

Developing Lifelong Leisure Skills for Individuals with Multiple Disabilities: An Overview of Fun Activities for the Classroom

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Why are leisure skills so important?

- Individuals with multiple disabilities are often entertained and leisure activities are done TO them, as they watch, rather than them engaging in them independently.
- These children are often not able to independently explore their environment, choose their own toys and activities, or interact with things not pre-chosen by a caregiver.
- Every person has down time and needs the ability to entertain themselves with preferred activities, rather than relying on others to entertain them.
- Leisure skill development needs to begin early and needs to be taught purposely and regularly in order to develop independence.

Adapting/Modifying Activities

“Individuals with multiple disabilities often have difficulty with leisure activities due to physical, cognitive, & sensory limitations. Adapting activities and materials provides individuals with increased opportunities to participate.” Wehman & Schleien developed 3 guidelines for adapting leisure activities.

Wehman, P. & Schleien, S. (1981). Leisure programs for handicapped persons: Adaptations, techniques, and curriculum. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

3 Guidelines for Adapting/Modifying

1. Adapt enough to increase participation, success, & enjoyment, but only adapt when necessary.
2. View any changes or adaptations to the activity or materials as temporary. Work toward engagement in the original, unmodified activity.
3. Make adaptations on an individual basis, meeting individual needs. Do not adapt an activity for an entire group if only one participant requires a change.

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5 Considerations for Adapting

1. Material adaptations
2. Procedural/rule adaptations
3. Skill sequence adaptations
4. Facility or environmental modifications
5. Lead-up activities

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Leisure Activity #1: Watching TV

- Needs to be taught, rather than being a passive activity.
- Identify end goals (adulthood skills)
- Sequencing skill acquisition - Ideas:
 - holding DVD case while watching
 - comment about scenes related to cover picture
 - match video scenes to correct case
 - match freeze shots/photos to case
 - match activity symbols to case
 - give multiple choices for viewing
 - give option for communicating wanting to stop/end

Leisure Activity #2: Card Games

- use adapters to hold cards
- begin by matching colors, numbers, symbols, textures, etc.
- work on turn-taking
- determine ways to pick up & put down cards
- have shuffle cards by stirring or putting in large tupperware bowl with lid & shaking



Ableware 15" card holder
<http://www.amazon.com/Ableware-15-Playing-Card-Holder/dp/B000TYO1XO>



<http://www.instructables.com/id/Easy-to-Make-Playing-Card-Holder-for-Little-Hands/>

Leisure Activity #3: Flashlight Games

- Most individuals with multiple disabilities never have the opportunity to sneak around in the dark & play.
- Mount light on wheelchair tray, arm rest, or table. The AbleNet gooseneck mount & universal swivel plate works great for flashlights. <https://www.ablenetinc.com/technology/mounting-cases>
- Play with light attached to switch, allow to explore dark places by flashlight (this encourages students learning to propel own manual or power chairs), or play light tag.
- Have shine on specified objects to transition to it as communication aid to show someone a wanted item that is out of reach.

Leisure Activity #4: Dominoes

- Put together in any way
- Play on sticky-side-up contact paper
- Put magnets on the back and slide on vertical magnetic board or cookie sheet
- Create own dominoes & put together by color, shape, texture, picture, or sound (attach Hallmark card sound buttons to back of each domino & match same sounds)



S & S Dominoes



<http://www.swww.com/therapy-and-rehab/cognitive-therapy/matching-discrimination/>



DIY giant dominoes:

<http://michellescharmworld.blogspot.com/2012/04/diy-jumbo-dominoes.html>

Leisure Activity #5: Reading

- Adapt any book by putting flattened toilet paper tubes (squish flat - don't cut) between each page to make it easy to grab individual pages
- Take apart magazines & laminate pages, then staple back together like the original, bind magazine, or put in 3-ring binder to make easy to turn pages.
- Build up page edges with pieces of foam (foam stickers work great) or add handles to each page with a clothespin.

Leisure Activity #6: Board Games

- Make color copies of game board & laminate. Hang on vertical/slanted magnetic surface to make it easier to reach/see.
- Put magnets on back of game pieces so they stick to the vertical surface. Can also use velcro on pieces & each spot on game board.
- You can buy talking dice from the American Printing House for the Blind
https://shop.aph.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Product_talking.%20glowdice.%20glow.%20dice.%20recreation.%20leisure.%20aid.%20daily.%20living.%20games.%20playing.%20aids.%20dice.%20electronics.%20digital.%20speaking.%20speech.%20roll.%20random.%20leds.%20light_1-07500-00P_10001_11051
- Shake dice by putting in tupperware container & shaking container.
- Make own switch-adapted spinner (<http://adaptingcreatively.blogspot.com/2011/07/diy-switch-adapted-spinner.html>) or buy one from Enabling Devices (http://enablingdevices.com/catalog/toys_for_disabled_children/adapted-games/game-spinner)

Leisure Activity #7: Puzzles

- Put magnets on back of pieces or use magnetic spray paint to spray back of all pieces (spray paint is my favorite way!)
- Put together puzzles on vertical or slanted magnetic surface (dry erase/chalkboard or cookie sheet) to make easy to reach and see all pieces
- Make own puzzles from laminated photos of friends & family, cereal boxes, or color copies of favorite book pages or movie covers. Cut pieces with straight edges to make it easier to slide them together.



