

Ideas for Purposeful Play

From the University of Washington Autism Center Parent Care book

Imitation: Object and Motor

- Sing finger play songs such as the Itsy Bitsy Spider, 5 Little Monkeys, Zoom down the Freeway
- Utilize musical instruments: “Let’s make music”, play Simon Says, have a musical parade, slow down, speed up, “Follow Me Song”
- Figurines: know on barn door, follow the leader to the schoolhouse
- Block play: make identical block structures
- Painting and drawing similar pictures, strokes, circles, lines, dot art
- Dramatic play: feeding babies, pouring tea, driving cars or trains on tracks, hammering nails, stirring

Receptive and Expressive Labeling

Embed labeling into activities such as:

- House (cup, spoon, plate, door)
- Grocery store (orange, apple, banana)
- Dolls (body parts, brush, clothing)
- Barn (animals, tractor)
- Art: Colors, scissors, glue, markers, big crayons, little crayons
- Books: pointing and labeling objects, letters, numbers, shapes, etc.
- Sensory Table: put different colors of animals, shapes, sizes, common objects
- Park/Playground: slide, swing, ball
- Play Dough: use different colored play dough, animal shaped cookie cutters

Receptive Instructions

- Songs: “Simon Says” clap hands, tap legs, etc.
- Clean up time: put in garbage, put on shelf
- During activities request items, “Give me ____”
- Ask child to get their coat/backpack on the way outside or at the end of the day

Matching

- Lotto matching game
- Puzzles with pictures underneath
- Picture to object matching can be done as activity during play (have the child match the picture of a cow while playing with the barn)

Requesting

- Utilize motivating items (i.e. bubbles, juice, trains) to address requesting/communication
- Swing: wait to push until child makes the request
- Door: wait to open until child makes a request
- Lunch/Snack withhold until child makes request
- Art: child can request glitter, glue, stickers, paint, etc.