

2026



SUMMER SURVIVAL



GUIDE



Packed full of tips, ideas,
activities and organisations
to help make your summer
less stressful

SNAP www.snapcharity.org
Registered Charity No. 1077787





Supporting, Nurturing and Partnering



SNAP partners with parents to provide compassion, guidance, and hope for the whole family.

We work with families across Essex, Thurrock and Southend who have a child or young person, aged 0-25, with any additional need or disability.

Crucially, no diagnosis or professional referral is needed to access SNAP.



Our Survival Guides are here to help you.

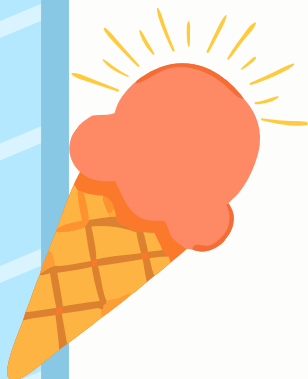
Written, researched and produced each year to help families cope with the summer and Christmas holidays, SNAP's Survival Guides provide key tips and ideas, along with useful information to help make those sometimes difficult periods in the year a little easier.



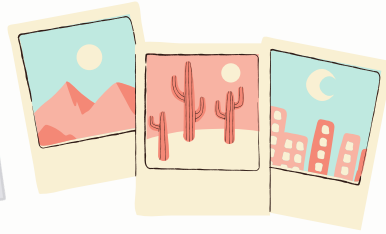
SNAP Services

SNAP offers a combination of in-person and remote services to meet the needs of its families.

- Helpline and in-person Face to Face Parent Support
- Specialist Talks and Training Courses
- Online Directory and Information Network
- Counselling
- Benefit Advice
- Reference library of Specialist Books
- Parent and Pre-School Children Sessions
- After-School and Holiday Sessions for Children and Young People
- Sibling Support



Helpline support via
01277 211300 • info@snapcharity.org



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Hello!

With the summer holidays fast approaching, it's normal to feel a little apprehensive about how you will fill six weeks with no school. It can be helpful to consider how much your child or young person with additional needs requires some form of routine or predictability.

In reality we know it is almost impossible to plan 42 days' worth of activities and guarantee nothing will change! But by making some rough plans and having a few back up ideas it can hopefully make you feel a little more prepared.

Whether you are going on trips away or staying at home, SNAP's annual Summer Survival Guide is packed with information, ideas and strategy suggestions that we hope will help you to plan for a fun and enjoyable summer with your family.

Do remember to refer to the SNAP Directory to find other contacts that may be of help, particularly the Leisure Time and Fitness, Respite and Breaks Away, and Local Advice, Support and Information sections. Our Information Network is updated regularly on the website, so be sure to keep an eye out for details of events and activities in your local area. We also have SNAP Charity Information Network Facebook page where we share a variety of information so give us a follow there.

The SNAP Team





Going on holiday



Holidays with children with physical disabilities

With any trip or holiday, in Britain or abroad, it is a good idea to do some careful planning for the travel part of your trip. It is important to remember that countries and areas differ and not all services and facilities will be available or accessible to you. If you have particular requirements, check that they are available before booking your trip.

Sometimes an impairment is not always obvious to others, so make sure you explain your child's requirements clearly. Don't assume that staff at travel agents, travel companies or airports will automatically know or understand the needs of your family. The more information you can provide them with, the better.

If you are planning some days out or a vacation in the UK and your child requires access to a changing places toilet then the Changing Places website has a useful journey planner so that you can find locations of accessible changing places/toilets across the country.

<https://www.changing-places.org/>

If flying, check with the airline in good time before the trip about the Special Assistance services they offer. Verify any specific seating and assistance needs and ask about facilities and procedures at the often smaller, less developed resort airports. In compliance with regulations of the European Parliament since July 2008, all European airports will offer assistance services for passengers with reduced mobility.

When taking medication with you, make sure you have enough for the duration of your trip together with an extra supply in case of delays or emergencies. Get a letter from your doctor detailing the medication your child needs and keep the medication in its original packaging.

Always pack medication in your hand luggage where possible in case the hold luggage is lost. You may need to check with the individual airline restrictions on taking the medication into the country.

When choosing accommodation, check with your travel agent or organisation that the buildings and resort are fully accessible for your child's particular needs.

When buying travel insurance you will need to check thoroughly that the policy you choose covers all your needs, including medical costs that may arise from your child's impairment. Many policies do not cover claims arising from pre-existing medical conditions. Medical equipment and mobility aids are unlikely to be covered by standard travel insurance so you may have to pay an extra premium, however your household insurance may provide cover for these items.

See section on travel insurance on page 8.





Going on holiday



Holidays with neurodivergent children

Going away on holiday, whether in this country or abroad, may require some extra planning for families with an autistic child.

Before you go on holiday it can be helpful to prepare your child in advance by letting them know where you will be going, how long for, how you will get there and who you will going on holiday with. This could be done in a variety of ways depending on how much information your child needs to help reduce their anxiety, and how they process information best.

Many autistic children find having things visually in some form helpful, and this makes the information concrete and they can refer back to it. This could be done using a visual timetable, looking at information online or in books about your destination or even compiling their own little booklet about the holiday. It is important to include when they will be coming home again as we don't always specify this and it can cause unnecessary worry.

If travelling by road consider the length of journey and any traffic "hotspots" such as the M25, think about going earlier or later in the day to help avoid delays. Scheduling in planned rest stops can break up the journey and also provide sensory or movement breaks. Having some in car activities or a travel kit of sensory or comfort items can be helpful.