[http://
centersandcircletime.blogspot.com/
2011/11/using-cereal-boxes-in-
preschool.html#.VbeSgfViko](http://centersandcircletime.blogspot.com/2011/11/using-cereal-boxes-in-preschool.html#.VbeSgfViko)



[http://mykindofmakeover.blogspot.com/
2011/07/magnetic-puzzles.html](http://mykindofmakeover.blogspot.com/2011/07/magnetic-puzzles.html)

Leisure Activities: Magnetic Play

- DIY Magnetic Play Set (found on Pinterest from Teach Preschool blog):

<http://www.teachpreschool.org/2011/08/diy-make-your-own-magnets-for-play-in-preschool/>



Leisure Activities: Memory



- Make your own Memory game with textures, colors, pictures (photos of friends/family are always a hit!), or sounds (use Hallmark card sound chips on back of cardboard pieces).
- I love this “Environmental Print Memory” example from the Kindergarten Kindergarten blog. <http://www.kindergartenkindergarten.com/fun-and-games/>

Leisure Activities: Bubbles & Music

- **Bubbles:** Switch-operated bubble machine from AbleNet <https://www.ablenetinc.com/technology/accessible-toys/bubble-machine> (or you can adapt any off-the-shelf bubble machine toy with battery interrupters or Environmental Control Unit). Pop bubbles with hands, arms, feet, legs, head, or any object.
- **Music:** Switch-operated radio or cassette player is easy to use with any battery interrupter. If using a CD player or MP3 player, you can use them with a battery-powered external speaker & have the switch power the speaker (or buy switch-ready players). The Go Talk Now app works great as an MP3 player on iDevices. (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/gotalk-now-lite/id953164338?mt=8>)

Leisure Activities: Building Blocks

- Hang contact paper on wall or vertical surface (or use on table/wheelchair tray) with sticky-side up and place blocks on sticky paper to arrange them.
- Glue velcro to any blocks to make them easy to stack together.
- Velcro attached to the end of foam tubes (pipe insulation from hardware store) is easy to push together for building.



<http://www.teachpreschool.org/2012/03/building-with-blocks-on-the-easel/>

Leisure Activities: Sensory Areas



Sensory Wall from Utah Assistive Technology Lab:
<http://utahatlab.blogspot.com/p/at-lab-album.html>

DIY PVC
Sensory Gym:
[https://
adaptedworld.wordpress.com/pvc-toy-
bargym-instructions/](https://adaptedworld.wordpress.com/pvc-toy-bargym-instructions/)



- It's easy to make DIY sensory play gyms or walls. Create your area so you can easily swap activities on a regular basis.
- Watch what things the individual prefers so you can identify similar items/input that may be enjoyed in the future.
- Create the activity so it can grow over time. Can you make sensory doorways at home? What about a sensory bar over bed, that fastens to wheelchair, or for the car?

Leisure Activities: Light Box

- The light boxes from APH are fantastic (and you can likely get one for your classroom or home if your child has a vision impairment - check with your VI teacher about Federal Quota requirements). The larger one is more adjustable for brightness & you can do more things on it because of added surface area. The Mini-Lite box fits better on wheelchair trays. Both are durable & resistant to routine abuse. <https://shop.aph.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CatalogSearchResultView>
- There are many DIY light box ideas online (Pinterest has lots of light box ideas!). I like this easy one from The Imagination Tree: <http://theimaginationtree.com/2013/01/diy-light-box-for-sensory-play.html>
- 50 fun ideas for the light box from the Texas School for the Blind: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/instructional-resources/90-materials/78-50-ways-to-use-a-light-box#lyrics>

Resources for Additional Ideas

- Pinterest! There are so many great ideas on Pinterest. Log in and start searching. Here's a link to my Pinterest boards (all boards titled with "C.O.T." in title are related to multiple disabilities):
<https://www.pinterest.com/singoffpitch/>
- Texas School For the Blind:
<http://www.tsbvi.edu/instructional-resources/1913-creating-educational-toys-and-activities-for-children-who-are-blind-or-visually-impaired>
- Perkins Learning: <http://www.perkinselearning.org/scout/toys-play-young-children-visual-impairments>
- Look through websites/catalogs like AbleNet, Enabling Devices, Don Johnston, S&S Therapy, etc. and get ideas for things you could make/use. Remember the end goal of lifelong use/skills!

Questions?

Feel free to contact me with questions or to request additional info/resources!

- Email: jodi.click@yahoo.com
- Twitter: [@singoffpitch](https://twitter.com/singoffpitch)
- Website (lots of resources related to individuals with multiple disabilities):
<https://sites.google.com/site/missclicksclass/>