

FOR CAREGIVERS

Identifying Your Child's Interests and Finding Resources in the Community

- ① From social skills to activities of daily living to increased independence, leisure activities play an important role in every person's life. As a caregiver, it is especially important to help your child identify areas of interest and support their leisure interests. Autistic individuals are at an increased risk for underdeveloped social skills, physical skills, and motivation due to their general decreased participation in leisure activities. This tip sheet will provide ideas for identifying your child's leisure interests and how to find resources within the community to further develop your child's leisure skills. Remember, leisure is a skill that must be learned, so it's important to practice good leisure skills at school and home.

Foster exploration



Follow child's lead

- » If they show interest in an activity, try it with them, even if it is not of interest to you.
- » If your child is very interested in one thing, like trains, for example, explore various activities related to that interest.
 - Visit a transportation museum.
 - Take a ride on a train.
 - Complete art project that involves trains.

Sample sessions

- » Many organizations have short sessions to try out an activity or offer free or low-cost first-time sessions.

Attend events

- » Attend a soccer game prior to joining the league/team.
- » Attend a free orchestra show in the park.

Watch shows, movies, or YouTube videos

- » Watching a show, movie, or YouTube video about a specific activity is a great way to be exposed to something new without stepping too far out of one's comfort zone.

Foster exploration (continued)



Read books, magazines, or online articles

- » Explore a potential leisure interest through books, magazines, or online blogs.
- » This provides another safe space for your child to learn about leisure interests.

Encourage participation



Keep stress around leisure activity low

Match skill level to activity level

- » “I’m bored” means the skill level required is too low for child’s ability or they are not interested in the activity.
- » High stress or frustration may mean the skill level required is too high for child’s ability. Modify parts or change the activity.

Dignity in failure

- » Allow your child to fail; this is where they learn!
Ex.: Child misses the tee when attempting to hit a ball. Allow multiple tries and stay positive. “Woah! Great swing, try again!”

Focus on strengths



Humor – can enhance personal relationships, reduce stress, and contribute to overall well-being.

Helpfulness – involves being generous, caring, and compassionate towards others.

Athleticism – involves body awareness, physical strength, coordination, and stamina.

Creativity – involves the ability to think about a task or problem in a new or different way, or the ability to use one’s imagination.

Focus on environment instead of just skill



Have a buddy complete the activity with the student to make the environment more comfortable.

Check for any sensory challenges, such as noise level or lighting.

Explore community-based groups



Recreation teams

- » Local parks and recreation website
- » Local YMCA

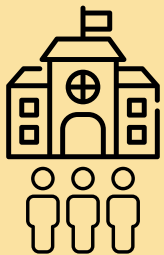
Church programs

Local community center

- » Bulletin boards
- » Recreation leagues
- » Parent's day out groups
- » Social clubs

Volunteer opportunities

Explore school groups and activities



Clubs

Sports

Social groups

Hobby groups

School sanctioned dances or other gatherings