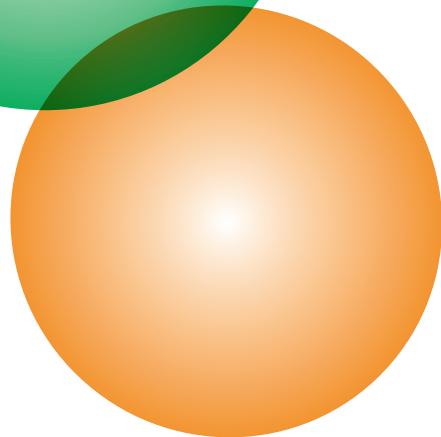
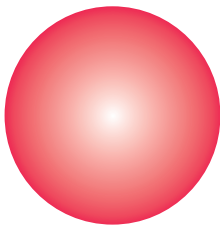


Play



Why is Play Important?

- Play is a child's natural way of learning about themselves and their environment, whilst developing life skills.
- Autistic children experience the world differently, they can display a range of varying behaviours such as sensory or communication differences, that mean spontaneous play may not come easily.
- Autistic children can often process information in different ways to others, at times this can present challenges and limit their ability to play.
- Autistic children are often dependent upon someone else to provide the motivation to play.
- Your child may need their time filled. Times when nothing else is happening may result in them displaying a range of varying behaviours.



Varying Behaviour which may be Displayed

Increased Activities

- Pacing the floor
- Climbing on the furniture
- Jumping
- Banging
- Throwing Objects

Repetitive Activities

- Lining up objects
- Spinning or twiddling objects
- Switching lights on and off
- Watching the same video or same section of video repetitively
- Opening and closing doors
- Playing exclusively with one toy

Focused Activities

- Toys must be played with in the same order
- Child must be in the same place each time he plays
- No one is allowed to share in the activity or the same person must share the activity

This 'varying' play behaviour may be due to sensory needs, the environment or difficulty in understanding the rules of play/ specific activities.

Tips for Play

Everyday activities provide the best opportunities for play and learning.

- Include your child in what you are doing throughout the day and involve them where possible.
- Try to set aside some time during the day for play activities when you can give your attention to your child. This could be part of a routine which your child looks forward to, perhaps after a drink or nap where they are not tired or hungry. Choose a time that suits you as well as your child. It is important for you to feel alert and relaxed too.
- If you have more than one child, it is important that the children have the opportunity to learn and play together. An autistic child may have difficulty playing with other children. This is a skill that can be taught and encouraged.
- Two short play sessions of about 5-10 minutes may suit your child better than one long session.
- Get down to your child's level. If your child is on the floor, get down on the floor with them.



- Keep some favourite toys aside for play sessions.
- Try to put toys which are not being used away. Too many toys can be distracting.
- Be aware of the distractions within your environment. Choose a play area with no distractions like TV.
- Children learn best when they are interested in something. Follow your child's interests and ideas.
- If your child shows no interest with an activity, leave it and come back to it later (before you both end up getting frustrated).
- Introduce an 'all done' box to help your child to understand the concept of 'finished'.

Areas for Developing Play

Exploratory play

Physical play

Messy play

Table-top play

Symbolic/imaginative play



Exploratory Play

Exploratory Play is important for:

- Learning to make things happen with objects
- Learning that different objects have names
- Learning about shapes, sounds, colours, quantities and textures of objects

Activities to encourage exploratory play

NB: Some autistic children may not enjoy some of the following activities. If this is the case do not pursue the activity.

A collection of safe household objects and ordinary materials can be interesting for young children. These will give your child experience of playing with different things.

- Collect items such as:
 - Wooden/metal spoons
 - Short pieces of ribbon
 - Empty yogurt pots or biscuit tins
 - Cotton reels
 - Old kitchen roll tubes
 - Jam jar/coffee lids
 - Plastic/paper plates
 - Tissue paper
 - Bells
 - Scraps of different material
 - Baby brush
 - Small plastic bottles

- Have a special box or basket for household objects, which are safe for your child. Change contents regularly so that your child does not lose interest.
- Put the objects in 'feely' boxes or drawstring bags and take one out at a time to explore.
- Bang things together or take them in and out of empty pots with lids.
- Cover things with a piece of material and encourage your child to pull it off.
- Fasten ribbons to old kitchen roll tubes and wave them about.
- Make a wooden spoon puppet pop up and down a cardboard tube.





