



## Ideas for Using Adapted Toys in the Special Education Classroom

Play is key to every child's well-being. Through play, children learn about the world and experience life. Play has many functions, especially for the physically challenged child. It increases motor skills and motivation, encourages peer relationships, releases tensions, advances intellectual development, increases exploration, and increases chances of children speaking and interacting with each other.

Enabling Devices has created hundreds of toys for the disabled child. Each toy encourages one or more desired activities. Here we address four different activities and suggest toys that help to accomplish goals related to those activities. The activities are Teaching Cause & Effect, Sharing & Circle Time, Improving Fine Motor Skills, and Promoting Visual Tracking

### Teaching Cause & Effect

Toys controlled by capability switches are a wonderful way to learn cause and effect. They help develop a child's sense of control over his or her environment and increase self-esteem. Clear cause and effect is learned when a child's actions cause consistent responses. Enabling Devices has many tabletop toys for children who are learning about cause and effect. Here are four of them:

The **Five Function Activity Center (#510)** has five activities that provide immediate feedback: Pressing a bright yellow plate activates a radio, rolling a wooden roller sounds a buzzer, pulling a ball on a string turns on a music box, pressing a red plate causes it to vibrate, and pressing an orange plate turns on a bright light.

The **Somatosensory Bead Chain (#357)** is great for developing the concept of cause and effect. By moving the beads, the child activates a built-in music box. As long as the beads are moving and touching the attached bar, the music stays on.

**Shooting Stars(#2001)** rewards a child with flying stars, music, lights, and vibration when he or she pushes the textured oval on the toy.

These three toys provide visual, auditory and tactile experiences and at the same time provide enough variation to maintain motivation. In addition, these toys are great to incorporate into a child's individual goals.

### Sharing & Circle Time

Circle time is very important in a classroom setting. It has a purpose. It is a time for group instruction, group singing and group sharing. Using the adapted toys suggested below allows your circle time to be interesting, engaging and fun.

Children love to take turns passing around the **Lighted Vibrating Mirror (#358-M)** to look at themselves and sing the good morning song. Convenient handles on two sides of this toy make it perfect for encouraging children to use both hands to grasp the handles.

The **Music Machine (#703)** can also be passed around the circle. It can hold any instrument the child chooses. Just attach the instrument and add a single switch to make wonderful music. This toy is fun to use especially by children who cannot grasp instruments on their own for long periods of time.

**Ring Around Bells(#23)** is another wonderful music toy for use during circle time. The children push an external switch and eight bells twirl around sounding the musical scale.

The **Bongo Drums (#756)** are played by activating two capability switches, so two children can play the drums at the same time.

### **Improving Fine Motor Skills**

Fine motor skills can be defined as small muscle movements that occur in the fingers and hands in coordination with the eyes with the intent to perform a task. Improving these muscle movements can be extremely important for the physically challenged child. Grasping, reaching and manipulating objects with the hands are good ways to increase fine motor skills. The following toys develop fine motor skills and are fun to use.

The **Pull Ball (#416)** encourages the child to grasp the multi-colored ball. Numerous holes in the ball allow a child's fingers to easily slip in, grasp and pull. The slightest tug activates music and lights. When released, the ball flips back into place. A child will want to reach out and pull again and again.

The **Therapeutic Manipulator (#2304)** is a fun way to encourage therapeutic movements. It is a bright activity center that allows the child to explore and manipulate a variety of cause and effect tasks. They love to pull the wiggle people and hear the crazy sounds. When rotating the worm they get a show of lights, music and vibration. Turning the knob and pushing the green button sets off more surprises for them. This toy is great for tabletop play or floor play.

The **Bubble Busy Box (#2200)** is perfect for promoting finger isolation and improves manipulation, eye hand coordination, and fine motor skills. The Busy Box is great to use as a tabletop activity for one or more children to work alone or together. Children love pushing the colored buttons to activate music, lights, or vibration, or pulling the ball to make something happen.

**Drop-in-a-Bucket (#349)** requires children to place a shape into the bucket. Six multi-colored lights focus the children on the bucket. When they successfully place the object in the bucket, a tune plays.

### **Promoting Visual Tracking**

Many children are visually impaired, partially sighted or blind. Enabling Devices has many toys that promote visual attention and visual tracking, many with an auditory component.

Enabling Devices has several slide toys that are great for visual tracking. They include: **Penguin Roller Coaster (#300)**, **Thomas King of the Railway (#5058)**, and **Whee-Mote Control Car (#1439)**. Children watch in delight as objects race around a track or climb up ladders. These toys are a fun and motivating way for children to improve visual tracking and attention skills. They are easy to place on a wheelchair tray or tabletop.

Every child loves bubble play! **Bubble Mania (#2286)** provides hours of enjoyment. This toy enhances eye hand coordination, visual tracking and visual attention. It is great to use in a group setting as a special activity or at home alone.

Enabling Devices has hundreds of additional toys for the physically challenged and our Technical Support Staff is happy to speak with you about your individual needs.

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