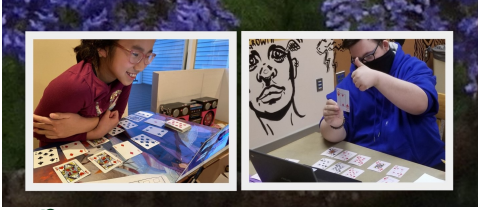


## Building Personal Connections through Play & Games

Support for Those with Autism & Other Special Needs



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1

**Inclusible** means *suitable for inclusion*.  
My goal is to make communities suitable for inclusion, not people. And play is a most enjoyable tool!



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## Objectives

Participants will gain information & tools to support learners with varying abilities in play.  
Specific topics will include:

- **The benefits of play for all**
- **Techniques for overcoming barriers & teaching game-playing skills**
- **Teaching sportsmanship**
- **Ideas and materials for caregivers, educators, & others**



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## The Remarkable Benefits of Play

Research shows play can improve children's skills in the following ways:

- Planning & organizing
- Social skills
- Regulating emotions
- Coping with stress
- Language skills
- Math skills



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) clinical report, *The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children*, 2018



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“[Physical] Play decreases stress, fatigue, injury, and depression and increases range of motion, agility, coordination, balance, and flexibility.”

Goldstein J. Play in children's development, health and well-being: technology and play. In: Pellegrini DA, ed. *Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2011



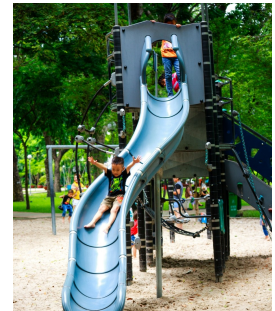
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Play reflects and passes on cultural values.

*Did you know?*

Recess in schools began in the U.S. as a way to support the social integration of immigrant children.



Rothbaum F, Pott M, Azuma H, Miyake K, Weisz J. The development of close relationships in Japan and the United States: paths of symbiotic harmony and generative tension. *Child Dev*. 2000;71(5):1121-1142pmid:11108082



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## From My Experience, I've Learned...

Play gives us a reason and the opportunity to gather together



...that can last a lifetime.



Play can give us a predictable and comfortable way to connect with others.



- Games have rules and a structure.
- They can be learned and practiced.
- Players can change but the game remains the same.

Play can give us opportunities to see and listen to others and in turn, be seen and heard.



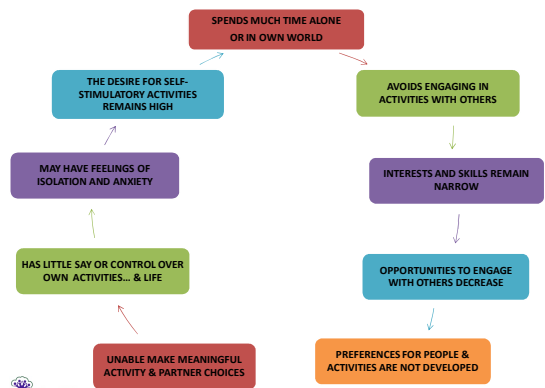
Through play we can spend time with those who are different from ourselves, build friendships, and grow as individuals.

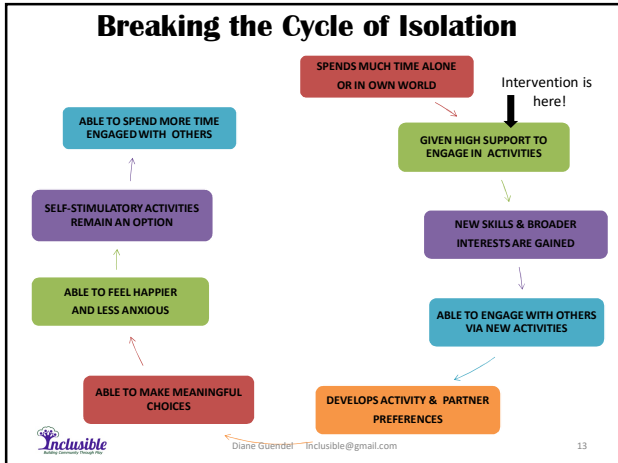


## Possible Barriers to Play for Special Needs Learners

- Skills
- Communication
- Motivation
- Emotions/Anxiety
- Behavior
- Mobility
- Medical
- Sensory
- Cognitive
- Opportunity

## An Isolation Problem, Especially for Students with Autism





# 15 Tips for Overcoming Barriers & Teaching Skills

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## 1. Choose Wisely

- Start simply (e.g. puzzles)
- Know your players – choose games with potential for interest.
- Avoid poor matches. Sensory needs? Anxiety? Don't choose games with startling features.