Physical Play

Physical Play is important for:

- Developing bones and muscles
- Developing experience of movement and space
- Developing all gross motor skills, e.g. balancing, jumping, running, climbing, hand eye co-ordination

Activities to encourage physical play

NB: Some autistic children may not enjoy some of the following activities. If this is the case do not pursue the activity.

- Ball play
 - Throw, catch and kick a ball (high, low, up, down)
 - Throw it into a bucket through a hoop/basketball net
 - Roll it down a slide
 - Throw it over a wall/fence
 - Roll it through your legs
 - Bounce it on the ground
 - Hit it with a tennis racket
 - Kick it under a chair
 - Roll it through a tunnel
 - Roll it back and forth with a partner (use 'ready, steady and go')
- Boxes
 - Climb in and out of boxes
 - Open each end of a large box to make a tunnel to climb through
 - Make a house with a door to go in and out of
 - Throw things into boxes
 - Jump over small boxes
 - Run around a line of boxes

- Hide and Seek
 - Hide behind the door, under the bed, and so on.
 - Hide things in cushions, boxes and behind the curtains, etc.





Messy Play

Messy Play is important for developing:

- Concentration skills
- Creativity and expression
- Hand-eye co-ordination
- Fine motor skills
- Awareness of shape, colour, quantities, textures and properties

Activities to encourage messy play

NB: Some autistic children may not enjoy some of the following activities. If this is the case do not pursue the activity.

- Paint
 - Hand painting
 - Using brushes of various sizes
 - Printing, e.g. petal printing
 - Bubble painting
 - Sponge painting
 - Using straws to blow paint
- Play dough
 - Basic Dough
 - 3 cups plain flour
 - 1 cup salt
 - Water with a little food colouring added
 - Mix all ingredients together to a pastry consistency. Please note this does not keep well.
 - Cooked Dough
 - 4 cups plain flour
 - 2 cups salt
 - 8 tsp cream of tartar
 - 4 cups water (with food colouring)
 - ½ cup cooking oil

Mix ingredients in a saucepan and stir over a medium heat until mixture thickens and combines into one lump. Tip onto a pastry board and when cool, knead until smooth. This keeps well in an airtight container.

Offer a melon sized piece of dough per child. If your child is sensitive to play dough textures, you can introduce it by putting it in a small clear plastic bag.

- Extension to play dough (additional items)
 - Rolling pins
 - Cutters
 - Blunt knives
 - Spoons
 - Rakes
 - Print makers
 - Rice
 - Glitter
 - Hundreds and Thousands
 - Colouring agents
 - Smells

Never leave your child unsupervised.

- Water
 - Essential items
 - A large bowl
 - Baby bath
 - Kitchen sink
 - Luke warm water
 - Additional items
 - Items that sink or float, e.g. stones, corks, etc.
 - Bubbles
 - Colouring
 - Pouring items, e.g. jugs
 - Sieve
 - Water wheel
 - Clear plastic bottles
 - Glitter

Never leave your child unsupervised due to risks of drowning



■ Sand

■ Essential items

- Sand container, e.g. baby bath
- Sand

■ Additional items

- Pouring items, e.g. jugs
- Buckets and spades
- Sand wheel
- Sieves
- Funnel
- Combs
- Spoons
- Rakes



Table Top Play

Table top play is important for:

- Developing attention and concentration skills
- Developing cause and effect relationship
- Developing skills, e.g. matching, sorting and building

Activities to encourage table top play

NB: Some autistic children may not enjoy some of the following activities. If this is the case do not pursue the activity.

- Basic posting task

Plastic containers or tins. Make a hole in the lid and post items such as:

- Ping pong balls
- Bottle tops
- Short lengths of drinking straws

- Nesting cups

One set of nesting cups (12 cups)

- Stack and unstack cups to improve hand-eye co-ordination
- Hide small toys under
- Can be used for water play
- Dough play – pinch off pieces and put in cup





Symbolic/Imaginative Play

Symbolic/imaginative play is important for:

- Learning about the world
- Developing language and communication
- Building self esteem
- Developing social interaction
- Developing insight into emotions

Activities to encourage symbolic/imaginative play

NB: Some autistic children may not enjoy some of the following activities. If this is the case do not pursue the activity.

- Doll play
 - Use dolls or teddies to pretend to dress, wash and feed them. You can make a bed out of a cardboard box.
- Transport play
 - Use cars to drive along a play road
- Zoo animal play
- Farm animal play
- Dolls house play





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