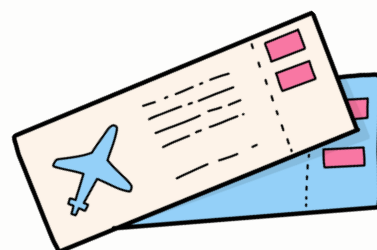
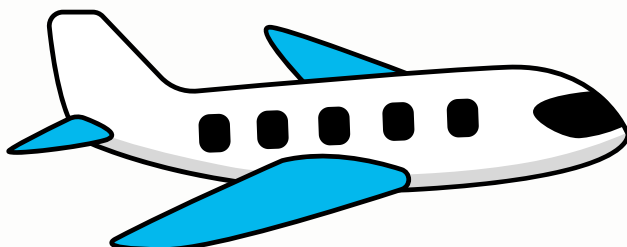
If you are travelling by aeroplane you may want to visit the airport before your holiday or look at videos online to familiarise your child with the surroundings and watch a few planes take-off and, if they have sensory sensitivity

with sounds, it may help to acquire some ear defenders or plugs to cope with aircraft noise, particularly during take-off and landing. If you are able to prebook your seats on the plane, think about where would be best for them to sit.

Ask your travel agent or the airline about any special arrangements for check-in. For example, they may be able to arrange a time for you to check-in so that your family is able to approach the desk straight away and your child does not become anxious due to the wait in the queue. There may be a quieter area where you can wait prior to the flight and they may let you board first or last, depending which would be the most beneficial for your child.

Give the airline advance notice if your child has any special dietary requirements. Tell the cabin crew if you feel there is anything they can do to help, and make them aware that your child has additional needs. Read more on our Airport Information on the next page.

Some children can find having a couple of consistent elements to their day reassuring whilst on holiday. You could build a loose routine into your days and creating a visual timetable may be helpful for children who are used to using one at home, or who find transitions between activities difficult.





Going on holiday



Airport Information

Under European legislation, your airline is responsible for providing assistance when you are on board the aircraft and the airport services and staff will help you while you are at the airport. All airport websites give clear information about the Special Assistance they offer and how to access it.

Gatwick, Heathrow, Stansted, Southend and London City Airports are using the Sunflower lanyards scheme for individuals with hidden disabilities. These will identify individuals to staff members as someone who may need additional support or understanding. Staff have been specially trained to recognise these lanyards.

At Gatwick Airport a Sunflower lanyard can be collected from their Special Assistance Desks. The lanyard does not offer fast track or queue jump during your airport journey, but staff will be mindful and if you are wearing a lanyard, they will do what they can to support you.

<https://www.gatwickairport.com/passenger-guides/assisted-travel.html>

London Stansted Airport staff are also trained to recognise the Sunflower lanyard. You do not need to have booked Assistance to request a lanyard.

You can pick one up at the Assistance Reception in Zone A. Sunflower lanyards do not automatically grant access to the security FastTrack lane.

<https://www.stanstedairport.com/help/assisted-travel/>

London Southend Airport recognises the Sunflower lanyard scheme and can also provide a discreet blue wristband for hidden disabilities such as autism to act as a subtle nod to the staff that additional support may be needed. There is an assistance meeting point at the ticket desk in the entrance concourse of the terminal.

<https://londonouthendairport.com/at-the-airport/special-assistance/>

Please note for Spanish Aiports

There is an additional scheme to the Sunflower Lanyard in place at airports in Spain. 'The invisible Disability Badge' can be applied for before travel that unlike the sunflower lanyard, allows access to the airport's security checkpoint that is specifically for families and persons with reduced mobility.

<https://www.aena.es/en/passengers/travellers/passengers-with-special-needs/invisible-disabilities/invisible-disabilities-badge.html>

Visual support

You may be able to create a visual guide of the airport you are flying from for your child to look at in advance. You can gather information from the airport website including photos of the different areas, and the order in which you will pass through each area.





Going on holiday

Additional things to consider



Firefly GoTo Seat

<https://fireflyfriends.com/uk/goto-seat-vinyl>

The Firefly GoTo Vinyl seat is a postural support seat helping children aged 1-8 years (depending on their size) participate in everyday family activities. The flexibility of design allows GoTo to be fitted to any standard seating, including dining chairs, swings, trolleys and much more. The new design also has the option of advanced headrests and a floor sitter attachment to allow the seat to be used without a chair. This could help while away on holiday in order to provide supported seating for your child where it isn't already provided.

Top Tip from a Parent

"Giving my autistic son a toy aeroplane with jet sounds before we flew helped to prepare him for the loud pitch of the engines."



Passport Interviews

www.gov.uk/apply-first-adult-passport



If your child aged 16 or over is travelling abroad for the first time and they have never had their own British passport, they may be asked to attend an interview as part of the application process. The interview confirms that the passport application they have checked belongs to the person and that they are the rightful owner of that identity. There are services and facilities available to people who have disabilities to help with filling in the form. If there are certain aspects of the application that you are unable to complete due to a disability you can provide evidence to skip the sections.

