

## TERRI'S TIPS

Parent Mentors share ideas and resources with one another on a daily basis. [Terri Goodridge](#), mom of a young son receiving special education related services and a Bibb County Parent Mentor, files our parents' tips in categories, so she can share information.



# Summer



*Hooray! Summer is almost here. With this season comes that much needed break from school and the start of fun activities, vacations, play and relaxation. However, for many families it also means having to find activities, programs and camps for children who have disabilities.*

*This can entail lots of time spent looking for ideas and a substantial cash outlay as a special needs camp often costs more. My advice is to not dismiss a "regular" camp. You may be surprised at what a typical camp environment might provide for your child.*

*Sometimes, parents simply need some creative ideas as a substitution or addition to a camp.*

## For Children with Special Needs

### Determining your child's needs.

Consider your child's age, interests, and personality. You'll also want to think about how summer activities can help support your child's year-round learning. Here are some questions that can help you determine what kind of summer program would be good for your child:

**What does your child enjoy?** (Does your child love the outdoors, are they interested in the arts, or maybe they are very sports oriented)

**What skills is he working on?** (Does your child have goals that include working on fine motor skills or maybe they need more socialization)

**Does your child have difficulty with new or unfamiliar situations?**

(Explore the option of sending your child to a camp that a friend is going to could help ease their anxiety, or find a program with a smaller number of campers.)

### Exploring the options

Options for your child do not necessarily need to be limited because of his/her disability. Sometimes, it just takes finding the "right" camp, extra care and planning, honest and open communication with the camp providers can make all the difference.

Search the internet for options, make phone calls and introduce yourself and your child in person.

Remember: **Our children are people first** and not just their disability!

Talk with other parents about their experiences.

Utilize your district's **Parent Mentors**.

Check with your school system's **Title I office**.



Check out the [Georgia Children's Museum](#) online

### What should I ask?

How large is the camp? (Is this a camp with 50 kids or 300)

What is the ratio of children to staff?

Is the facility **accessible** to children who may have physical disabilities?

For children with auditory sensory issues; you want to consider if the camp is excessively loud (Ex. Do they meet in one large gym and use a microphone with speakers).

What is the **program philosophy**? (Are they willing to make accommodations if needed, are staff well trained, are they welcoming and open to the idea of having a camper who may have a disability)

What type of **medical care** can they offer? (Is there someone on site with proper training to handle medical emergencies like a seizure, asthma, etc.) Or, are they in close proximity to a medical care facility?

How will you and the camp **communicate**? (Phone calling, in person “drop-in’s acceptable, email texting, etc.) Are they willing and able to speak with you at any time if need be?

How is **discipline** handled? (Do you agree with their procedures)



### Camp has been picked. Now what?

**Get to know the camp staffers** and let them get to know you.

**Visit the camp site prior to it starting.** Bring your child with you, take a tour and have them meet the staff.

Allow your child to **ask questions**. You ask questions too!

Make sure you and your child know the procedures and who the point of contact should be.

**Educate the staff about your child.** The more they know, the better they can serve him/her and the better off your child will be.

Information provided by the [Parent Training and Information Center at the Federation for Children with Special Needs](#)

## At Home or in the Community

### Fine Motor Skills

Use sidewalk chalk and **create murals on your sidewalk** or driveway

**Painting** with a brush or finger paints are always a big hit. Think outside the box and use huge butcher block paper outdoors. Let your child use their feet, hands or even body to create their masterpiece (Use

water soluble paints though). This combines both fine and gross motor skills.

**String beads, popcorn, or cheerios.** Once completed, hang outside on your porch, fireplace mantel or in your child's bedroom to display

If handwriting is a concern, think of ways your child can work on this skill without it feeling like work. For example, if your child loves baseball, have them read and look at their baseball cards and the ask them to write down their favorite players and why - who had the highest number of Home runs, etc. **Let them keep a log.** Find what your child is interested in and utilize that to help them work on handwriting during their summer break.



Wait till dusk, and then **collect lightening bugs!** Place them in a jar, but make sure the lid has holes for ventilation. At the end of the night, enjoy letting them go and watching them light up the night sky!

**Do some cooking!** Basics like having your child help with pouring the milk in the measuring cup encourages fine motor and coordination skills.

**Shoe lace tying**

## Gross Motor Skills

*Get Physical!*

**Swimming** is a great way for to get moving!

Make regular trips to your local **playground**. **Tip:** Change playgrounds throughout the summer to keep it more exciting and help with change.

**Kick the ball around** in your yard. You can create goals using sticks to outline the area. This is no cost fun thing to do.

Go play **miniature golf** or just hit balls in a field. This is good for fine and gross motor!

**Go for a walk** in your neighborhood. Use this time to talk, find bugs, sticks, rocks, etc. These can be collected and taken back home to create a science or art project.

Practice shooting some hoops with the **basketball**.

Great for the upper body.

Let your child help you **push the grocery cart** at the store and bring in bags once you arrive home.



