

What you will learn in this module

How to adapt physical activities so children with disabilities can participate

Adapting activities to meet individual needs encourages everyone to move and explore. Some children require special equipment to complete fine or gross motor tasks. Others need teachers to adjust expectations or give them more time. A task analysis helps teachers make the right accommodations. Children can then participate as independently as possible.

How to help children with disabilities develop good physical fitness habits

All children in inclusive early childhood programs get regular physical exercise. Opportunities to play outdoor games keep children fit. Confidence is built through creative movement and trying new things. Physical activity helps children avoid dangerous health risks like obesity and bone loss. Keeping active requires accessible playground equipment and adaptive swings and bikes.

How to use everyday activities to meet therapy needs

Many children with disabilities receive Early Intervention or specialized services from birth. A preschool-aged child will often need continued support. These services might be provided at the preschool program or Family Child Care Home. Special education staff and early childhood teachers review classroom activities and routines. These are used to address the child's individual goals. This allows children to play and address therapy goals at the same time.

You already know a lot about how children develop physically

You know that children need to use their large and small muscles every day.

Children develop physically when they have lots of chances to use large and small muscles. Active play exercises large muscles, making them strong. Tabletop activities encourage the use of small muscles. These help control hand movements and improve grasp, allowing children to manipulate small objects.

Some children with disabilities may never have full control of their muscles. But accommodations help them get as much control as possible. For example, scissors and crayons can be adapted for a better grasp. This allows children to take part in classroom activities. Or they can use special equipment like walkers, braces, and standing devices. This equipment develops strength and flexibility.

You know the importance of keeping children physically fit.

Teaching children to live a physically active life starts young. There should be daily physical activity and outdoor play. This helps them grow strong. And it introduces them to the habit of physical exercise. Children who are physically active are less likely to become obese. They can avoid the other health risks linked to an inactive lifestyle.

Children with disabilities sometimes use special equipment when physically active. Games and movement activities should be adapted so that all children can participate.

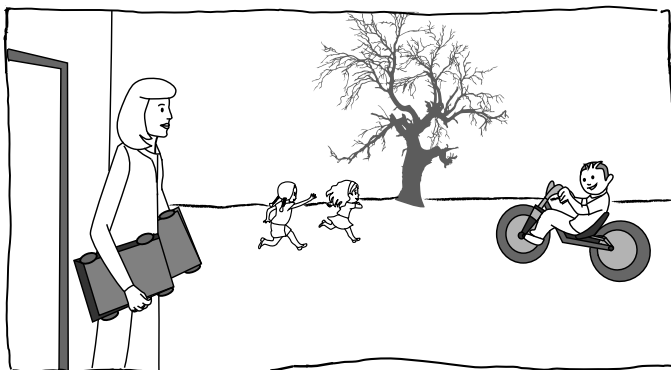
You know how to give children the support they need to reach their potential.

Each child is a unique blend of strengths and weaknesses. Early childhood teachers know how to tailor individual expectations so that each child reaches his potential. Knowing when to give support and when to encourage independence is important.

Teachers build on classroom skills when children's therapy goals are implemented in an early childhood environment. The child's therapist or special education teacher and the early childhood teacher form a team. The team adjusts expectations and gives support. Everyday activities and routines are used to address the child's needs.

Integrating Therapy Into Outside Play

As you read this story, notice how Ms. Creegan and Oscar's physical therapist, Dr. Hooper, work on his goals using enjoyable outdoor activities.



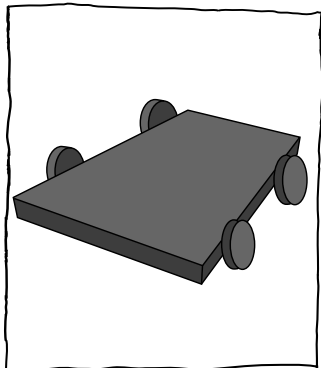
Ms. Creegan: "Hi Dr. Hooper! What do you have today?"



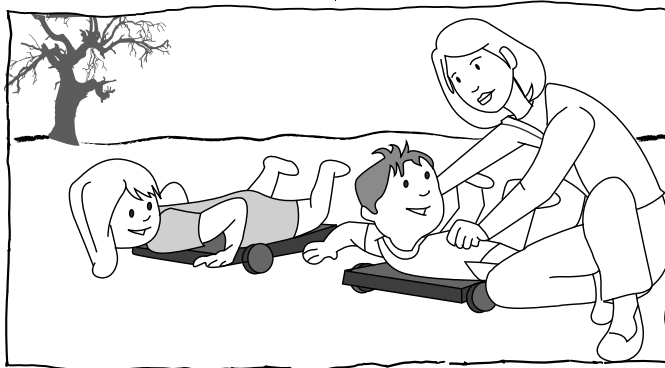
Dr. Hooper: "Scooter boards. They'll let Oscar enjoy working on his gross motor skills and balance."



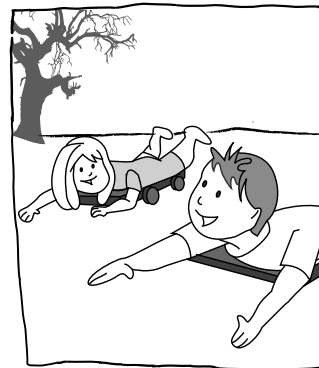
Ms. Creegan: "I like it when you bring things we can use outdoors. The handholds you put on the climbing equipment are great."



Dr. Hooper: "Scooter boards are a fun way to work on balance. I thought Oscar and Megan could test them out."



Dr. Hooper: "Remember, use your hands to push. Let's see who can go faster."



Ms. Creegan: "It's great when Oscar gets his therapy needs met and still has so much fun."