Additional resource: <https://www.gov.uk/passport-services-disabled>



Going on holiday

Additional things to consider



Travel Grab Bag

Bring together your child's own essential sensory and distraction toolkit for their journey. This could include some of these items-

- Fidget Toys
- Soft Hoodie, scarf or blanket
- Ear defenders
- Sunglasses
- Trusted snacks
- Doodle pad and pen
- Story apps or music playlist
- Scented lip balm
- Visual timetable of journey



Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme

<https://hdsunflower.com/uk/>

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower encourages inclusivity, acceptance and understanding. It is a global scheme to support people living with non-visible disabilities. Simply by wearing the Sunflower, you're letting everyone know that you might need extra help, understanding, or just more time.



It is recognised in organisations from retail, travel and tourism, transport, education, healthcare, football clubs, theme parks, and theatres.

Travel Insurance

When purchasing travel insurance it is important to make sure the policy will cover all your needs as well as any medical costs that may arise. Be aware that standard travel insurance is not likely to cover medical equipment and mobility aids. There are providers that can offer specialist insurance for children with disabilities and their families. There are a few companies listed below but be sure to look around for your family.

Fish Insurance <https://www.fishinsurance.co.uk/disability-travel-insurance/>

Free Spirit www.freespirittravelinsurance.com/

Good To Go Insurance www.goodtogoinsurance.com

Insurancewith www.insurancewith.com



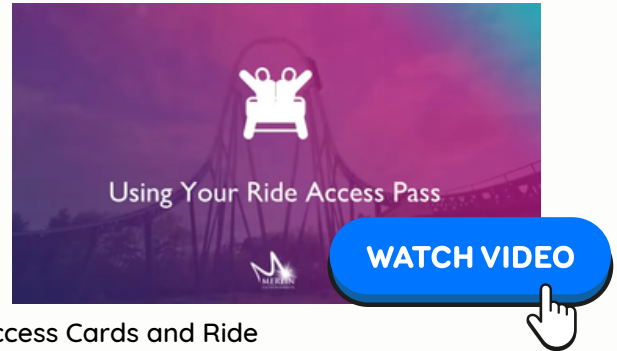


Visiting Theme Parks



Many families with a child with additional needs have been able to enjoy a day out at a theme park by taking advantage of the special arrangements that are put in place for guests with additional needs or disabilities. There are various concessions and also restrictions in place to ensure safety.

If your child or young person is not eligible for a Ride Access Pass, you may still be able to purchase a free ticket for a carer with evidence. Merlin theme parks have made some improvements to the Ride Access Pass scheme, which is completely online, including Ride Access Pass reservations for each visit (since March 2024).



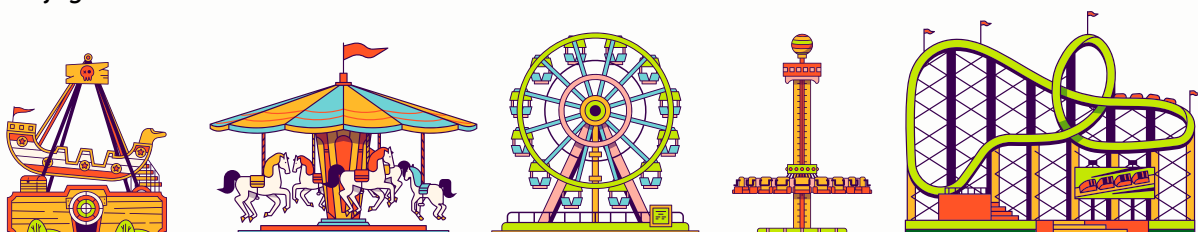
Merlin has partnered with Nimbus Disability to issue Access Cards and Ride Access Passes.

An Access Card costs £15 for 3 years and means your access requirements are pre-registered at 2,500 venues and events in the UK and beyond <https://www.accesscard.online/>

The Merlin Ride Access Pass is free and is only valid for the four Merlin resorts. You register once, with either Alton Towers Resort, THORPEPARK Resort, Chessington World of Adventures Resort or LEGOLAND Windsor Resort and you will be given a Merlin Ride Access Pass ID card on your first visit to one of the parks. It will have your name, photo and carer requirements on it and will be valid at all four parks for 3 years. You should apply via the website form of the theme park you are intending to visit first. You will also find a full list of applicable evidence you will need to submit a scan of. This includes a certified NHS letter from a doctor stating why you are eligible for the pass, or proof of DLA or PIP high rate/enhanced mobility award within the last 24 months, or blue badge if you have one. Photo ID of the child or young person applying will also be required.

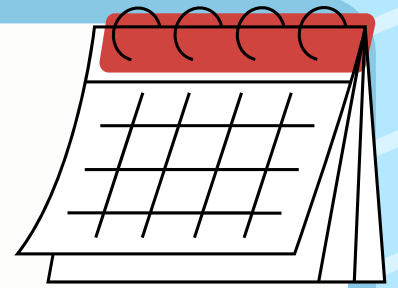
Ride Access Passes are reserved for adventurers who do not understand the concept of queuing, have difficulties with everyday social interaction, have a limited capacity to follow instruction or to understand others' emotional feelings or expressions, and may become agitated or distressed having to wait for extended periods of time, have a physical disability that prevents them standing for extended periods of time and permanently non-ambulant guests. Having a registered disability does not mean you automatically receive a Ride Access Pass. Once your application has been accepted you will be directed to create an ID card via the chosen attraction's website that will be available for collection on your first visit.

Adventure Island in Southend-on-Sea allows exit access for wristband holders who are unable to queue due to their disability. The ride operator has the discretion to allow the guest and carers to wait at the exit to then be allowed on at an appropriate time. An Access Sheet with a time allocation procedure can be issued at busy times. Up to two carers can purchase wristbands for half the price of in-park rate. The website has a helpful sensory guide to ensure guests with sensory sensitivities can enjoy the rides.





