Education) for the kids which got the IEPs (Individualized Education Program) in place and was further required proof for the SSI (Supplemental Security Income) process. It's probably different for everyone and you just need to find out what your child's needs are and what your area mandates.

Sonya Wieman Williams Things are a bit different in South Dakota. There are really two options. With either option, you should document your concerns. For instance, if your child is flapping his/her fingers, you should try to get a rough estimate of how many times each day he/she is doing this. Then, you could either: A. Go the medical route, by

At a Glance:

- > Call your pediatrician
- > Contact a developmental pediatrician
- > Contact an early intervention center
- > Look online for resources in your area

contacting your pediatrician or B: Contact the state's Birth to Three program for further testing. If you have more medical concerns than educational concerns, definitely go with option A. But, if your concerns are more developmental, option B is not a bad choice. We actually went with the medical route for our first son and that doc referred us to Birth to Three. With our second son, we checked in with our doctor after we had already set up the testing with Birth to Three.

Michelle McNaught Best Pediatrician. Then PIE (Parent Infant Education Program) or whatever the local flavor of PIE is. Wait lists for developmental pediatrician's are long...so go ahead and make an appointment. It can always be canceled if vetoed by the pediatrician or found otherwise unnecessary. Don't listen solely to your pediatrician. Follow your gut. Often it is better to be pushy than to wait too long to get services. I'm still learning this last one.

Steph Klatte Unfortunately our pediatrician wasn't much help for us when I began seeing signs of Autism in my son just before his first birthday. I was repeatedly told that nothing could be done until he was two. Thankfully we moved (my husband's in the military) and at our new pediatrician, we received a referral to a developmental pediatrician who has become our go-to guy! Having a pediatrician who specializes in developmental disorders is such an amazing resource! He and Early Intervention made all the difference in the world! Now my son is about to turn 4 and made such amazing progress he's nearly indistinguishable from his 'neuro-typical' peers :)

Bonita L. Hawkes With my daughters vision problems, I asked the pediatrician --whom I love dearly. He was convinced it was nothing but a lazy eye so she wasn't diagnosed until she turned 5... I recommend if you THINK something is not right get a second opinion and keep asking anyone who will listen. Sometimes even if you don't qualify for Early Head Start, they will lead you to the proper resources. It can't hurt to ask!



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When your child is given a diagnosis, which community or government agencies can you turn to for support / resources?

Courtney Carter The county's mental health department.

Katrina Troy To be honest, I turned to the internet first. There are so many helpful online communities out there. Especially since I live in a very small city that is 2 hours from any big cities.

Gennie Gaudet English Where I live in metro St Louis/MO area in St Charles County, our Crider Health Services has a great behavioral health group and has helped our family tremendously.

Sharon Mullarkey Dersam When I was in Minnesota: FRASER Parent and Child Center. Now in Louisiana....I think I would do some google searching and get contacts for my child.

Stefanie Smith Local pediatric hospital CHOP, in Philadelphia, Elwyn (3-5 program) puts out a great resource booklet. Now that I'm in Florida, the Pre-K ESE program and All Children's Hospital. Also check out university hospital -- they always have "teaching" programs that you can benefit from... Easter Seals, support groups and the internet is probably the best!

Heather Radcliff Pacer Center, The Wilder Foundation, and ARC.

Edith Snuffer Suggest you google the diagnosis and the name of your city and state...I'm amazed at what I discover that no one bothered to tell me about.

Jennifer Smith In Louisiana we have Early Steps for infants and toddlers. We also have Families Helping Families. I would apply for SSI and be sure to contact the JPHSA (Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority) to be put on the wait list for Medicaid waiver if denied by social security.

Julie Foxx JCC has a wonderful program for special needs families.

Laurie Cullen Kedrowski PACER Center is the Minnesota Parent Training and Information Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

At a Glance:

- > Look online for resources in your area
- > Discover the local program centers

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What is the most valuable resource to parents whose child under 3 was just diagnosed with special needs?

Melissa Gladden I know that my most valuable resource was knowing my rights as a parent of a special needs child as per his education. If I didn't know things about the schools and what services he could or couldn't get, I don't think my son would've made as much progress as he has!

Tara Ham For me it was my son's therapists. They were amazing with him and my family. They would explain different treatments to me and my husband, but also included my daughters into his therapy as well. They were a wonderful source of information and support.

Anna Fargo Early intervention, Speech therapy, OT, PT.... Finding a good support network/group.

