People join recreational groups for many reasons—for fun, exercise, and meeting others. They look forward to Tuesday bowling, Saturday hikes, Sunday book discussions. Best of all, when people take time off from everyday responsibilities, they return to them later, refreshed. In a way, recreation re-CREATES us.

People who are deaf-blind and have cognitive disabilities enjoy recreational activities just as you and I do. To combat the isolation and lack of independence that often result from their disabilities, they NEED them even more than we do.

A challenge exists to help those who are deaf-blind put recreation into their lives. Everyone—educators, family, friends—should tout the benefits of recreational activities.

**Outdoor Activities**
- fishing
- hiking
- kayaking
- sledding
- camping
- canoeing
- horseback riding
- rowing

**Home Activities**
- cooking
- needlepoint
- gardening
- knitting
- arts and crafts
- listening to music

**Table Games**
- card games
- dominoes
- bingo
- board games (chess, checkers, etc.)

**Community Activities**
- bowling
- roller skating
- ice skating
- dances (folk/social)
- martial arts
- diving
- community leagues
- golf
- softball
- basketball
- swimming
- rollerblading
- goal ball (persons with hearing)

Remember to work with clubs and organizations for those who are deaf to encourage individuals who are deaf-blind to participate in social activities to reduce isolation (Kappen, 1992).

**Fitness Activities**
- aerobics
- swimming
- running
- cross-country skiing
- weight lifting
- gymnastics
- bicycling (stationary/tandem)
- wrestling

**Sports**
- Special Olympics
- school sports
- baseball
- soccer
- volleyball
- hockey
- beep baseball

**Recreation Is More Than Mere Fun! Look What It Can Do**

It gives us and others information about who we are (Haggard & Williams, 1992).

It can take the place of inappropriate or self-stimulatory behavior (Honig, 1990).

It can reduce physical, social, and psychological isolation (Sauerburger, 1993).
What Activities Are Age Appropriate?

Age-appropriate activities are those activities normally found in the individual’s culture and geographic location that are geared to the individual’s chronological age.

Observe other people of the same chronological age to determine what activities are appropriate. Some examples of age-appropriate activities enjoyed by teenagers in our culture are bowling, dancing, swimming, and video games. Activities which are not appropriate for this age are duck-duck-goose, riding children's tricycles, or interacting with preschool toys. Many children who are deaf-blind will choose an inappropriate activity. Our goal is to broaden their experience and move them on to choices that are appropriate.

As you research what is available in the community, be sure the activities you suggest are available for the age of the person you are helping.

What Is Safe?

If the individual is engaging in a new fitness program, the physician should be informed. If there is a heart condition, a potential for retinal detachment, tubes in the ears, or a shunt, the physician will then inform the staff or parents of any cautions that must be taken. But remember, almost any activity can be adapted for individual needs.

What Is Available?

Find out what recreational activities are available at the person's home and school. Consult with the following groups to see what is available in the community.

- YMCAs/YWCAs
- church leagues/synagogue leagues
- community leagues
- university- or college-affiliated programs
- local deaf clubs
- local associations for the blind
- Ski for Light

Research the Communication Patterns

It is important to determine each person’s communication patterns and needs. For example, he or she may use augmentative communication devices such as schedule boxes and communication boards that use symbols, pictures, objects, and/or words. Since each person will have developed unique ways of using these, you will benefit from all the information you can gather. This can be as easy as looking in the files or getting the information from previous teachers, residential personnel, parents, siblings, or peers.

You’ll soon find that each person is unique. For example, a person with residual hearing may only require that you get his or her attention before speaking. The person with usable vision may wish to communicate using signs. If this is the case, you will need to know which mode of signing—Signing Exact English, Pidgin Sign, American Sign Language, or Cued Speech—he or she uses. Some people may require tactile signing into the palm of the hand. For more information about various modes of communication that can be used with persons who are deaf-blind, take a look at D. Sauerburger’s book, listed in the references.

Develop a Plan

Once the above steps have been taken, you can develop a recreation plan. This plan should include short- and long-term objectives that have been developed, if possible, by a team consisting of the individual, the family, and the staff. Remember that the overall goal is to find an activity that will be fun and will provide relaxation. Be sure to set the stage for successful recreation.