Timetables and Visual Supports



Having some form of structure is constructive for everyday life. Most of us will use some kind of visual reminder to help keep organised, from a simple to-do list, to a detailed family calendar. As adults these help us with tasks and events and take away the pressure of having to remember everything!

This is just the same for our children. In addition to teaching our children these important organisational skills, this can help reduce apprehension about the day ahead and allow them to communicate without expressing thoughts verbally. Here's some helpful resources to support your family.

If your child or young person uses any kind of visual support or timetable during term time it is important to adapt this for the summer holidays which can be a lot less structured.

Timetables and schedules

Timetables and calendars can work well for anyone of any age—they give us a reassuring sense of certainty about what is happening that day.

Some children may prefer just to know what is coming up after their current activity so you could use “now” and “next” or “first” and “then”. Other children may prefer having a timetable for the whole day ahead. You could look at the timetable the night before or in the morning. It may be helpful to get your child to help you decide which order to do things. You could give them a small selection of activities and they could either decide which ones to do that day or in which order to do them. This may help them to be more receptive to following the timetable and give them an element of feeling in control.

Trying to keep to a similar layout for each day may help ease some of the anxiety as everyone knows what to expect. Ensure breaks and “down time” are included on your timetable.

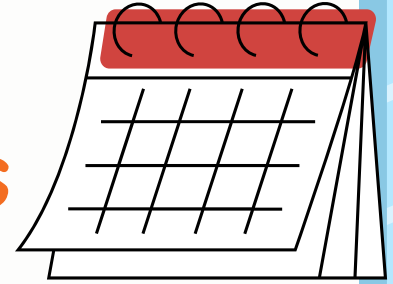
If you are feeling particularly organised, then a plan of the week might be helpful for the family to know what is coming up. This could be as detailed or as brief as you all need. It could reflect which days school work will be done,

and if a member of the household is working (whether at home or not). Depending on the needs of your child or young person the timetable could be made using words, signs, symbols, pictures, photographs or even tactile objects that represent the activity - whatever your child is most familiar with. Some children find it difficult to relate a drawing or symbol to a real life activity or object, so photographs or short videos of specific items, or your child doing the activity may be helpful. You could also use a tactile object to represent the activity, for example a spoon for breakfast.





Timetables and Visual Supports



Some families may prefer to create something digitally on their smart device or computer, or physically using paper, post-it notes or a whiteboard. Whether it is done as a pristine, colourful table or simply a written list on a piece of scrap paper, do what is manageable and works best for your family. Images, ideas and templates can be found on the links below, or via search engine images or Pinterest.

First and Then

https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/first_then.htm

Picture Schedule

<https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/schedule.htm>

Library of printable images

<https://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/>

Downloadable Timetable Templates for Excel

<https://www.calendarpedia.co.uk/timetable-excel-templates.html>

Daily Visual Timetable Resources

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/classmanagement/dailyroutine/visual-timetable>

Visual Timetable App

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/picturepath/id1339643269> (only on Apple App Store)

Printable PDF Timetable

<https://www.pricelessparenting.com/documents/family%20schedule.pdf>

Microsoft Office has a huge number of downloadable templates for Word and Excel

<https://templates.office.com/en-us/schedules>

Other visual supports

We can also use visual supports to help children and young people learn new skills or routines. This could be related to hygiene, such as washing our hands or brushing our teeth, or learning to do something independently such as getting dressed or making a sandwich. For some routines (if appropriate) you could take photos or a video of your child or young person completing each step in the process. For older children and young people you could compare it to creating a YouTube tutorial. This may also be helpful if you do not have a printer at home as they can be viewed on your smart device.

Visual supports can also help children communicate their wants, needs and emotions. This could be anything from showing what they like or dislike, to communicating pain or sensory overload. Images, ideas and templates can be found on the links below, or via search engine images or Pinterest.

Visuals for routines and/or independence skills

Hand Wash Routine

<https://www.widgit.com/resources/popular-topics/wash-hands/index.htm>



Getting Ready Routine

<https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/reminderstrips.htm>

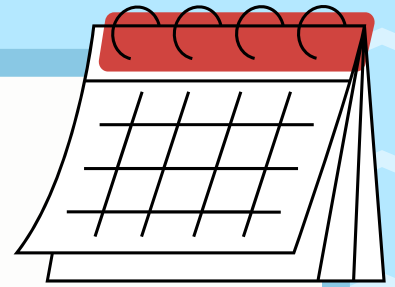
Sesame Street Daily Routine Stories

<https://sesameworkshop.org/resources/learning-daily-routines/>



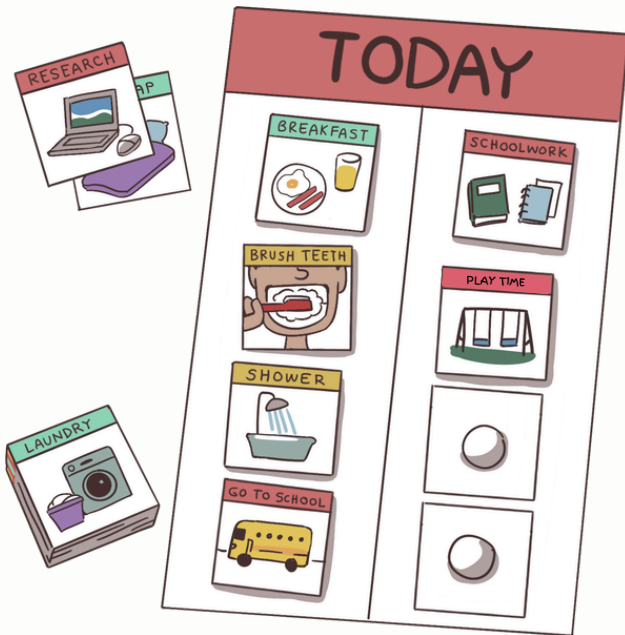


Timetables and Visual Supports



Other visual supports

Visuals for routines and/or independence skills (continued)