Carrie Kuhar Netschi Other parents of special needs children, and love & support from family and friends were and still are invaluable resources for me!! =)

Lisa Brenneman Early Intervention was key for us - in home therapy was so nice. When my son started I thought he may never lift his head, roll over, or sit independently. Now he can.

Steph Klatte Early intervention home-based services were a lifesaver for us. We would not be where we are today without them.

Brenda Morgan Anderson Early intervention, therapies, and the internet. Yes there is a lot of info to wade through, but even before my child got his diagnosis, my concerns were validated and I was armed with knowledge when the time came to start the evaluation and therapy process. And I've found great message boards and groups that support and help get me through the tough times.

At a Glance:

- > Early intervention
- > Therapy - Occupational, Physical, and Speech
- > Parents of children with special needs
- > Family, friends and support groups



Brook Frosaker-Davidson Easter Seals were great...they're all great and will work endlessly with you and your child.

Bev Tarantino Pinkney Early intervention! Our son was completely non-verbal at 18 months, diagnosed at 20, and now he is almost 3 and talking up a storm! Of course we still have a long road ahead, but I have no doubt that early intervention was instrumental in making that road a little easier.

Angie Greaver ECI and other parents! The experts can tell you what the "books" say, but other parents can give you ideas that really work!!

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What criteria should you use for choosing a pre-school program?

Stefanie Smith It will vary for each child. Will it keep them safe? Will they be nurtured? Are they qualified to handle your child's sensitivities, work on their strengths etc. Is the program full day, part day? Can my child handle a full day?

Tara Ham I think that it comes down to comfort for the child and parents. When we picked our son's school (we went to many), it came down to somewhere that I thought he would be happy, safe and be able to receive all of his therapies. I spoke with the administrators and they answered every question without hesitation and were very open with their policies and practices. We have been there since September and couldn't be happier. I've never seen my son so happy to go anywhere.

Erica Penner We decided that our boys definitely needed to be in a special needs preschool program and not the special kids in the regulation preschool. It was important to us that there were teachers who understood their needs as individuals yet the environment be inclusive of all students together. We wanted a classroom that was set up with safety in mind. Also we needed a class that would be willing to potty train and have enough teachers and aides to allow for each student to receive one-on-one attention. The added plus was that speech, OT, and PT were integrated into the teaching everyday regardless of whether the students qualified for the individual services.

Danielle Campbell We have our son at a regular preschool. What made me pick it was one of his teachers used to do ABA. I also felt that one of the most important reasons we were

At a Glance:

- > Works with you and your child
- > Supports integrated therapy
- > Provides structure
- > Ensures safety

putting him in preschool was for social aspects. One of the first things they talked about was they encourage the kids to find a friend when they are alone. They were also very structured. We are at home as well. But honestly I think there is a good match for every child. It might just take time to find the right one.

Brenda Morgan Anderson Ask about teacher turnover rate. Before our son was diagnosed, we had him enrolled in a preschool/daycare and his teacher changed 3 times during the school year. This contributed to stress and anxiety (in retrospect, signs of his autism) because routine and familiarity were disrupted.

Kristy Strong Eisenzopf I would choose a loving environment. I feel too many teachers try to beat down ABC's and forget about social interaction/having fun/learning to be with other children (not afraid to learn how to brush my daughter or take sensory breaks). I would pick a site open to learning new things about our children, loving that truly cares for the children, and that your child feels comfortable. (Trust me from experience you can tell if they don't like it there.) Sometimes NAEYC has a list of certified daycares that are based on child friendly. I will say we had one such daycare in Michigan and I miss it. The staff was so friendly and let us gently educate them on what the OT's were teaching us to do with our child.

Sarah Groeneveld The teacher's willingness to work with you to make classroom modifications or willingness to let your child have sensory-calming items with them throughout the day. Everyday structure and predictability of a daily schedule was also critical for our youngest so that the potential for the dreaded "meltdowns" was lessened. Low child to teacher ratios was also critical for us. I was shocked how many preschools I have toured that were taken back when I asked if noise reducing headphones, pressure vests, fidgets or calming seats (that we provided) were a problem and they were not willing to help to ensure that preschool was a successful experience for my child. If you are not comfortable and don't feel supported, your child will not feel comfortable and supported.



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If a child, age 3-plus, is receiving therapy at school, what resource can provide low cost therapy services at home?

Teri Sibenaller Your local child care resource and referral specialists and gateway foundation/sass programs.

Stefanie Smith Local pediatric hospital in larger cities seem to have good options most covered by Medicaid.

Naomi Scarce We hired and trained local people. Folks always say college kids. But there are none in our area, and they are so transient. I say stay at home moms and grandmas! We used VB & Leaf & McEachin’s book to set the program.