Maintain Interest

Establish a Time Period

Establish a period of time that is appropriate for trying out a new activity. At the end of the period, let each person evaluate the pleasure derived from the activity. He or she can then decide whether or not to continue. Use of a time period helps prevent feelings of failure; it also ensures that enough time is given to the activity to provide adequate information for making a good decision. For example: 17-year-old Robert chooses Tae Kwon Do in the community club. The parents suggest a 6-week session to determine if he enjoys the activity. At the end of the 6 weeks, Robert may choose to continue, or he may end the session and choose another activity.

Select the Proper Time of Day for the Activity

Try to schedule the recreational activity for the time it is most needed to meet individual needs. For example: Amy is a 14-year-old who is in an educational setting. She is faster than her peers at getting dressed in the morning. As a result, Amy has 20-25 minutes every morning when she has nothing planned, and there are not enough staff to direct her play or an activity. She used to engage in self-abuse and became intensely agitated. When the recreation specialist noted that Amy loves to
ride the stationary bike, the bike was made easily accessible to her. Now, every morning, Amy gets on the bike and rides for 20-25 minutes. She does not become agitated, and her self-abusive behavior has disappeared.

Modify the Activity When Necessary

Most recreational activities were developed with hearing and sighted people in mind. In many cases, an adaptation that is relatively minor can make these activities enjoyable and safe for those who are deaf-blind. For example, the children in Shannon’s Girl Scout troop go roller skating every week. Shannon, like many young individuals who are deaf-blind, has difficulty keeping her balance. By using a skate aid device Shannon can safely participate in roller skating.

Ask each person if he or she prefers the help of a guide or assistance from peers. However, be aware that some persons may prefer activities that promote personal independence.

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Discover the Best Ways to Teach

The following teaching strategies will help each individual succeed and make the learning process more effective.

Orient the Individual to the Playing Area

Give each person the opportunity to explore and become familiar with the equipment involved, other persons in the room, and the physical site. The absence of reliable visual and auditory input makes this a time-consuming process, but it is essential (McInnes & Trefry, 1993).

Explain

Select language (oral, sign, or augmentative systems) appropriate to the pupil’s functioning level and communicate the key points of the skill.

Demonstrate

This is a practical teaching strategy only for persons with usable vision (Lieberman & Cowart, 1996).

Use Brailling or Feeling and Imitation

Fait (1978) defines brailling as an inspection of people or objects with the hands. Brailling has also been referred to as “seeing” (Reams, 1980), or “tactile exploration” (Vodolä, 1973). The individual who is deaf-blind feels the instructor execute the skill or activity being taught. The skill must be carefully analyzed by the demonstrator prior to the instruction in order for the demonstration to be effective.

Use Physical Guidance/Hand Over Hand

Place the student’s body and/or limb(s) into the appropriate position and help him or her perform the desired movements at the preferred speed (Lieberman & Coward, 1996). Physical guidance can range from total physical assistance to a gentle touch that prompts him or her to complete a task.

Enable Choice Making

Many people who are deaf-blind go through their days with someone else making decisions for them. When they get involved in recreational activities, they must use choice-making skills. Begin with simple choices. First, offer two activities and allow him or her to choose the order in which they will be done. Next, give a choice of two or three activities and let him or her choose which one to perform. As each person increases in ability to make choices, remove prompting and allow more independence in decision making.

Use Additional Strategies

♦ Begin with the amount of assistance that will ensure desired performance and success.

♦ Combine teaching techniques to ensure the individual is learning as much as possible. For example, Eddie is 16 and learning the game of T-ball. He is deaf and has some residual vision. When standing at bat in the game, Eddie needs to be reminded of which way to stand and when to bat the ball. The instructor models which way to stand, signs “hit the ball,” and taps Eddie on the elbow. Eddie then bats the ball off the T. In this case, both explanation and physical guidance techniques are used.

♦ Be aware of the individual’s responses. Try to minimize assistance as soon as you feel the individual is learning the skill in the appropriate manner.