Search Visual Timetable Resources <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search>

Daily Routine Charts <https://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/printable-visual-schedules-and-daily-routine-charts-for-children/>

Search Sequencing a routine activity <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search>

Back to School Parent Toolkit (Widget) <https://www.widgit.com/resources/home-early-years/back-to-school-parents/index.htm>

Visuals for communicating

Search Emotional Resources <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search>

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) <https://pecsunitedkingdom.com/pecs/>

Objects of Reference <https://www.sense.org.uk/information-and-advice/ways-of-communicating/objects-of-reference/>

Search Communicating feeling unwell <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search>

Lego Face Emotions and communicating sensory overload http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-gnfrVRA0t7M/Tf_DaVa2YJI/AAAAAAAAANU/gWzMLt6lj_Y/s1600/Feel+PECS.png

The Zones of Regulation is a full curriculum aimed at teaching children and young people to identify, communicate and regulate their emotions. It is designed as 18 lessons which are to be taught in order, to get the most benefit from the programme. However even without the lesson plans there are a lot of helpful resources for identifying and discussing emotions and building a “toolkit” of strategies to help regulate feelings. You can find a huge amount of resources by searching Zones of Regulation online or on Pinterest. <https://www.zonesofregulation.com>

SNAP’s Information Sheet on [Emotional Regulation and Zones](#)





Summer Holiday Sessions at SNAP



SNAP has a programme of holiday activity sessions for families who are registered with us.

Some sessions will be adapted to welcome other organisations, such as Little City and Track Play Arcade, so our families can experience what they offer in a safe, quieter environment. Further information will be sent out via our family mailings to registered families.

These sessions are very popular and must be booked in advance.

The sessions run at various times and there is a small charge.

Please contact the Family Team on 01277 211300 or email familyteam@snapcharity.org if you are interested in attending SNAP holiday sessions.



Little Stars

For families with pre-school children with additional needs and their siblings



Big Stars

For families with primary school aged children with additional needs and their siblings



Super Stars

For families with young people with additional needs and their siblings aged 11 and over



Little Legends

For families with pre-school children with additional needs who would benefit from a more relaxed environment, and their siblings



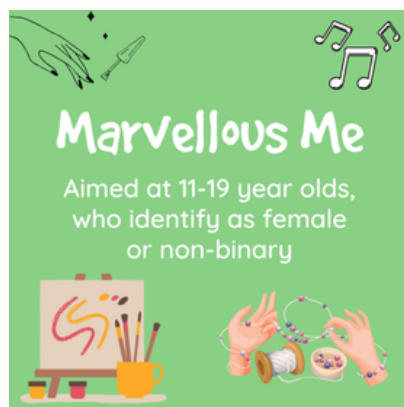
Big Legends

This small group is specifically for children with more complex additional needs who may benefit from a quieter session, and their siblings



Sensorise

For families with children with more profound and complex additional needs and their siblings

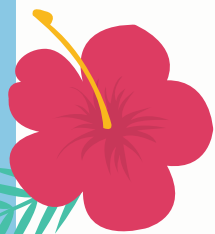


Marvellous Me

Aimed at 11-19 year olds, who identify as female or non-binary

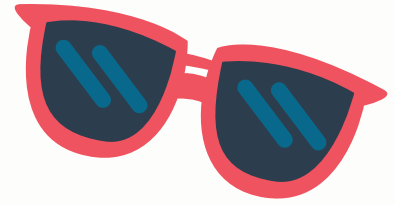
Thank you to Matchroom Charitable Foundation, St. James's Place Charitable Foundation and Charles S French Charitable Trust for helping to make these holiday sessions possible.

More information can be found on our website: www.snapcharity.org/activities.





Activities



The summer holidays can be notoriously unpredictable at times, (particularly if you are spending most of it in the UK with our changeable weather!) so it can be helpful to have some ideas up your sleeve for activities to do at home.

We have tried to include a range of general ideas as a starting point that could be adapted to fit the age and ability of your children and young people.

Although some may not be able to complete these activities independently or with support yet, most can be adapted so they are involved by making choices. Learning to make and communicate choices is an important skill for everyone this can be done verbally or with the use of visuals, pointing, symbols, signs or any type of communication aid.

Get creative

Design a den Use materials from around the house to create your own clever cave. The easiest way is to use blankets or a bedsheet to go over a table, or maybe four chairs arranged in a square with the material over the back rests. Make your den more cosy with cushions or pillows. You may even have some fairy lights that you can add. Great place to snuggle into and read a story.

Chalk walk Chalk on a pavement washes off easily and your child can scribble away to their heart's content. Draw pictures, shapes, practise writing their name or spelling words. Great way for supporting a dyslexic child. You can also play a Colour Run game. Colour four areas (draw circles or squares) with different colours of chalk. Call out a colour and have your child run or point to that coloured area. Continue to call out different colours in a varying order.