April Landers We do a lot of activities at home that carry on his therapies. I have found the school has books of such activities that can be checked out for free. The public library is also a great place to find activities to practice groups and such.

At a Glance:

- > Local pediatric hospital
- > Local childcare Resources
- > Books with therapeutic activities
- > Private therapists



Hope Reinhardt United Healthcare Children’s Foundation, Inc. is taking applications. Their rules for qualifying are fairly lax compared to others (SSI, Medicaid, etc.) <http://www.uhccf.org/apply.html>

Melissa Gillespie I have done therapy with my children since they were little. All it cost us was the price of some books and the results were well worth it!

Deanna Turner My son who is 5 and was diagnosed with autism at age 2 1/2, has benefited from being the youngest of 6 children. The constant interactions with his siblings has helped him and I have found a lot of good, free, educational videos on You Tube which have helped him with speech, letters, reading and social skills.

Kim Burt Fries If a licensed therapist (ST, OT or PT) does therapy that is covered in the “natural environment,” they can provide therapy in the water.

It is not necessarily the same as “aqua therapy” but depending on your reasons for seeking water therapy, it may work for you.

Dana Ledereich Your school-based therapist is a great resource for home therapy! Speak to him/her before the summer to plan a treatment plan for you, the parent, to follow until school starts again (and beyond!) Therapists are usually thrilled to get questions like this. There is little more rewarding than an involved and proactive parent!

Kristen Perrinez I used our insurance website to find a private OT. There are not a lot of private resources after age 3. I coordinate with our private OT and the school that my son will be entering this coming year for kindergarten. I like knowing that I will get weekly updates one on one.

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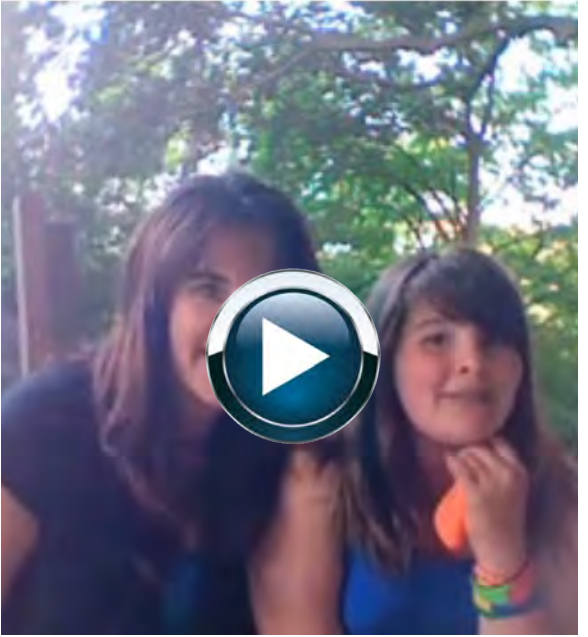
What school based resources are available to a child with special needs? How can parents access it?

Devorah Katz OT, classroom modifications (e.g. special seating, extra movement activities in the daily schedule), IEP to track progress with milestones. First step is getting your child evaluated by the county in order to qualify for services. Do it quickly because most counties have a several month backlog.

Amy Zarr Hunt Early intervention is available in many states for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. In Oregon the 0-3 yr program is therapists coming to your house for free. The 3-pre-k is a preschool setting with therapists and special education teachers, again for free. My child has been enrolled since he was 13 months old and we are now getting ready to transition him to kindergarten. I cannot say enough wonderful things about this program. To enroll I just had to call their office and they sent me a questionnaire and then sent out some therapists to assess him.

At a Glance:

- > Occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy
- > IEP to track milestones
- > Early intervention



>Tips to Help Children Manage their Anger by Tammi Van Hollander, LCSW and Registered Play Therapist at The Center for Psychological Services

Jennifer Smith OT/PT, Speech, Adaptive PE, music therapy, IEP to see where child needs to be placed such as in a severe/profound setting, moderate, or in a regular class with a PCA. 504 plan for those who do not qualify for an IEP but still have some sort of need for services.

Stephanie Stoltenburg We cyber school so it's slightly different for our kiddo but some is pretty standard. IEP, Speech, OT, PT and some modifications to lessons.

Kari Scherer OT, PT, Speech -- ask the school administrator for assistance or even the teacher. We have just implemented a pilot program with nook colors which will help with children's reading and comprehension levels.

Erica Penner IEP's and 504 plans can help to outline all the needs of the student, special services needed (such as speech, OT, PT), adaptive technology and classroom modifications that are necessary.