♦ Provide immediate and accurate feedback so that he or she can make necessary adjustments before the next attempt (McInnes & Trefry, 1993).

♦ Allow each person to practice the skill in an environment that is as normal as possible. This will allow the transfer of skills to occur much more easily.

♦ Be patient. Progress may be slow due to learning the new skill as well as learning new terminology to go with it.

♦ Decrease physical cues to cues that are natural or typical to initiate desired performance. For example, in a dance unit, start with hand-over-hand assistance (unless he or she has enough ability to start with a less intrusive
References


Additional Resources

Best Toys, Books, Videos & Software For Kids: 1,000+ Kid-Tested Classic and New Products for Ages 0-10. Oppenheim, J. & Oppenheim, S.

This book is published annually and lists products for children that are entertaining and provides tips for getting the most play and learning value. Contains the section “Ordinary Toys for Kids with Special Needs” that explains why a product is suited for children with various disabilities, including suggestions for adaptations and activities. Available from bookstores.


This article describes the importance of having opportunities to engage in physical activity, sport, recreation and aquatics for individuals who are blind. Camp Abilities provides ways to introduce children with visual impairments to sports and recreation, physical activities and socialization.


This article offers guidelines for locating and identifying appropriate community recreation opportunities for children with disabilities. Resources discussed include: community/municipal recreation departments, commercial organizations, community centers, churches and synagogues, libraries, museums and zoos, service clubs, and youth agencies.


A guide for selecting the right camp for a child with disabilities. Discusses options such as mainstream or specialty camps, and lists questions for parents to ask while assessing the camp facilities.

Creative Expression: Opportunities for Persons who are Deafblind. DB-LINK and The Blumberg Center, Indiana State University VSA Arts of Indiana. Madison, WI: Bailey Video Design, 2001

This video presents ways to involve deafblind people in creative arts including music, painting, pottery, weaving, and writing. Available from: Indiana Deafblind Services Project, (800) 622-3035.


Describes the benefits of dance and movement education for students who are deaf-blind. Students are given the opportunity to communicate with others through bodily movement, however limited that movement may be, through the use of techniques such as contact improvisation and “mirroring”.


Provides guidelines for assessment, activity selection, and provision of instruction, as well as support strategies to enable young adults to participate in a variety of leisure time and recreational activities. Case studies are included.

This book is a collection of 70 games and activities designed for people who work with students or adults who are visually impaired, deaf, deaf-blind, or visually impaired with other disabilities. Guidance for adapting games and instructional strategies are included. Available from Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61825-5076. Phone: 800-747-4457. Fax: 217-351-1549. Email: orders@hkus.com


The American Toy Institute and the American Foundation for the Blind jointly produce this guide each year. This is a resource for parents, grandparents, and teachers that contains commercially available toys and games appropriate for blind and low-vision children of all ages, as well as adults with visual impairments who wish to participate in play with sighted children. Copies are available free of charge by contacting American Foundation for the Blind, 11 Penn Plaza, Suite 500, New York, NY 10001, 1-800-AFB-LINE (232-5463) or American Toy Institute, 1115 Broadway, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010, telephone: (212) 675-1141.


Discusses strategies that allow children with special needs to attend regular summer camps. Suggests reviewing camp literature for indications of accessibility and talking personally with staff to see what kind of experience the camp has had including children with disabilities. Emphasizes the importance of communication throughout the registration process as well as during and after camp. Includes specific ideas for overcoming environmental barriers and ways to fully include all children in all aspects of the experience.


This “how-to” manual is intended to support theater companies and venues in serving deaf-blind patrons. Creating access requires the coordinated efforts of a variety of people. Roles and responsibilities of the various staff are described. The role of interpreters is discussed at length. Sidebars include comments by a deaf-blind patron, a theatrical producer and an interpreter. Available from Northeastern University Interpreter Education Project for New England (617) 373-2463, (617) 373-4302 TTY.


This article specifically addresses the area of sensory organization as it pertains to children who are deaf-blind. The early foundation of emotional bonding, pursuit of external stimulation, and ultimate interaction with people and the immediate world is directly linked to the infant's capacity to organize sensory information. Activities to encourage infants and toddlers in this organization are presented here.