Seed sowing Learn how to plant seeds and grow and look after plants. This could be both indoor plants and outdoors. Planting fruit or vegetables can be extra rewarding and may encourage them to try new food. If you have space outside (and patience) then sunflowers are an impressive option - but for something quick and easy cress can be grown on a damp sheet of kitchen roll!

Smelly socks Use old socks for this game. Scent cotton wool balls using things like tea, coffee, lemon or tomato ketchup and once they are dry put them into the old socks. Tie the ends of the sock and then ask your child to play 'guess the smell'.



Clever copy Stick A4 paper together, lay it on the floor and then get your child to lie down while you draw around their outline. Then your child can colour in their life-size copy of themselves. Maybe you have some old material they can use to glue on clothes.



Activities

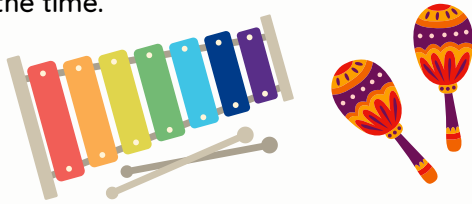


Get creative

Sky shapes

Lie on the grass looking up at the sky and try to identify pictures in the cloud shapes.

Making music Music is something that brings people together regardless of age or ability. There are countless activities you can find online - but it could be something as simple as each family member picking a song to listen and dance to, or creating playlists (or an old school mix tape or CD!!). Feel the beat and vibrations or find ways to turn everyday items into instruments. Creating your own music or songs can be an enjoyable way to pass the time.



Powerful presentation For some of our children, speaking about their interests is one of their favourite things to do. By giving them an outlet it can allow them to get creative about something they are passionate about. It could involve drawing posters, creating a presentation on the computer, turning it into a radio show, podcast or video.

This can help with a variety of skills including public speaking, learning social cues (such as keeping your audience engaged), and boosts self-esteem to be an "expert" on something.



All about me Encouraging your child to talk about themselves can be a great way to boost their self-esteem and encourage their self-awareness. Why not ask them to make a booklet all about themselves, including their likes, dislikes, favourite TV show, toy or song, favourite character, maybe even a family drawing. This can be done by hand or on a computer if preferred. Maybe your child could tell you what to write or type and you could work on it together.



Cosy Cinema Set up in the living room, close the curtains, rearrange furniture, make tickets and prepare the snacks.



There's more inspiration on these websites:

Amazon Alexa - Commands, Games and Activities

https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/browse.html?node=10068517031&ref=nav_em_T1_0_4_NaN_5_k_a2s_all

CBBC - Games, Quizzes and Puzzles

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc>

Summer scrapbook

Take a picture of some of the activities that you do over the summer, print them out and record your summer fun in a scrapbook to look at together at the end of the day or save up looking back through it all to the end of the summer holidays.



Activities



Animal magic

Animal actions Inside or out, encourage your child to slither like a snake, hop like a frog, gallop like a horse, or walk like a bear on all fours.

Give a bear a birthday Throw a pretend party for your child's favourite cuddly animal. Put on the music, blow up some balloons. Older children could set a budget and plan everything such as venue, entertainment, decoration and food. This can help with research skills, planning and organisation.

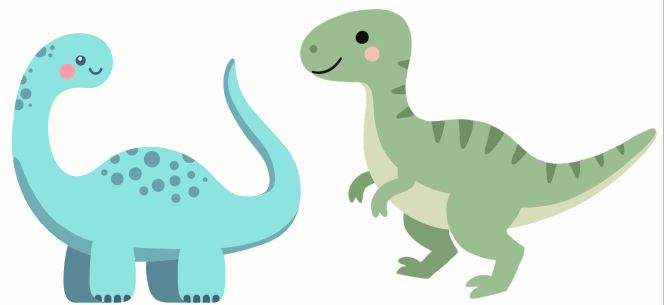
If your child would find it difficult to plan a pretend event, you could scale it down to planning something like a living room picnic or a Friday family disco! They could pick a theme and make decorations and choose food/music, and even make invites for the rest of the family. Extended family could be invited over the phone and join the fun through a video messaging app.

Pebble pets You need smooth pebbles, paint and a paint brush. The best paints to use are a waterproof craft paint or acrylic. Ideally you should use two layers to make sure the colour is thick enough.

There's more inspiration on these websites:

Natural History Museum - resources and activities

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/take-part/try-this-at-home.html>



The Wilderness Foundation - Wild Time Nature Activities, Mindfulness and Reflection Activities

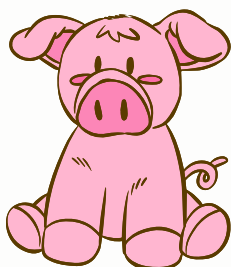
<https://www.wildernesskids.net/activities>

RSPB Minibeast and bug safari

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/go-on-a-bug-safari>



Teddy treasure hunt Hide your child's cuddly animals around the house, or alternatively print and cut out pictures of famous bears such as Winnie the Pooh. Go on a bear hunt to find them. You could even draw a map to help find the secret locations. For older children you could use word clues instead of a map such as 'look for me where we keep the milk.' Once found, you could turn the tables and let your child hide the cuddly toys for you to find.