The school, if outlined in the IEP, will have to provide adaptive technology such as weighted blankets/vests, special seating and cushions etc. All this information can be provided by school officials, with the best first step to speak with the teacher, principal, and special needs liaison, if one is available, usually located in the board of education office. It can also be helpful to coordinate with an advocate who knows all the laws and procedures and can help you through as it can all become overwhelming and confusing.

Terri Shannon Speech, OT, PT, adaptive PE, classroom modifications, behavior intervention plans, family support services & teacher support services (to teach the family, teachers, paras, etc to better understand & work with the child), assistive & adaptive technology...you may have to fight for some of it but you are your child's advocate & your child is worth fighting for.



See Video Tips on transitioning throughout the school day by Jamie Lambert, elementary school teacher

7 How do you help your child transition to the structure of a school day...and back to home again?

Erica Mahaffey Lambert We met with the teacher before school started. C was able to meet her and spend some one on one time with her. She gave us a schedule of what his day would be like and we follow it home. C did amazingly well transitioning!

Sarah Groeneveld We use a visual schedule from the time we wake up, get off to school, and then get in the car to come home, making changes to the basic structure as needed on a daily basis. My son has no unexpected changes to the routine. He can anticipate what is coming next and the transition is a lot easier.

Tina Carr We don't have or do anything fancy, just simple picture cards on a magnetic white board for his schedule.

Donna Porter During the summer, a few days a week, we still do school work and follow a regular school day. I also use PECS, meet the teacher, and provide the teacher with a traveling binder of information and sample work from my daughter. I write a blog about her so the teacher can follow the progress and knows what we are struggling with. Communication between parent and teacher makes any transition easier! Oh also I make school shopping fun! I allow my daughter to look out for her new things and help gather them so she gets excited about the new year!

Shannon Flo Visual schedule and lots of prior explanation and we use timers with different tones -- one tone for breakfast, another for dressing time, another to get out the door. And he gets to watch the show of his choice when we get home.

Kristin Bell Definitely a visual routine. Our preschool therapist helped us make one specifically for us with the Blackboard and now we only have to use it when big changes are coming. We also had blank cards made in case we needed to add something new. I put it on a poster board and put it in clear view while she eats. It has velcro on the back, easy to inter-change.

Danielle Campbell We have a reward for a good day at preschool, which is 30 minutes of one of his favorite educational shows. it gives him some time to practice calm body and transition to home rules. It also gives me a few minutes to get lunch prepared.

At a Glance:

- > Visual schedule/routine
- > Meet the teacher before school starts
- > Rewards for a good day at school



Maggie Reason Mills We don't...we homeschool! Honestly, we do transition but it's more like we gradually ease into our day rather than have to rush to be up and out the door crazy-early. We start off with a little sensory play to settle ourselves for the work ahead. Then a little Bible time out loud together, a prayer, and we're ready to start! We used to do the public school madness but it just wasn't the right fit for our family, for many reasons.



> See Transition Tips by Ilana Danneman, Mom, PT and Director of Product Innovation and Education at Fun and Function

At a Glance:

- > Social stories are a huge help!
- > Familiarize kids with the schedule/routine
- > Talk about summer plans before the summer
- > Involve your children in choosing activities

8 How can you help your child transition to camp or summer activities?

Amy Daniels Lauber Take along a photo album from home.

Karen M Tamm Fortunato A lot of talks about school ending and fun things we will do over the break. Once a week we attend summer movies with lots of our school/therapy friends to help keep some normalcy.

Kara Madison Trimble A lot of discussion. He does a lot better with any transition when he has a lot of information and knowledge about what will be happening.

Julie Foxx Our camp has a wonderful program for special needs children. They allow visits before camp starts. We do storyboards. Plus the camp provides our son with an advocate who ensures that he is included in all the programs, facilitates his play with others and keeps him safe.

Nicole Caldwell of PositivelyAutism.com Social stories describing what is going to happen, using clip art or photos. You can find a lot of these by searching online.

Julie Preston Bean We use social stories, daily schedules, and picking a special activity to do each week. We've also found that just talking about the daily schedule helps alleviate anxiety for our sweet girl.

Sasha Goldfarb Write a social story about taking a vacation. Take pictures of yourself in the car.

Rebecca Wilcox Aman We go to Autism summer camp in Florida every year. My boys know we are "going to grandma's" and they have no problems with the long drive or staying away from home for the summer. We do take all of their favorite toys and their own pillows and blankets. We have so much fun they usually don't want to go home.