This includes personal stories, ideas on how to modify program activities, training suggestions for recreation program staff, checklists for recreation providers, tips on how to have a positive approach and specific ways to include folks with disabilities.


This includes information on how to prepare students for a museum visit and follow-up activities that build on their museum experiences. This guide offers an approach to discussing and interacting with works of art based on the needs and learning styles of students with disabilities. The suggestions offered are intended to aid the teacher in helping students of different ages and abilities understand that art objects can tell stories in many different ways. Available from Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Avenue of the Arts, 465 Huntington Ave, Boston, MA 02115-5523


Suggestions for games and toys that develop basic cognitive concepts and that are readily available in stores with no special adaptations needed for visually impaired children. Also suggests some adaptations that might be made to existing games to make them more accessible (i.e. adding brightly colored stickers to game pieces). A list of pre-adapted commercial games available is included. Available in Spanish.


This article describes the program developed at Sense Midlands for using a pool to develop basic fundamentals of movement while providing a warm, relaxed, and nurturing environment. Topics include methods of support, boundaries, and developing water confidence.


Physical activity is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle, and this article advocates encouraging individuals who are deaf-blind to participate in physical activity in school and in their recreational time. Adaptations for individuals with deaf-blindness are discussed in six areas of fitness activity. The activities include: bicycling, jogging, circuit training, aerobics, aquatics, and dance.
National Organizations

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
1900 Association Dr.
Reston, VA 20191 (800) 213-7193
(703) 476-3400 Fax: (703) 476-9527
Info@aaahperd.org http://www.aahperd.org

Students, educators in physical education, dance, health and recreation. Houses the Adapted Physical Activity Council. Operates Information and Resource Utilization Center devoted to physical education and recreation for the handicapped.

USA Deaf Sports Federation
(formerly American Athletic Association for the Deaf)
3607 Washington Blvd., Suite 4
Ogden, UT 84403-1737
(801) 393-7916 TTY Fax: (801) 393-2263
usadsf@aol.com www.usadsf.org

Fosters athletic competition among the deaf and regulates uniform rules governing such competition. Regional, state and local groups.

Blind Outdoor Leisure Development
533 E. Main St.
Aspen, CO 81611
(970) 925-9511
http://www.challengeaspen.com

Assists blind persons in participating in outdoor recreation. Aids in the establishment of local recreation clubs. Designs and conducts training courses.

Disabled Sports USA
451 Hungerford Dr., Ste. 100
Rockville, MD 20850
(301) 217-0960 Fax: (301) 217-0968
TDD: (301) 217-0963
information@dsusa.org

Promotes sports and recreation opportunities for individuals with physical disabilities. Provides direct services to people with mobility impairments, including those with visual impairments, head injuries, cerebral palsy, birth defects, and neuromuscular disabilities.

National Lekotek Center
2100 Ridge Ave.
Evanston, IL 60201
(800) 366-7529 Fax: (847) 328-5514
lekotek@lekotek.org www.lekotek.org

Offers a family centered approach to play. Children with special needs—along with their parents, siblings, grandparents, neighborhood friends—attend monthly play sessions. Has more than 50 affiliate play centers across the U.S. Trains Lekotek leaders to facilitate play groups.

Special Recreation for disABLED International
362 Koser Ave.
Iowa City, IA 52246-3038
(319) 337-7578 john-nesbitt@uiowa.edu

Organization for consumers with disabilities, their parents, rehabilitation professionals and volunteers. Promotes self-determination, equal opportunity, consumerism, and normalization in recreation and leisure for individuals with disabilities.

U.S. Association for Blind Athletes
33 N. Institute St.
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
(719) 630-0422 Fax: (719) 630-0616
usaba@usa.net www.usaba.org

Aims to develop individual independence through athletic competition.

Society For Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH)
347 Fifth Avenue, Suite 610
New York, NY 10016
Tel. 212-447-7284 / Fax. 212-725-8253

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This fact sheet is available in standard print, grade 2 braille, or on disk (ascii). To request your free copy, or for additional copies, contact:

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http://www.tr.wou.edu/dblink

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