Activities



Sensory session

If your child has been assessed by a sensory occupational therapist make sure you have a copy of the most recent report or support plans that include any recommendations for sensory strategies or a copy of their “sensory diet” for personalised sensory support.

Rice feels nice Fill a tray or washing up bowl with uncooked rice. Let your child use a cup, bowl, spoon or ball and let them play. Alternatively use shaving foam, dried beans, or even toothpaste. Sensory trays allow children to enjoy a variety of sensory experiences such as tactile, vestibular, visual and proprioceptive which can help to support your child’s development.

Texture time Make a texture book using different materials that you may have at home already - bubble wrap, washing up pads, wallpaper samples, sand paper.

Foil feeling Use a foil emergency blanket as a play mat. Great for sensory stimulation.

Flour fun Mix together cornflour and water to make a great sensory play tool. Add some food colouring to flour in a sealable plastic bag. As your child squishes it around it changes colour.

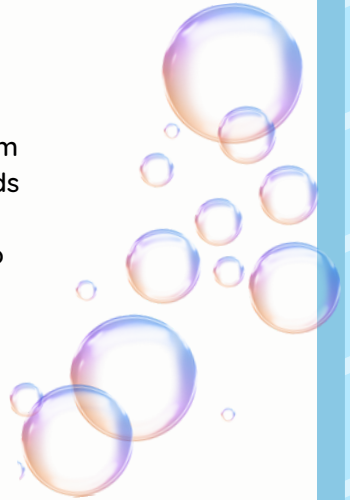
Music magic Music is a great way for children with additional needs to help them express themselves. You can use simple actions to songs, such as ‘the wheels on the bus’ or use instruments such as homemade shakers (using a bottle and some rice) to shake to the beat.



Magic moonsand Made by Spin Master Ltd™ it looks like sand but moulds like dough. Hours of fun! Comes in a variety of colours.

Blowing bubbles

Bubbles are a great sensory experience. From tubs of bubbles, to wands to bubble machines, bubbles are great fun to watch float in the air or try to pop. Best in an outdoor space whether you are standing, sitting or lying down.



There’s more inspiration on these websites:

- Sensory Spectacle - Information on sensory processing difficulties and tutorials on how to make some DIY sensory items

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIQ6vrkCOeZhK1J8sR0JbeA/playlists>

- NHS Scotland - Messy Play Activities

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/messy-play-activities/>



- The SEN Resources Blog - Learning Through Play Activities

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpkztoFHIgP4jpJDKWNWaHA/videos>



Activities



Get Active

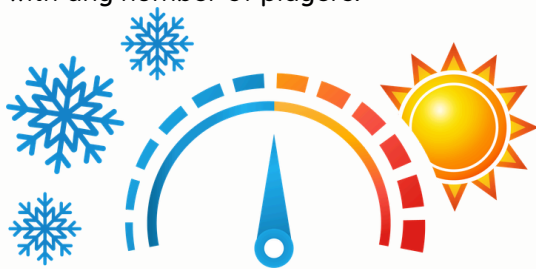
Following a dance, yoga or exercise routine. There are countless videos online that not only help to keep us active but help our children's gross motor skills, coordination and ability to copy movements. For children who process information slower, you may need to use pictures or stop the video after each movement. If you take photos or video of them completing each step you can create your own routine to follow - or better yet let them invent their own. You could share this digitally with friends or family for them to follow too!

Talent time Put on a dance or talent show where the family takes it in turns to see who can make everyone laugh or impress with a talent. This can help boost self-esteem and encourage speaking in front of others (favourite toys and teddies could bulk out the audience!).



Ribbon running Tie a length of ribbon to the end of a stick or baton and watch your child dance around swirling their ribbons in the air.

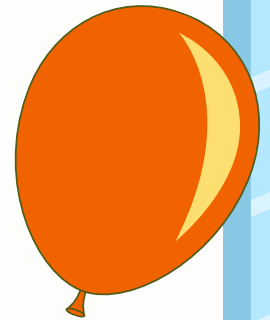
Hot or not Hide an object around the house or garden and ask your child to find it. If seekers get near the hider shouts "hotter", if they get further away the hider shouts "colder". The child who finds the object is the hider next time. This game is so simple it can be understood by small children and works well with any number of players.



Simon says Always a great game to play. To vary the game the instructions can be described instead of demonstrated. Being able to give clear instructions as well as following them are important skills in life. Some children might enjoy creating a tutorial either by video or with pictures. Children with communication difficulties could point to visuals to give people instructions - such as which silly dance moves to do or to stop and start an activity.

Pillow path Set up a line of couch, throw, or bed pillows on your floor, and have your child walk from one end to the other. It may sound easy but their balance will be challenged!

Balloon bounce Outdoor fun on a wind free day! Blow up a balloon and see how long your child can keep the balloon off the ground using their hands, a soft bat or even a pool noodle if you have one!