Amber 'Dontje' Slocum Create a calendar and let the child pick activities they would like to do as well as choose the dates to do them while at camp or on vacation. Also have them put together a trip kit with their favorite things.

Edith Snuffer With any long change I get a yearly calendar out and show him when things start and stop. It's been very helpful.

Kelly Jean Van Singel We are a family living with autism, so summers can be a challenge, but with each summer it is getting better by creating summer traditions. This helps to build routine and can be a good coping strategy for children with ASD. We go to the same vacation spot and go to the same day camp, but we also try to put in some new experiences too.

Francine Furia Hogan My ASD son will transition from to camp to ESY over the next 6 wks. I went to the camp and took pictures of the activity sites and grounds. I also got a schedule of daily activities. Then I made a social story from the pix and schedule. We will also do what we do @ the beginning of school. Visit before camp starts to meet the staff/ explore and hopefully help with some small task to help them prepare for campers. Michael has words but it's not functional language and he dislikes transitions! This plan works almost every time!

Heather Jewell-Valliere In addition to social stories and having a schedule written up that we go over ahead of time, regularly, we throw a party on the first day of summer. "Spring To Summer" we call it. The kids look forward to it every year. They each get to invite a friend, not many so it's not overwhelming. The kids plan it and work together to



come up with games/activities. They put all their strengths together and use their special talents to make it a fun time for all! This occupies the first couple weeks out of school and keeps their minds busy and looking to something in the future. This way they don't dwell on the change/transitions so much, and it's a positive thing!

Kelly Strong We have a small activity planned five days a week. We have made bedtime 30 minutes later and are sticking to the same bedtime with bath and books routine. We are also keeping the same morning routine. It just doesn't include school. I make sure to explain what will be happening each day so my children know what to expect for the day and try to schedule our work time and play time so they can anticipate what is coming next.



>See Video Tips on Making Adjustments by Tammi Van Hollander, LCSW and Registered Play Therapist at The Center for Psychological Services

At a Glance:

- > Share plans and maintain structure
- > Plan fun sensory activities
- > Take chances to relax
- > Water play keeps kids cool

9 What are your best strategies and tips for a successful summer?

Tasha Cummings Chapman We have a poster called "Today's To Do List"! I have pictures of everyone and everything we see and do. I velcro them on so my son can see what we are doing and the order we are doing them in! This helps him cope.

Sharon Bendzlowicz-Vogt We fill a kiddie pool with a 50lb bag of rice for hours of enjoyment!

Amanda Brown Bergen Like the Phineas and Ferb song, we celebrate 104 days of summer vacation with a bucket full of 104 clothespins. Each clothespin is labeled w/ a summer OT activity. I concentrate on my children's areas of needs (tactile aversions, oral/motor development, gross motor skills) and give the children a little control over their own therapy. It's going to be a sticky, gooey, hot, and wonderful summer. Three cheers for all the milestones that will be met between here and Labor Day!

Molly Noon Use a visual timer for the pool to reduce meltdowns when it's time to go.

Holly Hollister My daughter loves "heavy work" so letting her help us with home improvement projects, gardening etc... really help.

Miracula Nightwing Bowling! AMF is offering free bowling for kids this summer.. <http://amf.com>

Alexia Herbowy Conrad Our summer plan: trying new things without pushing, having an alternate plan, and always a dose of patience and the ability to go with the flow. You never know until you try!

Sara Jenkins Tinklenberg We cope with a long summer by keeping it scheduled, yet flexible. There are lots of great, free things to do where I live, so we set up each day of the week to do a certain thing (i.e. Monday-library, Tuesday-Zoo, etc.)

Jo Ashline We love anything with water; going to the pool, the beach, setting up a sensory table outside with loads of water activities. Anything that gets us wet and cooled off!

Laura Bosak Lots of outdoor activities and lots of room to run and have some "freedom"... a lot of sensory needs in my neck of the woods and the outdoors have more than I realized.

Trisha Kitchin My best way for my son to cope is with a really long hose that will reach the pool AND the trampoline!! Hours of fun with a huge water bill! (Totally worth it)

Kelly Strong The hammock swing we installed in our livingroom, for those too hot to be outside days.

Penny Ray Ice skating is an amazing summer activity! Bundle up in winter clothes on a hot summer day and step into a freezing cold rink to get balance, bilateral coordination, tactile (cold), vestibular input, and proprioceptive (you can't look at your feet and stay upright - you have to sense where your feet are in space while you look forward).

