

Adaptive Activities Resource Guide

At Shriners Children's we celebrate physical differences and encourage parents to embrace making the ordinary extraordinary.



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Although many places are becoming more accessible for those with differences, it can still be challenging for parents and caregivers to find safe, fun and accommodating activities their children will enjoy. But who better to give advice on these ideas than a Shriners Children's parent who has been through it?

With a sprinkle of creativity and a dash of adventure, our Shriners Children's patient families and providers shared some amazing ideas on how to create a magical childhood that embraces all abilities. Let's dive into 15 amazing activities to add to your to-do list.



1. Embracing The Thrill Of The Ride: Enjoy a day at an amusement park.

In families with more than one child and differing physical abilities, finding family destinations takes internet research and calling ahead to ensure no one gets disappointed. Luckily, many helpful blogs and resources exist online that can do some of that work for you!



2. Swings, Slides, and Sunshine: Research accessible playgrounds in your local area or along your road trip route.

In addition to ADA compliance, accessible playgrounds help ensure people using wheelchairs can enjoy the space. If you are searching for a nearby playground online, try using terms such as "accessible playground," "universally designed" or "inclusive playgrounds" to quickly find the parks you are looking for. Several websites, such as accessibleplayground.net offer a searchable list of accessible playgrounds by state – and even country! Whether you're going to the playground as a destination or a pit stop to get the wiggles out, there are many options all kids can enjoy.



3. Easy Sundae Drives: Tour local ice cream parlors.

I scream, you scream, we all dream of ice cream. Whether you prefer a cone or a cup – a simple trip to an ice cream parlor can feel like an adventure. And what kid doesn't like ice cream? We suggest not only creating activities around ice cream destinations but taking time to appreciate the scenic rides to get there.

"When Blake was younger and much less ambulatory, there was one summer where; starting on his last day of preschool, we tried a different ice cream place almost every week. We both found some new, unexpected favorites!" - LAURA



4. Dance Like Nobody's Watching: Go to a local music concert.

Concert on, world off. Many communities and cities offer free live music opportunities at local parks or pavilions. The schedules are often posted on city government websites and can help you plan ahead to stay moving and grooving with your family.

"The best part about live music is that the shows are usually free, and there is typically a large enough space for Blake to dance. Plus, he loves getting out, meeting new people, and hearing new music. It's definitely a budget-friendly and fun time for our whole family." - LAURA, MOTHER OF BLAKE, AGE 7, A PATIENT WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

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5. Making A Splash: Visit local splash pads.

Looking to cool down? Splash pads generally have level, paved surfaces, making them ideal for families with accessibility needs. Children with walkers, strollers, and wagons can easily navigate the park. Additionally, the interactive and sensory-friendly design of splash pads ensures that children of all abilities can fully enjoy the refreshing water play. Just remember the pavement can get pretty hot in the summer months so don't forget your water shoes!



6. Where The Wild Things Are: Plan time for a zoo visit.

Whether you are planning a trip to your local zoo, or planning a vacation in a city that has one, zoos are always a great way to entertain kids of all ages. Many zoos throughout the country also make concerted efforts to ensure their paved pathways, exhibits and facilities are accessible to all visitors. Make it extra special by visiting all of your kids' favorite animals first and packing a fun picnic lunch.



7. Lights, Camera, Action: Experience watching a movie in a new way.

Unwind with some popcorn and the big screen! Check out what your town offers for drive-in movie theaters and showings at your city park or public pools. Watching The Little Mermaid or Jaws while floating in the pool takes immersing yourself into a movie to a new level. Enjoying a sense of community and cinema is something for the whole family.



8. Over the River and Through the Woods: Hit the hiking trails.

Explore the wonders of all-ability hikes, where trails come alive with excitement, laughter and endless discoveries. While there are plenty of accessible campsites and parking spaces, hiking sometimes requires extra planning. Sometimes adults will have to carry a child or wheelchair over a specific obstacle. Other times it's good to challenge them to navigate difficult terrain on their own. Striking a balance takes preparation but the payoff is priceless.

"There will be times on a hike when one of us will carry his chair, and the other will carry him to ensure he doesn't just see the waterfall from the road, but can get to the top and experience the majesty. Other times, we will require him to get out of his chair and navigate a trail or hill by himself. We want him to sweat, get dirty and scrape his knees, then dust himself off and try again." - **ROB, THE FATHER OF LIAM, AGE 10**



9. Making Waves and Getting Rays: Set up water-based experiences.

Life is better at the lake. Boating and other water activities like paddle boarding, swimming and fishing can be enjoyed by all. With such a wide variety of activities there is something for everyone to enjoy. So grab your life vest, fishing pole and paddle board to make amazing summer memories.

"Being born with a limb difference, I didn't expect Giavanna to enjoy being on and in the water so much, but this is truly one of her happy places. G is a great paddle boarder, and can far outpace two-handed paddlers (like her mother)." - **MICHELLE, MOTHER OF GIAVANNA, AGE 14, A PATIENT WITH A LIMB DIFFERENCE**

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10. Put the Pedal to the Metal: Organize a neighborhood bike parade.

Whether using a wheelchair, adaptive bike, or other mobility aids, all kids can participate in a bike parade around the neighborhood. Make your ride unique by decorating it with flags, flowers, stickers and banners that reflect your interests.



11. Dream, Believe, Create: Make a homemade movie or movie trailer.

Let your kids be the star in their homemade movie or video trailer creation! In a world where cameras / iPhones and unique editing apps are increasingly available and easy to use, this is an activity that can keep your kids busy for hours and is open to kids of all physical abilities. Have your kids decide the story they want to tell or reenact, write a rough script and then act it out on camera. One way to include everyone is to rotate roles and ask everyone to participate in writing, directing, acting and recording. Whether they write an original script, make their own movie trailer or re-enact a favorite scene from a movie, it's an excellent opportunity to let your kids' imagination soar while acquiring new skills that can be empowering and inclusive for all.



12. Ready, Set, Soak: Create DIY chalk bombs.

A new and safe spin on a water balloon fight is to create chalk bombs. Mix one cup of water, two tablespoons of cornstarch and a few drops of food coloring, and use a clean soap dispenser to add the mixture to water balloons. Draw targets in chalk around your backyard and see who can get the most points.



13. Stop, Drop & Roll: Plan a visit to local fire and police stations.

Ignite curiosity and extinguish boredom with a friendly visit to local fire and police stations. Calling ahead and scheduling a visit is a good idea since visiting hours and on-site visit rules may vary. You can also ask about accessibility and accommodation that fit your family's needs.



14. Rock the Town: Paint rocks for others.

A simple and creative way to keep the fun going is to turn a craft like painting rocks into a creative way to spread joy. Collect rocks from a hike or a flower bed at your house and decorate them with paint, glitter, stickers or markers. They make a simple, fun gift kids can give to friends or neighbors.



15. Running on Summertime: Relax and enjoy the easy pace of summer

In a world full of summer adventures, there's something truly magical about staying home and embracing the lazy days. This is your reminder that fun can be found in the mundane. Keep this helpful list of ideas to try out on days when you'd rather stay at home.

- Build a box fort
- Organize a scavenger hunt
- Make homemade jewelry
- Try no-bake child recipes
- Play charades
- Bury a time capsule
- Make paper airplanes
- Camp in the backyard
- Make a bird feeder

Take advantage of thrilling adventures that cater to all abilities, ensuring unforgettable memories for the entire family.