## Communication/Speech and Language skills

**Taking a walk with your child**, always involves some real time for simple communication between you and your child.

Use **words, naming, labeling and talk** about what you are both doing.

When you go out to eat, have your child practice **ordering from the menu**.



Sometimes, we tend to finish our child's sentences (I am guilty of this). **Allow your child the time it takes to ask or complete a thought before "jumping in".**

After you watch a TV show or go to a movie, **talk about** what it is you've seen, **what they liked or did not like about it.**

**Read, read and read....everyday.** Read to them and get your children to read to you. Talk about the story together. Ask them questions about it. **Communicate!**

If your child has a special interest, [Google](#) it or look at it on Youtube. For example, my son has a fascination with tornados. We look up tornados on [Youtube](#) and he talks about it.

### **Socialization:**

***Find opportunities for your child to interact with other kids!***

Make **play dates with a special friend** your child has.

When at a playground, **help your child interact with the other kids.** Maybe they simply need to know how to make that first move?

If your child is not going to a camp, **find local area events** or one day programs that your child can participate in. Often this can be of little or no cost.

Explore the option of having your child **join a sports team, cub scouts / girl scouts, or Karate program.** These are more affordable than a camp and continue even after summer has ended.

**Volunteer with your child.** If your child likes pets, volunteer at the SPCA where you can walk and play with the animals, feed them, etc. Or, the two of you could help the elderly at a retirement or nursing home by simply playing checkers and talking with them. **Idea:** Try a local gardening club where your child could help and learn at the same time.

## **For Children with Special Needs**

***by Patricia Glenn, Practice In Motion***

The summer is a great opportunity to incorporate authentic learning experiences. Families frequently spend more time together and deviate from their typical daily routines. There are not specific activities or tasks that parents must do with their children, but giving mindful attention to communication, vocabulary development, community experiences, and preparing for the upcoming school year may support continued academic and social development.

### **Communication**

Engaging communication provides continuous opportunities to converse with children and allows them to express their ideas and concerns. This dialogue is a great opportunity to learn about your children's thoughts and reasoning skills.



People make decisions based on their thoughts and perspective, and sometimes parents are surprised by the behaviors and decisions of their children.

This may occur because parents are not familiar enough with their child's ideas, beliefs, and interpretation of their world. Having **open lines of communication** fosters the development of a loving parent and child relationship.

### Vocabulary development

Increasing vocabulary can be done through reading fiction, nonfiction, and by discussing current events. Begin in the area of your child's interest. Conversations also promote vocabulary development by aiding children to make meaning of words in context. Research has shown that children score higher on standardized tests with increased vocabulary. Ruby Payne's research about the language acquisition of children from ages 1-3 varies by economic households. Her work found that children in poverty with stable households possess as little as 10 million words while their working class and professional class peers have 20 million and 30 million words respectively. Vocabulary should not be taught in isolation with a spelling list to be tested at the end of the week, but should be taught in context of experiences. Vocabulary development is a link to increased comprehension and making meaning during reading.



### Community experiences

Planning adventures in your local community can be a starting point to expand learning experiences. Vocabulary alone will not always fully provide children the meaning they need to understand unfamiliar or new concepts. Some ideas for community experiences may include visiting museums, parks, businesses, or utilizing varied modes of transportation. Also, traveling to rural, urban, and suburban communities with diverse cultural opportunities may bring life to the vocabulary that a child has acquired.

*Photo by Picture Perfect Photography*

### Preparing for the upcoming school year

As children relax and enjoy their summer, encourage and support them to journal their events. Keeping a chronological timeline is a great way to teach sequencing. The memories of the summer can also be organized and collected to summarize a specific event or period of time in their lives. Making both structured and unstructured ways of pulling the summer memories together help children learn to take the skills acquired in school and use them in their daily lives.

These activities tie into both reading and language arts tasks that children are given throughout the school year. As long as learning takes place, children are always preparing for school. Actually, school is the preparation place for life. The more children engage in both school and out of school learning opportunities, the stronger their abilities to function and make decisions in life will be.



For children with Asperger’s Syndrome and other mild forms of autism, the idea of blending socially with the rest of the world can be extremely challenging. During the summer time it is no different. Like most children, autistic kids want to get out and enjoy summer weather and fun too, and they should. Typically children with AU do not play well with other children. They parallel play with little social engagement.

Studies show that activities that build social skills and offer sensory integration can be more exciting for children with these forms of special needs. Sensory integration is always needed. Here are a few suggestions and reasons for parents who are looking for ways to engage their autistic child in the summer fun.

- o [Swinging](#)
- o [Jumping rope](#)
- o [Trips to the Jungle Gym](#)
- o [Walking on sand at the beach](#)
- o [Building sand castles \(watching so that they don’t eat it\)](#)

For more information and customized support for creating successful learning opportunities for your child, visit my website at <http://www.practiceinmotion.com> or email me at [practiceinmotion@gmail.com](mailto:practiceinmotion@gmail.com)