Kelli Rumore The beach is my son's favorite summer activity and it doubles as a wonderful place for sensory integration! He finds the waves very soothing. At first he was very hesitant and didn't like the sand on his feet, so we invested 10 bucks in some water shoes and BAM! Problem solved! He refuses to wear a hat or sunglasses so we keep him in the shade and coat him with sunscreen, but splashing in the waves is one of his favorite things to do.

Katrina Troy For play on the beach we always bring baby powder...when my daughter with SPD is done playing in sand she wants it off and wants it off now - sprinkle the baby powder everywhere there is sand and just brush off. Works great and quick!

Terry Hamilton Beardsley Outdoor water play is the best! Bins filled with water, Water guns, water squirt bottles, old shampoo bottles to fill with water and squeeze, cups for water play, water balloons, slip and slide, sprinkler to run under and you are all set for an afternoon of fun sensory play!

Melissa Selleck I have learned to let my son lead when it comes to water. If I push him to go into the water he fights non-stop, but if I allow him to make the choice he loves it! Last year I bought him a life vest, so now when we go to the lake he can have some freedom while swimming. I made sure to get one that helps keep him balanced, and he went from screaming and clinging to me to not wanting me near and "swimming" the whole roped area by himself!

Michelle Norris In Texas, baseball season is in full swing by summer. Unfortunately, the loudness of the fans, the music, and the emcees can be quite overwhelming. We bring my son's stereo headphones (the kind a DJ would wear) and his music therapy loaded onto his mp3 player. When it gets to be too much, he'll just turn it on and tune out to the overall noise but still get to enjoy the game.



Heather Jewell-Valliere We keep a beach bin, loaded, in the trunk. Towels, SPF umbrella, toys, sunblock and extra swimsuits, and a small cooler. That way when we're out and about and need a sensory break, we just stop by a convenience store to fill the cooler, and to the beach we go. My son loves the feel of the water on him and the waves crashing against him. It's very calming to him - a beautiful thing.

Christal Barton We are planning our days to include LOTS of rest time. That way, if one of my son gets overwhelmed we already have a built in time for him to recharge. I'm also combing blogs--especially homeschooling blogs--to plan our home activities for summer, and to figure out how to modify them for all three boys. For example, we'll be doing a unit on Rainbows--for my most severe son, there will be lots of playing with colors and figuring out how they mix, lots of sensory activities. For the one in the middle, we'll talk about why the colors split for a rainbow and try to make our own rainbows. For the oldest who is higher functioning, we'll talk about the science of light vs the art of paint, and how all the colors mix to make white light but for painting they make brown/black. And best of all, since we don't officially 'home school' we can just make everything fun, and what they 'get' is great, and what they don't understand is no big loss :D

Heather Clark Bring a bag full of fun outdoor toys to the park when you go. It entices other children to come over and meet my shy guys. It is a great ice breaker.

Shannon Cline Post My daughter loves being in the water. It gives her the pressure she needs & the freedom to move around in the cool water. Wax ear plugs help with the noise. We go to the Y for the pool. They have life jackets for kids so she can swim on her own.

Jennifer Adamy Fishing! My son has ASD and the only thing I can keep him focused on is fishing and or outdoors. We go on scientist adventures and see what type of animals we can find or plants. He absolutely loves hiking with grandpa! Making a visual tracking list of different plants or animals is great! Take pictures and put it in an album. Bring a kids camera so they can take their own to add to the collection!

Lori Muessig-Kambeck Swing swing and more swinging! With a trapeze bar as well and slide on our playset as well as our water table sand box and inflatable pool.

Lynn 'Hill' Cordin We set up our Aspie daughter with computer game play dates, outside. We set up our canopy so they get shade and let them play for one hour and then jump in the pool to cool off and get some exercise.

Julie Wallace Noble My 5 yr old son loves our swingset. It's like having his OT sessions everyday! He can swing, flip, twirl...it's great. I also setup different "centers" outside. Chalk, sandbox, water table, bikes, powerwheel, quiet area. It gives choice but keeps it structured

as well. My son loves mud so I setup an area where I allow him to dig as much as he wants and use the hose as much as he wants. He gets VERY dirty but worth it because playing in mud soothes him.

Tara Korastinsky Henninger finger painting, which usually leads to full on body painting- outside, then with a quick rinse off in sprinklers, kiddie pool, or bath for my sensory seeker/fish.

Rachael Adelhelm Flashlight hikes/tours at Botanical Gardens are his favorite. He gets his own flashlight and gets to look for frogs, touch snakes, do crafts, etc.

