



Natural Learning Concepts

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Activities for Downtime

Whether its school vacation or you simply have nothing to do, finding activities to occupy your child during downtime can be a challenging task. Try out some of these popular activities used by parents of special needs kids. The activities are fun and will easily occupy and entertain your child.

Make a tent

Get a bunch of sheets and blankets and throw them over some tables and chairs. You can make the tent dark or light by altering the amount of blankets and sheets you use. Your child will need very little encouragement to make his tent! This activity is an all time favorite with kids. There are lots of things that can go in a tent, blankets on the floor, flash lights, books, a snack, stuffed animals. Your child also might need plastic cups, plates and a pillow to rest on. Perhaps there are wild animals outside the tent such as lions or domestic ones such as dogs. Help your child find them and place them outside his tent. This activity is excellent for expanding a child's imagination and encouraging pretend play.

Household hunt

This activity takes a little bit of time to prepare but is well worth it. It's fun for kids and teaches them organization skills they need in the home. All you need is a digital camera, a printer and plastic bin. Get your digital camera and take pictures of lots of items in your house. Examples are your child's bed, the living room sofa, the TV, the dining table, the bread bin etc. Load the pictures on your computer and print them out. Now walk around your house and collect household items such as teaspoons, toothpaste, socks, small toys etc. Hide each one of these items in a place you took a picture of such as your child's bed. Now it's time to explain the rules to your child. Show him the stack of photos and tell him there's something hidden in each of those places. Allow him to take one photo at a time for his household hunt. Each time he finds something; he should return that photo to you and place the item in the plastic bin. When he's found all the items, it's time to use his organization skills. Tell him to take one item at a time and place it where it belongs. Socks go in the sock drawer, toothpaste in the bathroom, spoons in the kitchen drawer etc. This hunt is lots of fun and a great way to teach children about the space they live in.

Water play

Children love playing with water and activities involving water is always fun. Set up a washing day! This is loads of fun. Allow children to put on their bathing suits or shorts and go in the yard. Fill three large buckets, one with soapy water and two with clear water. Have lots of sponges and towels available. Now bring out all those things your child can wash. Some ideas are plastic lawn furniture such as chairs and tables, small bicycles and scooters, trucks and any plastic toys they can safely wash. Allow them to sponge it down with soapy water, rinse it in with clear water and lay it out in the grass to dry. You can add to the fun by including containers of different shapes and sizes, water wheels, sieves, funnels and a toy fishing rod with plastic fish to catch.

Pizza cheese faces

This simple activity is lots of fun for kids and it's really simple to prepare.

The ingredients you need are as follows:

Pizza dough or white pita bread

Pizza sauce

Grated mozzarella cheese

Slices of yellow cheese such as cheddar or American cheese

Optional: pineapple, mushrooms, carrots, olives or any type of veggie that your child eats.

Lightly grease a baking sheet and place the pizza dough or pita bread on the sheet. Place all the ingredients on the table and tell your child to take his spoon and dip it in the sauce. Allow him to spread sauce over his pita bread or pizza dough. Now it's time to sprinkle grated mozzarella cheese on his pizza face. Once that is done, it's time to decorate. Use blocks of cheddar or American cheese for eyes, a



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mouth, eyebrows, a nose and cheeks. Place more pizza sauce on top of the cheese for cheeks. If your child eats vegetables such as carrots or fruits such as pineapple, use these on the pizza for decorating. Create a hat by cutting a triangle piece of pita bread or pizza dough and placing it above the round pizza face. Decorate the hat in the same way as the face. Now pop it in the oven at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes. Set the timer and encourage your child to keep checking how much time is left. When the pizza is ready, it's time to eat!

Tackle that skill

We all know we should teach our kids certain things but we just can't face it. Whether it's tying shoes, telling time, doing up a zipper or brushing teeth, the thought of it brings tremendous guilt. You're not alone! We've all tried teaching our children skills with no results. Our enthusiasm waned with each blank stare. Skills can be tough to teach and sometimes kids just aren't ready to learn certain things. We all know you have to learn to walk before you can run. But you never know when that something might click. Summon up the courage and try again. Pick something you haven't worked on in a while. Your child doesn't have to master the whole goal, just the first steps. If you're trying to teach skills such as tying shoe laces or brushing teeth, take a look at our [video modeling series](#). The songs and video modeling will help greatly. If you're teaching reciprocal conversation, use our [conversation starters](#) and follow the easy instructions. Whatever you decide to tackle, remember your child will get it! It just takes patience and persistence.

Independent healthy snacks

Create healthy snack bags. The first step is to create the snack container. Get plastic containers that are a suitable size for snacks. Now it's time to decorate. Use markers, stickers, glitter, paint, photos or anything that appeals to your child. Let them decorate their snack box to their hearts content. Encourage them to write their name on it. When the snack box is complete, it's time to fill it with healthy snacks. Use a shelf in your kitchen cabinet that's within easy reach of your child and fill it with healthy snack choices. Examples include raisins, apple sauce, cereal bags and granola bars. Tell your child to pick two or three things from the snack shelf and put it in his snack container. If your child eats fruit, encourage him to take a fruit from the fruit basket and include it in his container. Make a special place where your child will keep his snack container. When it's time for a snack, your child will independently pick a snack from his container. Each morning help your child choose his snack choices. It won't be long till he does it independently.

Video day

Your kids need some downtime and so do you. Take a trip to your local library or video store and rent lots of DVDs that your kids will enjoy. Pick up some books on tape where your child can follow along with the story. Even better, allow your child to watch our video modeling series and turn this into a productive, learning experience. Don't forget the popcorn! Then pop the movies into the DVD player and take this time for you. Whether you do household chores or simply kick your feet up and relax, you deserve some time for yourself too!

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