



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 child with physical or cognitive disabilities. 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 and learning aids 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 **Gel Pad Activity Center (#3951)** has three activities that provide immediate feedback: Press the green switch to make a fan blow and music play; a red switch has a spinning light and music; the yellow switch vibrates while colorful glitter whirls around a dome and music plays. This activity center provides terrific auditory, tactile and visual stimulation.

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.

Mini-Dome Switch w/Lights, Music & Vibration (#72S) rewards a child with flying stars, music, lights, and vibration when he or she pushes the rim on the toy, or you can use it as a capability switch to activate another device.

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 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 (#2202) 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. It's a great way to introduce and practice cooperative play.

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 child with physical development needs. 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 **Wall-Mounted Activity Center (#556)** 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 wooden ball and feel that breeze from the fan. When rolling the wooden roller, they are rewarded with music and lights. Pressing the plate switch turns on a bright light and the bead chain entertains and exercises little fingers.

ADL Boards (#7006) allows children to practice four different manipulative skills—buttoning, zipping, snapping and lacing—preparation for learning to dress themselves.

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 toys that are great for visual tracking, including **Penguin Roller Coaster (#300)** and **Stunt Car (#3092)**. Children watch in delight as the penguins move around the track and the car responds to their commands. 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.

Tube Tracker (#5061) is a great device for developing both visual tracking and switch skills. How high the balls fly in their tube depends on the how much pressure the user puts on the switch. The harder he or she presses, the higher they fly!

Every child loves bubble play! **Fubbles Fun-Finiti Bubble Machine (#2337)** 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 and learning aids for the children with disabilities and our Technical Support Staff is happy to speak with you about your individual needs. Call 1-800-832-8697, ext. 5 for help.

Revised 3/2025