Kristin Huff Outdoor play is so motivating for my 6 year old! He loves the pool, bubbles, soccer, frisbee--you name it! He will clean his room with no prompting just to be able to go outside and play! We also like going on walks to our neighborhood park, and jumping on the trampoline! Lots of water, and lots of sun protection are my tips! And have fun! :-)

10 How can you help kids expand their circle of friends?

Katrina Troy Take kids to local events that interest them....you never know when you are going to find a new friend.

Michelle Zonca Neighborhood walks and trips to the local park.

Sonya Wieman Williams As one who isn't very good at making friends myself, I was a bit clueless as to how I should hook my son up with playmates. I just decided to ask his pre-K teachers which kids have really taken a liking to him. I have their names and their parents' names now. I plan on dialing them up after the holiday to schedule some play dates. :) Here's hoping I can make friends with the parents! Even mama could benefit from some new friends.

Laurie Sparks-Dennison ...by getting them out and about! Amazingly, my boys have met some good friends (sadly we have moved) just by playing in their own yard!

Rachel Castillo First, ask your child what their fab things to do are. Then plan a family event with some friends or family that is local. Set up the games, or activities geared to what your child likes. After the event happens, talk to your child about who he liked playing with the most, and if they enjoyed the same things. If so, set up more play dates with those children, then grow from there. Making your child comfortable in social situations first is the most important step!

At a Glance:

- > Attend local social events
- > Schedule playdates with kids they like
- > Plan group outings
- > Pen pals

Cindy Napoli DeLuca As a parent, I became a volunteer in my church's Sunday school program and preschool group my son was in. That way I got to know the other children, how they interacted together and met the mom's at pick up time. Initially it felt like I had to be there the whole time during play dates (which was totally different than my daughter at that age, where she only required supervision). It was well worth the work. He is graduating this year, and has a whole slew of friends!

Stephanie Hammerman Volunteer within the group. (School, scouts, camp...anything) Just get active with your child and encourage social interactions.

Laura Luedtke We have "party club" once a month with the kids that go thru the same company we do for the ABA therapy. Each month a parent hosts an outing. The kids are with the therapists who help guide the play. We also involve the neurotypical siblings to help with peer play. It's also good to chat with the other parents. We've been doing this for 2 years now and it's been helpful.

Jane Stadnik We have a resource center, like a teen center where families just come and hang out...no therapy no pressure, lots of craft materials video games board games and what not.

Erica Penner Get the kids to take part in as many social activities as possible. Even if they don't socialize at first, I find that something somewhere will trigger the urge. Have them take part in their most favorite activities with other kids. Instead of a play date try a group movie with peers. It tends to be quieter and less interaction to start. Laughing with peers can lead to interacting with them. It's very important to have regular, sit at the table-type family dinners, with plenty of social interaction. As simple as "can you please pass the butter" -- modeling is important.

Vera Cruz Pen pals! A social media network which is Anchises network with moderators. Team local children in low income areas with pen pals from higher end income areas within their own city. My first year in HS I had a pen pal from South Africa. Apartheid was in full force and I was afraid she would not like me. We were pen pals for a couple of years and she was wonderful.



Kelly Strong We are more intentional to have group play dates with friends from many areas of our life. It allows us all to mingle as adults and enjoy watching the other kids get to know one another better.

Melissa Meserve Sometimes it's simply saying hi to another parent when you are at a school function. In my daughters preschool, I have made some wonderful lifelong friends. We all hang out together and really feel comfortable with each other. Getting the kids together is less stressful as all of us parents understand and don't judge as some parents can. Joining age appropriate play groups are alright also. It just depends on the size of the group.

Erica Penner It helps for our son that he brings his closer buddy with him or one of his brothers. It takes several visits before he is ok, but we keep doing it and don't let him give up. Also allowing him to bring one of his favorite activities to share, like bubbles, helps the bonding process along.

Erica Mahaffey Lambert I have always taken my kids everywhere with me (gym, store, park, etc) and we are always around other children. C is non-verbal so he just smiles and waves after I introduce him. It has also helped that he is a social butterfly and loves to watch what other children do. I was floored on his last day of school at how many children knew him (and said bye) outside of his classroom - such a wonderful feeling.

Janis Hastings I just started letting my son go outside the townhouse to play with the other kiddos. He wasn't ready until now (he's 7), and I let the kids work out their differences on their own. It teaches my son to problem solve on his own with his peers. Plus he is learning to follow rules much better because when I tell him to come inside, he does without argument and he says goodbye to his friends. It's awesome!

