



Best toys to encourage speech and language development

The holidays are quickly approaching which means family gatherings, traveling, and gift exchanging. As a speech language pathologist, I am often asked to give recommendations for games/toys that encourage speech/language growth and development.

Often times people assume that toys designed to teach basic concepts and simple vocabulary (colors, numbers, shapes, etc.) are the most effective. However, the toys that can encourage the most language, especially for early language learners, are ones that are open-ended, and encourage children to use their language for a variety of purposes (requesting, labeling, commenting, showing/sharing, role playing, problem solving, organizing, etc.). Children learn and develop these skills by using the language/vocabulary they learn, as language is much more than just memorizing vocabulary!

The following is a list of toys and associated language goals for different levels of language learners.

1. Farm and animals:

- Producing animal sounds to practice early syllable shapes and sounds
- Receptive/expressive nouns
- Verbs
- Following directions/basic concepts
- Using a variety of play schemes

2. Baby dolls:

- Receptive/expressive body parts/clothing items
- Object function
- Realistic play schemes (dressing, feeding, bathing)
- Verbs
- Answering yes/no and WH- questions

3. Play dough:

- Receptive/expressive nouns
- Verbs (rolling, pushing, cutting, etc.)
- Turn taking
- Requesting
- Sensory play
- Basic concepts

4. Blocks:

- Turn taking/collaboration
- Asking/answering questions
- Problem solving
- Basic concepts (tall/short, big/small, more/less, etc.)

5. Kitchen play:

- Receptive/expressive nouns
- Verbs (cutting, cooking, baking, etc.)
- Multi-step play schemes
- Basic concepts/attributes
- Categories/classifying
- Asking/answering yes/no and WH-questions

6. Music/musical instruments:

- Sensory play that can encourage joint attention/imitation
- Attributes (loud/quiet, big/small)
- Turn taking
- Requesting

7. Books!

- Encourage early literacy skills
- Articulation
- Receptive/expressive vocabulary
- Sentence structure and expansion
- Repetitive lined books are great for encouraging early language (e.g., Brown Bear Brown Bear)
- Pronouns
- Describing
- ... And much much more!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Adaptive Ice Skating:

For ages 2 and older with special needs. Beginner skaters with disabilities will get comfortable on the ice while learning basic skating techniques. Participants must be able to stand. Parents need not participate but are asked to remain on site. Each participant will have a 1:1 skating instructor if necessary, but will learn to skate in a small-group setting.

Please bring: Single Blade Skates – Please note that Sharper Edges does NOT have skate rentals, skaters must bring their own skates, Caged Helmet, snow pants, and gloves

When: November 4, 2017 – December 16, 2017

Where: Concord, via Sudbury Recreation

Special Needs Children's Christmas Party:

Free to all special needs families, including siblings. The Knights of Columbus Council 488 invites special-needs children to their Annual Children's Christmas Party. Hosted in a supportive environment so kids can enjoy things like visiting Santa and Mrs. Claus at their own pace, engaging in crafts with necessary assistance, a DJ with Holiday Music, Games, Crafts, Gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Claus, and pictures with Santa for those who would enjoy them.

When: December 2, 2017

Where: Bridgewater, MA

Contact: Karin Sullivan at MrsGumby56@comcast.net or call (508) 697-1527 for more information and registration

Adaptive "Caring Santa" events:

These Sensory-Friendly Santa programs provide a more controlled and welcoming holiday environment for children with all spectrum of special needs and their families to enjoy the time-honored tradition of the Santa and/or Santa Photo Experience, without the usual triggers associated with this bustling time of year. Extra care has been taken to support the sensory, physical and other developmental needs of children so they can enjoy this holiday tradition.

When: November 19th – December 3rd, 2017.

Where: Across Massachusetts, plus several locations in CT, Maine, New Hampshire. Please visit this website for more information about locations:

www.simon.com/caring-santa

Happy
Holidays!



North Pole Express for Special-Needs Kids:

The annual Scituate North Pole Express, sponsored by the Scituate CORSE Foundation and SHORE, will feature one 12:30 p.m. reservations-only car on the train for families of children with special needs who would prefer a more relaxed setting. This designated car will appear as a choice on the ticket page.

FEES APPLY, RESERVATIONS REQUIRED.

