



Ways to Turn Any Activity into a Fun Learning Opportunity

Family and community activities often are viewed as breaks from learning, but they are great opportunities for practicing existing, emerging, and new skills. Use the strategies below to turn almost any activity into a fun learning opportunity.

- 1. Plan Ahead** – Keep goals top of mind and pre-select skills to work on during activities. The first step in making the most of a child’s experience is to target specific skills. Post reminders of skills in different areas or notes on which skills fit different activities. Encourage children to learn from each other by pairing children with different strengths. Give children roles that develop their skills. For example, a group art project can include roles such as cutter, gluer, writer, and presenter to help each child work on different skills.
- 2. Make the Most of Opportunities** – After identifying skills, think about opportunities for adding them throughout the day. For example, if a child is working on initiating an interaction, play games like ‘Red Rover’ or ‘Duck Duck Goose’ where they have to select a peer to play the game. Assign a regular task that involves interacting with peers or adults such as reporting the daily snack count to the camp cafeteria. If children are working on self care skills, involve them in feeding pets, preparing food, or using tactile art materials to provide natural hand washing opportunities. Look for impromptu moments for skill building such as camp guide for an unexpected visitor.
- 3. Use Materials that Encourage Learning** – Many children with social deficits select independent rather than group activities. Although everyone needs time to themselves, plan activities where children want and have to interact, such as board games rather than video games.
- 4. Let Children Be the Experts** – Prevent skill regression by letting children be the experts and use skills they already have throughout the day. Plan events where they are in charge of the activity or are paired with a peer to be the group expert. These opportunities allow children to practice and demonstrate their skills to family and friends.
- 5. Evaluate Progress** – Data collection is important for understanding current functioning, improvements, and regression. Have data collection materials in easy to access places to track progress. Children can help document progress if the system is created with them in mind. Have a low chart the child can add a sticker or line to when they complete a skill such as putting on their coat or following directions during an activity. This is a positive way for children to participate in monitoring their progress.
- 6. Elaborate on Skills** – If a child shows an interest in an activity, be sure to encourage their curiosity. Build on language during the activity by asking questions. If a child is struggling with a skill such as spreading peanut butter, give them a little help, but allow them to complete the task to their best ability. When children show an interest in something new, bring the interest or skill into other environments. For example, if a child is intrigued by a butterfly outside, research butterflies online and create a butterfly picture to integrate art and literacy into the learning opportunity.

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