



Recreation, Leisure, and Play Activities

- Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) tend to have fewer recreation and leisure interests than others. In order to help identify preferred play activities, parents, teachers, and therapists can help children explore a variety of activities. Offer choices rather than forcing a child to engage in one activity. Recreation and leisure is about finding an activity that a person enjoys.
- When teaching a recreation skill, it is helpful to break down larger skills into smaller parts so that the child can master them. As smaller skills are mastered, self confidence will grow and the child may be more likely to participate with their peers.
- Music and art activities are great forms of self expression. These activities can be done alone or with peers.
- The park is a great place for a family to recreate, enjoying nature. Visit a local nature center outdoor recreational area to have a supervised scavenger hunt. Partner with the child to search for items with different textures as well as different nature sounds.
- Visit www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness to get helpful tips for successful inclusion, ideas for recreation accommodations, tips for adapting recreation programs, as well as other educational resources for recreation and leisure for children with ASD.
- Many families hesitate to let recreation providers know that their child has ASD and his or her specific recreation needs because they don't want to be turned away. It is beneficial to communicate openly with the provider during registration in order to prepare, support, and include the child. The information provided is confidential and can only be shared with those directly involved in supporting the child's recreation programming.
- Parents can arrange for their children to participate in specialized recreation programs. These are excellent ways for children to learn play and social skills and become comfortable in different recreation environments. As a child masters these skills, families and recreation providers can work together to broaden the child's exposure to general recreation and leisure activities.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) supports the rights of all individuals, including those with ASD, to participate in recreation programs. The ADA protects the right to receive a needs assessment, participate in integrated recreation programs, receive reasonable accommodations, and use adaptive equipment. When registering a child for a recreation program, in most instances, the recreation provider cannot charge additional fees for reasonable accommodations or for participating in the most integrated setting.

