

ADAPTING TOYS + TOOLS

When you notice a child having some difficulty using a toy or other activity material it may be time for some simple adaptations to make it easier to join in. Ask the following questions to determine what further adaptations are needed:

- Can the child reach the toy/tool? What can you do to bring it closer or extend certain parts?
- Would highlighting certain areas of the toy/tool make them easier to locate?
- Would making the toy/tool more stable help it stay in a certain position?
- Does the toy or toy parts need to be confined so it stays within the child's reach?
- How can the child's participation be more successful?

Adapting toys and activity materials can make them easier to use for many children with disabilities. There are several types of adaptations to use for different needs. Some are listed below.

Stabilizing

These materials support play by holding a toy within the child's reach or vision. Often toys that stay "in one place" can be easier to use. Use them to hold a jack-in-the-box in place or connect a communication device to a crib.



- Show loop
- Dycem
- Grip liner; mug mats
- Hook Velcro; Dual Lock
- Suction cups
- Carpet squares
- Magnet tape on toy with cookie sheet as the play surface



***The tray in the photo has been covered with a piece of Velcro loop fabric; a material.*

Small pieces of hook Velcro are placed on each small toy that adheres them to the tray.



Extending/Building Up

These materials are used to build up certain toy features. They help children press too-small buttons or keys, use puzzle pieces or make markers, spoons or brushes easier to hold.

- Plasticine
- Magic Model Clay
- Popsicle sticks
- Cylindrical foam padding
- Sponge rollers
- Knobs on puzzles



*** Foam padding was cut and slipped onto the handle of a musical shaker to make it easier for a child to grasp the shaker. The same can be used for markers, spoons, brushes, etc.*

Highlighting

These materials are used to highlight/enhance certain areas on items making them easier to locate. They can also change the appearance or feel of the toy pieces. Try highlighting certain areas or conversely, masking others. This adaptation can help to simplify the tool's design and facilitate independent participation by children.

- Tape: painters, colored vinyl, colored masking tape, duct tape
- Colored Velcro tape, dots
- Clear bumpers; felt protectors
- Wikki sticks
- Glued yarn, colored glue
- Black or contrasting color cloth for masking; cardboard templates



Attaching

These materials are used to bring items closer to the child; making reaching, grasping and playing less “work”. For safety reasons, do not use materials longer than 10” in length.

- Links
- Snaps on fabric tape
- Ribbon, elastic (1” or wider)
- Colored wide Velcro straps

*** plastic links were hooked onto the tray and then onto a child’s toys and books. If the book falls onto the floor, the child can easily retrieve it.*



Confining

These materials preventing a toy from moving too far away from a child-- out of the child's reach or vision. These items create boundaries to help a child to control his immediate play environment.

- hula-hoops
- cardboard or wooden boxes/ tops
- planter bases
- baskets, trays

*** The remote controlled car can easily get out of reach. Placing it in the planter base allows it to still “bump and go” but allows a child to see all of the action.*



Other items can be used to create play areas that confine several toys. Their use may particularly benefit children with visual or physical impairments by providing a boundary for their play.

- inflatable boats
- tents
- play environments – e.g. gardens, forts, castle, etc.
- cribs, bathtubs, laundry baskets

Simplifying

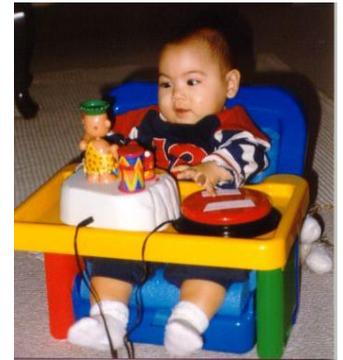
Try simplifying how materials are presented to your child. Limiting the number of toy choices and pieces may make play easier.

- Remove distractions from the play area before the activity begins. Turn off the TV, remove clutter and provide good lighting to decrease distractions from play.
- Select 1-2 toys at a time. Place toys on a contrasting color surface
 - When playing with toys with multiple pieces and colors, offer all the pieces on a solid colored surface

Other materials with multiple adaptive uses

Pool Noodles: this inexpensive, lightweight, flexible material is easily modified to provide many supports for young children.

- Safety: put around shopping cart edges for extra padding
- Positioning: help a family member customize seating for a child. Cutting noodles to fit a child to a seat for extra support, to create lateral supports and a pommel. Velcro helps to hold the pieces in place
- Communication: noodles float! Cut a slit in a 10" piece and insert laminated pictures/symbols for pool or bath time.



Wikki Stix: these tactile, sensory, sticky, bendable stix have been used by families and therapists for years to help young children participate.

- Drawing tools: wrap a few stix around a marker, crayon, stylus or utensil. It creates a textured grip that's easy to hold
- Create a "keyguard" grid on an iPad with several stix so that a child feels the boundary of where to touch.
- Use under paper and other surfaces to stabilize
- Use as a zipper pull by slipping it through the zipper and tying
- Outline toy access areas to highlight them.



Let's Participate! Project
FHI 360
1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
letsparticipate@fhi360.org
www.letsparticipate.org