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## 2. Choices, Choices!



- Meaningful choices
- As soon as possible – but make sure the choices are available and understood
  - show actual objects
  - visuals choice boards (paired with text)
- Include partner choices

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## 3. Create the Environment

- Inviting
- Heterogeneous groups (e.g. different classes/grades, families, community members/locations)
- Expectations are clear
- It's easy to start right in

Visual schedules can help!



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### Play a Game, Get a Prize!

For motivation, for targeting skills, or just for fun!




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## It Takes Two!



If possible, start with the puzzles apart and let the learner leave with their put-together accomplishment in tact.



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## Three or More



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## Set up memory match games



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## Something Unstructured



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## Introduce 'House Rules'

- A specific term for changes in a game
- Make decisions together to slightly change rules of a game
- Fosters flexible thinking, creative thinking, & collaboration
- A good way to explain making modifications

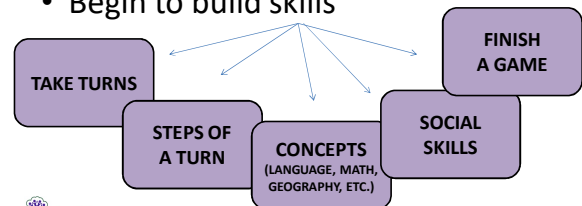


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## 4. Demonstrate & Model

- Experienced players go first
- Play a practice round
- Begin to build skills



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## 5. Physically Pass the Turn

- Bowls or baskets
- Serve as prompts
- My turn & not my turn



### & Always Go Clockwise



- Can anticipate turns
- Predictable = comfortable

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## 6. Shorten It Up

- small commitment
- build tolerance
- lengthen with interest



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## 7. Play with Partners

- pair inexperienced with experienced
- players learn with little stress
- leaders can assess skills
- keeps it fun for all
- keeps the game moving



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## 8. Consider the Invitation

Do you want to play a card game?

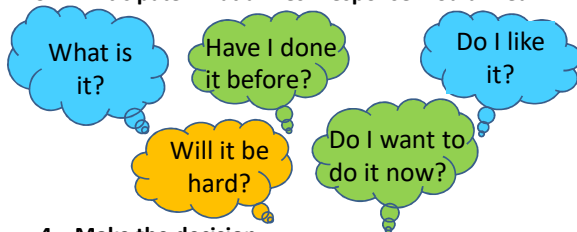


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May trigger a sequence like this:

1. Process the question
2. Consider the options
3. Anticipate what a "Yes" response would mean



4. Make the decision
5. Formulate & produce a response that will be understood – in a timely manner !

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The impulsive & easier route may be to just say "NO".

Instead, consider the invitation like this:

Come try this game with me.  
I will help you.

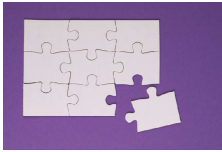


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## 9. Last Move First

- Last puzzle piece
- The last round of the game
- Short & easy
- Build with comfort & interest



## 10. Count Backwards

- Especially if new or non-preferred
- Pitch and... throw away?
- 1<sup>st</sup> pitch = "Ten!" ... "Nine!" ... "Eight" ...
- A known endpoint
- Be true to your word! -- build trust



## 11. My Turn is My Turn

- Resist using your turn to teach
- It's a downtime for others
- Narrate through your turn

My turn. I roll the dice.  
I got a 3. I move 1-2-3.  
My turn's done.

## 12. Skip the Quiz

- Resist teaching through questioning
- Learning comes naturally through play
- We all learn best through doing
- Replace "What number did you get?"  
with  
"Wow! You got a 6."