Danielle Campbell We are still struggling with this. My son is 3.5. So far we have tried MOPS, parks and rec classes and autism playgroups. He prefers to play alone or with an adult.

Sarah Berman Champeau We take lots of pictures with friends, so we can practice names and talk about fun things we can do with them.

11 What do you want your friends & family to know about how best to interact with kids on the spectrum?

Lori Muessig-Kambeck Patience patience and more patience! Get down to her level speak clearly and make sure she's focused on

At a Glance:

- > Patience is key
- > Stay calm
- > Don't stress about eye contact
- > Follow the child's lead



you. If there's background noise like the TV mute it or shut it off. Don't get mad when she throws a fit of rage she can't help it or understand why in the moment. When she calms down calmly talk about what just happened. And if you can't understand what she's saying don't fake it. Ask her again to slowly say it while facing you. And if you still can't understand ask her to show you. And don't give up. We as parents don't. They know when you throw in the towel.

Suzanna Young He doesn't mean to not look in your eye/face but he does know you're there. Just remind him kindly and not loudly to look at you. Also reminder's that though their interest is interesting let's talk about "this" for now. It make take awhile for them to answer back and they may need repeats but they are trying just give them time.

Bonita L. Hawkes Have patience and never give up!

Evelyn CoraFaye Olive He over reacts to everything just ignore the overreacting and work simply on the problem at hand.

Jamie Nalley Don't push him with your presence. It may take him awhile to warm up to you. Don't charge in.

Carla Kilic Eye contact is actually overrated; then they have to focus on your face AND what you are saying. Eye-to-eye canbe intimidating and takes the focus off what you are saying.

Erin Clemons Enyart Take what you can get when you can get it. It takes time, and it needs to be on their schedule and when they're comfortable. Most importantly: just because your relationship might look different, doesn't mean it isn't special and wonderful.

K. Lynne Koval Bauer Practice makes perfect! Stay with it!

Julie Sahadi DeArmon Don't ask a bunch of questions and start by showing interest in what they are focused on.

12 What should someone know if they are hosting your child for a playdate or party with neurotypical friends?

Shannon Flo Keep it calm and be patient if he gets overwhelmed. Let him have a secluded place to get over a meltdown if needed. If you don't want my kid to touch it, then don't have it out or have the get together where he can get into whatever he wants. Find out if he is on a special diet and have some foods he can eat.

Sharon Jontiff Daniels When he starts to get upset for any reason don't start firing questions at him. In fact say as little as possible and talk very quietly.

Julie Wallace Noble Show him a place he can go to that is "safe" if he feels overwhelmed or needs space.

Kelli Rumore Block off areas in your home that my son cannot play in. Close doors to your bedrooms and keep fences shut.

Jennifer Adamy It would be great if they had door alarms. Keep an eye on him and keep small pets and children away if possible.

At a Glance:

- > Provide a safe, quiet escape
- > Be calm and patient
- > Watch out for wandering

13 What resources can help your child transition to high school or adulthood?

DeLanie Phillips Brewer As much as I used to steer clear of taking my son shopping with me... as he got older I realized the more aware he was of the "shopping process" the more likely he may be able to go on his own one day. So I began taking him on short trips out. As a result the store managers now recognize us (him) and began taking it upon themselves to help him through the checkout process! GREAT training for Him (and them, lol) and SOOO encouraging for ME!! Thanks Neighborhood Walmart & 7-Eleven!!!!

Lisa Brenneman Just attended a district training on this. Great suggestions from parents. Tour school ahead to get bearings. Try to open locker. Try to meet teacher ahead. Try to meet some other students ahead.

Main concerns of verbal students is getting lost, forgetting locker combo, and difficulty of class work. Plus, of course, making friends and worries of bullies.

The state Medicaid waiver programs usually offer transition programs. Our current school district offers transition and job coach programs.

Charity Glenn For us, I see church as an awesome transitioning resource...there are fewer people who are usually more understanding, so that helps them slowly adjust to the new things that they will need to be doing or learning. Not to mention they can make friends with those children and/or adults and then hopefully that with carry over to school, the work place, etc.

Trisha Rae Kitchin My son is only 7 and I think I have more anxiety about high school now than he will when he gets there. I think the teachers and the students team as a whole are wonderful but I honestly wish there was some education offered to students who do not have disabilities of any kind. I remember high school and kids can be cruel. That's my biggest worry.

For more information, visit www.FunandFunction.com or call 1-800-231-6329 to receive product guidance from our pediatric therapist.

At a Glance:

- > Prepare them for what's ahead
- > Attend training seminars
- > Utilize local resources