When: December 10th, 2017

Where: Scituate, MA

More info: Please visit the following website:

<http://scituatnorthpoleexpress.com> or

scituatnorthpoleexpress@gmail.com

Sibshops:

This is a recreationally-based sibling support program for children, ages 8 to 12, who have brothers and sisters with special needs. This program is a special time just for siblings and is guaranteed to provide food, fun, and new friends! brothers and sisters will have the opportunity to:

Meet other children who know what it is like to have a sibling with special needs

Learn more about disabilities and what they can do to help their brother or sister

Have lots of fun playing exciting games

When: Fridays, December 1st, 8th, 15th, & 22nd from 5:00 to 7:30pm.

Where: Brockton Area Arc, 1250 West Chestnut St., Brockton, MA. FEE: \$40 dollar program fee, full payment due by 12/1.

For registration form or for questions contact:

Christina Grande, 508-583-8030, x209

recreation@brocktonarc.net



Inclusive “Polar Express” night:

Open to all ages and disabilities. It is a movie night where everyone can enjoy a viewing of “polar express” and with socializing.

To RSVP or for more information contact Jayne Bowler at 774.241.2505, jbowler@sevenhills.org; or Elizabeth Carroll at 774.241.2504, ecarroll@sevenhills.org or visit www.sevenhills.org/programs/family-support-centers

When: December 4, 2017

Where: Sturbridge, MA

Sensory friendly viewing of the following films/shows:

1. Miracle On 34th Street:

This musical production show will be modified for length, doors will be opened, and lights will be up. There will only be a piano playing, with reduced lighting cues, and introduction of lead characters and explanation of some scenes. Fidgets and flexible seating will be provided, as well as break rooms for calming activity space.

For ticket purchases or more information visit www.westonfriendly.org/ or email westonfriendlysociety@gmail.com with the subject “sensory-friendly production.”

* Suggestions for accommodations are welcome.

When: December 3rd, 2017

Where: Weston, MA

2. The Nutcracker:

This newly created performance has lighting and sound accommodations for reduced sensory experiences. A narrator will assist the audience at the start of the performance. The Pioneer Valley Ballet will perform this holiday classic and tradition of Clara’s magical story. Guest artists include dancers from Carolina Ballet and Festival Ballet.

When: December 8th, 2017

Where: Northampton, MA

For tickets or more information visit www.aomtheatre.com/event/pvb-presents-the-nutcracker-sensory-and-family-safe-presentation/ or contact (413) 584-9032

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Holidays!**



3. Coco:

Theater sensory friendly films provide a family friendly, accepting environment to all special kids. The auditoriums have their lights up, the sound turned down and audience members may dance, walk, shout or sing.

Check with individual theaters for specific times.

For more information visit www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films

When: December 9th, 2017

Where: Braintree, Burlington, Dartmouth, Framingham, Methuen, and Tyngsboro.

4. A Christmas Carol:

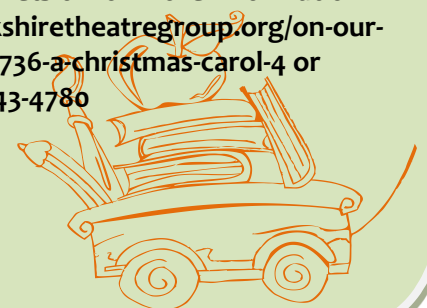
Berkshire Theatre Group presents a special community and sensory-friendly performance of A Christmas Carol. This performance is a production that is slightly modified to accommodate individuals with sensory-input disorders, such as people on the autism spectrum.

There will also be relaxed “house rules;” people may need to get up, move around, and leave the theatre during the performance. There is no expectation that the audience will be completely quiet during the performance. The goal is to create an environment where people with autism or sensory needs, along with their families, can enjoy coming to the theatre together and will feel comfortable, supported and free to be themselves.

When: December 13th, 2017

Where: Pittsfield, MA

To purchase tickets or for more information visit www.berkshiretheatregroup.org/on-our-stages/theatre/736-a-christmas-carol-4 or contact (413) 443-4780





CANDY CANE CHALLENGE



There will be a jar filled with candy canes displayed in the waiting room. Each child is allowed one guess (siblings included). The child that correctly guesses the amount of candy canes in the jar, or comes closest to that number without going over, will win!

They will get to take the jar home, along with a Dunkin' Donuts gift card!

Thank you for reading our Let's Talk Newsletter! We appreciate your feedback about additional events, resources, advice, and information you may have. In addition, we welcome recommendations about the content of the newsletter.

Please email: nscalera@ltspeech.com with suggestions/comments/concerns.



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December Crafts

Please come check out our December Holiday crafts! Make a cup of hot chocolate to warm you up on a cold day, and make an ornament to hang on your tree!

****Reminders****

We are **OPEN** during school vacation week with the exception of the following holidays:

- 12/25/17: for Christmas Day
- 1/1/18: for New Year's Day



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