There's more inspiration on these websites:

- Go Noodle - Pre-School to Primary

<https://www.gonoodle.com/tags/IYOj8w/gonoodle-junior>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/GoNoodleGames>

- Cosmic Kids Yoga

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

- Focuz-Fit Ltd - Ultimate Kids PE Lessons

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzqJkt4uqhk>



Activities

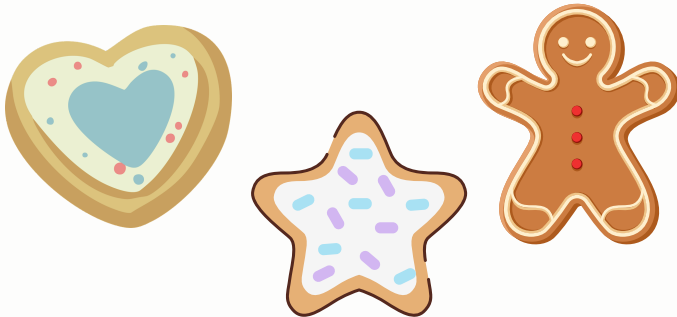


Food delights

Cooking and baking are fun activities for families. Not only are they great life skills to have, but they can help with organisation and following instructions, as well as incorporating maths (and a bit of science too!) ending up with a yummy treat at the end is all the better. You could take pictures or video and create your own family cook book.

Nice ice This is a really quick and easy recipe for making biscuits that you can make and then decorate with icing and any other sprinkles of your choice. This is always a firm favourite with children and young people that visit The SNAP Centre for our summer holiday sessions.

www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/shortbread_1290



Awesome apples Alternatively to using biscuits to ice how about making apple fruit doughnuts? Slice your apples thickly. Use a corer or a knife to make a hole in the centre. Spread cream cheese, or chocolate spread on top and then add sprinkles.

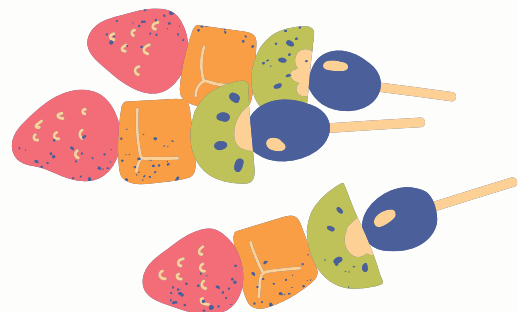
Necklace nosh Tie a knot on the end of some string or cord and let your child thread sweets or cereals - ones with a hole in of course!

Pack a picnic Pack up your child's favourite lunch, grab a blanket and eat outdoors in the sunshine! If it's raining, why not have an indoor picnic?



Frozen fruit yoghurt bites Lay out cupcake cases in a muffin/ baking tray, dollop in some yoghurt of your choosing and pop in a few pieces of fruit such as strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. Press them down into the yoghurt, you could even make a funny face with the fruit! Put them into the freezer for a couple of hours and then take them out of the cases to serve.

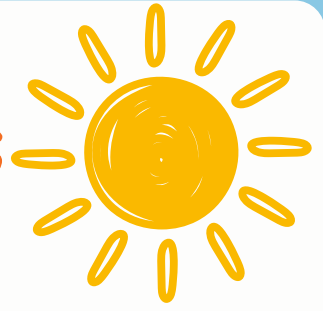
Muffin pizzas Split each English breakfast muffin into half to make the pizza bases and lay them on a baking tray. Spread tomato puree over the bases. Add on any other of your favourite toppings and cover with mozzarella or cheddar cheese. Bake in the oven for 5-10 minutes at 180oC/350oF/ Gas Mark 4.



Rainbow fruit kebabs You can recreate a rainbow like the one at The SNAP Centre. Thread red grapes, blueberries, green grapes, kiwi, pineapple, mango, orange, strawberries or raspberries onto skewer sticks and arrange in a semi-circle.



Explore the outdoors



Themed nature trails

Meet the characters



Brambly Hedge
Abberton Reservoir
Colchester



Wind in the Willows
Hanningfield Reservoir
Near Chelmsford



The Gruffalo
Thorndon Country Park
Near Brentwood



Peter Rabbit
Langdon
Near Basildon

<https://www.essexwt.org.uk/nature-reserves/themed-nature-trails>

The Wind in the Willows: A garden adventure



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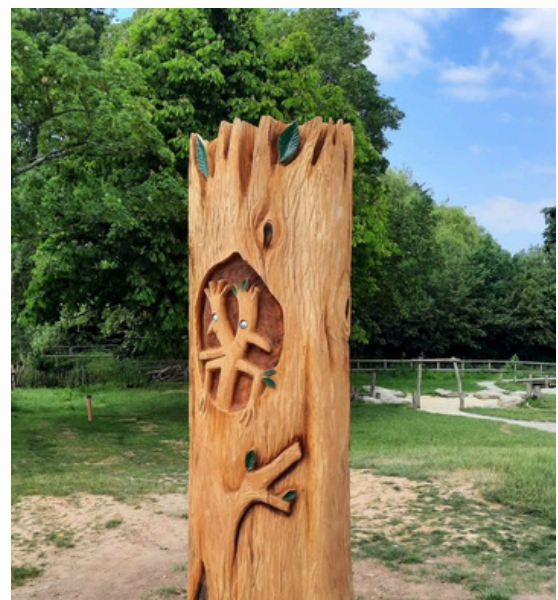
The Stick Man Sculpture Trail

**Weald Country Park
Brentwood**

Based on the much-loved picture book by Julia Donaldson, meet six of the characters and animals around by the lake.

All on surfaced paths suitable for pushchairs, buggies and wheelchairs.

<https://www.explore-essex.com/places-to-go/find-whats-near-me/weald-country-park>



RHS Hyde Hall

South Woodham Ferrers

Join Mole, Ratty, Toad and Badger at RHS gardens to explore The Wind in the Willows garden trail

Step into the enchanting world of The Wind in the Willows following the characters on a magical journey across all five RHS gardens

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/whats-on/summer-holidays>