## 13. Give a Little Time



- Processing time (count 5 seconds)
- Time for multiple steps of a turn

## 14. Be Observant



If having fun, build upon it –  
different play partners, similar but new  
games, or become an expert and team  
with inexperienced players

If not, give more support  
– provide more assistance, shorten  
it up, be a temporary partner, find  
alternatives



# 15. Finish the Game

- Build the expectation & routine
- Make it short
- Take a break
- Goal = good game-playing partner



# How to Be a Good Sport

**Yes** I say "Yes" & try new things

**Wait** I wait for my turn

**I say or do nice things**  
"Good idea", "Thank you", or sharing

**I take good care of me!**  
I need a drink, bathroom, I need help, fun

**I finish with positives**  
"Good game" "Thanks for playing" "High 5" & help clean up

## How to be a Good Sport



Schedules help build in time to instruct or reflect upon good-sport goals.



Finish by saying something nice to your fellow players like...

**Good game!** Nice playing!  
**It was fun to play with you!** Well done!  
**Nice game!** Let's play again sometime!

# Ideas & Tools for Caregivers, Educators, & Others



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## Playing Card Holders



Exqline Wood Curved Playing Card Holder Racks  
Tray Set of 4 for Kids Seniors Adults - 13.4inch  
with Widen Base Stable Enough for for Bridge  
Canasta Foot and Hand About \$20



Look for this symbol on  
wood and paper products!  
'FSC' = Forest Stewardship  
Council, an organization that  
works to promote the practice  
of sustainable forestry  
worldwide.



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## Or Make Your Own...



card holder from an upside down shoe box!



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## Fit-to-a-Space Puzzles



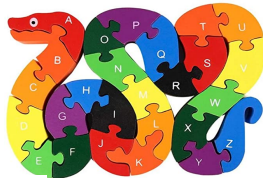
Perfect for beginners



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## Alphabet and Numeration



Try taking out  
just a few pieces  
to start with.

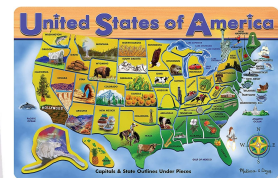


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Lauri Rubber Puzzles



Melissa & Doug



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## Jigsaw Puzzles

24, 48, 100 pieces

Ravensburger Puzzle

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## Easy for Turn Taking

Look for unstructured activities that can just be fun to do together.

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## Matching & Memory Games

Use bowls to keep track of whose cards are whose & to keep collected cards separate from playing cards.

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## Modified Memory Match - Twice as easy! Twice as fast!

Use placemats to separate cards into 2 sections. Choose 1 card from each section.

Search 'Inclusive, YouTube' for video instructions

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## Make Your Own Matching Games

Always include text!

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Made for St. Rose Friday Knights Social Program for Students with ASD

Tip: Use PowerPoint tools of duplicate slide & copy & paste from slide to slide

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## Dollar Store Deals



Buy 2 of the same set and you've got a matching game!



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## Teachers Pay Teachers

www.teacherspayteachers.com



www.AutismEducators.com



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## Watch for games from me at...

**InclusiveGames.com**  
Building Community Through Play



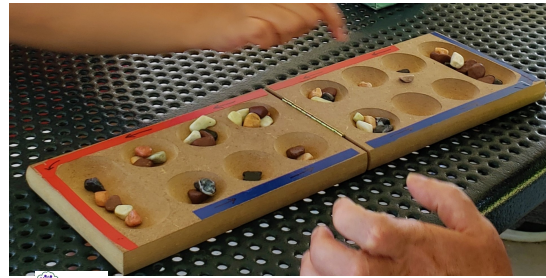
For players of all ages



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## Modifications

Mancala - colored tape indicates each players pockets & arrows show which direction to move



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## Good Ideas for Physical Play



A soft Frisbee substitute called 'Pocket Disc'



Nerf football

Make visuals for traditional games like 'Red Light Green Light'



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## Mini Schedules

Schedule

Free time 5-4-3-2-1

\_\_\_\_\_

Activity

Free time

Schedule

Free time 5-4-3-2-1

\_\_\_\_\_

Activity

Free time

Schedule

Free time 5-4-3-2-1

\_\_\_\_\_

Activity

Free time

Schedule

Free time 5-4-3-2-1


\_\_\_\_\_

Activity










Free time



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Tools for rounding corners can be useful!

 For 2 Players	 For 2 Players	 For 2 Players
 For 3 Players	 For 2 or More Players	 For 2 or More Players
 For 3 or More Players	 For 3 or More Players	 For 3 or More Players

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### Play a Game. Get a Prize!

For motivation, for targeting skills, or just for fun!

Prize Token	Prize Token	Prize Token
Prize Token	Prize Token	Prize Token
Prize Token	Prize Token	Prize Token

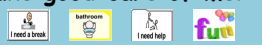
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**Yes** I say "Yes" & try new things

 I wait for my turn

 I say or do nice things  
"Good idea", "Thank you", or sharing

 I take good care of me!  


 I finish with positives  
"Good game" "Thanks for playing" "High 5" & help clean up

## How to be a Good Sport

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# Playing Games Virtually

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## Play 20 Questions

**THINKER:** I am thinking of something...

**GUESSER:** Can it...? Does it have...? Is it...?

One person (the "thinker") starts the game by saying, "I'm thinking of something that is...an animal" (or another category).

The other players (the "guessers") ask questions and try to guess what it is. As a group, guessers can ask up to 20 questions.

The thinker can only give 4 kinds of answers.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Maybe
4. I don't know. Please ask another question.

So players cannot ask a question like, "What color is it?" but they can ask, "Is it red?" Each time players ask a question, they can also make a guess.

If no one can guess before using up the 20 questions, the thinker wins!

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To be fair, the thinker's idea must be something all players would know!

Come up with your own categories or use one of these.

- an job or sport
- an animal
- a plant
- a food
- a house or classroom object
- an action
- a famous person
- a mutual friend

**Notes**  
At the end of 20 questions, the thinker can opt to give the players 20 more questions.

The one who guesses correctly may be the next thinker or they may choose to give their turn to someone else.

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### Some questions to ask...

- Is it bigger than an iPad? A man?
- Does it live in water?
- Does it have teeth?
- Does it have stripes or spots?
- Does it have wings? Scales? Fur?
- Does it fly? Swim? Hop? Run fast?
- Does it have legs?
- Does it eat other animals?
- Does it make a good pet?
- Does it have antlers, horns or tusks?
- Is it colorful?
- Are people often afraid of it?
- Is it usually found in North America, where we live?

I have a question...

**An animal**

20	10	
19	9	
18	8	
17	7	
16	6	
15	5	
14	4	
13	3	
12	2	
11	1	

### About Horses

- Bigger than a man
- Live on land
- Have teeth
- May have spots
- Have hair not fur
- Can run fast
- Eat plants
- Can be good companions and help with farm work
- Colors are black, brown & white
- Native to North America and bred for racing, riding, and farm works

Photo credit - ArtHouse Studio

### Virtual Matching Game

**Drive Old Cars**

The PowerPoint matches physical cards Ben has. Mom directs his attention to the screen.

Found it! (Independently)  
Mom helps Ben hold it up so I can see his card.

### Combination Digital & Physical Card Game

Initially, Mom and I practiced the game with Ben.

And then we got Dad in on the game.

Remembering our priorities of fun and personal connections. Ben's enjoying his mom & dad's company!

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### Abby and Carabelle, 4<sup>th</sup> graders, play DIS-CARD II.

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### Playing 20 Questions with a Visual Guide

**Some questions to ask...**

- Is it bigger than an iPad? A man?
- Does it live in water?
- Does it have teeth?
- Does it have stripes or spots?
- Does it have wings? Scales? Fur?
- Does it fly? Swim? Hop? Run fast?
- Does it have legs?
- Does it eat other animals?
- Does it make a good pet?
- Does it have antlers, horns or tusks?
- Is it colorful?
- Are people often afraid of it?
- Is it usually found in North America, where we live?

I have a question...

An animal

20	✓	10
19		9
18		8
17		7
16		6
15		5
14		4
13		3
12		2
11		1

If using Zoom, there is a check-mark stamp under 'Annotate'

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### Animal Detective "What's this animal?"

To create, each student in a class could contribute an animal or two. Students could then become the facilitators and play the game with others.

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**23** 1<sup>st</sup> Look

pelican

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### "And what's this?"

**18** 1<sup>st</sup> Look

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**Opportunity for sharing and getting to know one another.**



Abby, a fan of snakes, shared her feelings and some facts while Carabelle listened. (New info...It's a green tree python!)



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Then Carabelle shared her feelings—not a fan of snakes—while Abby listened.

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**“We don’t stop playing because  
we grow old;  
we grow old because we stop playing.”**

— George Bernard Shaw



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