

SIMPLY PLAYING

"Things to do when there is nothing to do!"



**A collection of games and activities
Written specially
for children and their caregivers.**

Suzanne Tabor

A Free Ebook Publication

By Suzanne Tabor

FREE EBOOK REGISTER - ISSN 1837-977X Volume 25 2011

This is a compilation of Games that do not require technology, and in most cases not even much cost to create/play.

I am sure as you read through them two things will happen

1. Childhood memories will inspire more for the list
2. You will invent new variations of the ones already here

If you don't have grandparents still alive, go and borrow someone else's and talk to them about the games they played as children. I am sure you will find they mainly involved make believe, invention, pebbles & dirt with circles and patterns, trees, ropes, and tyres, and the such like.

Investing in some basic but very necessary play equipment will reap the rewards of happy healthy active kids, with developed fine and gross motor skills and you will see the results in their co-ordination, writing & reading, and speech.

In Australia, we are able to buy pop up mesh washing baskets for just a dollar or two; they are cheap storage for dress ups, ropes, balls, and craft resources.

As you will see in the pictures, I store my toys in zip close recycle bags that the grocery store sells. This is mainly because I have a mobile clinic and need to be able to carry my toys with me easily and neatly. The bags are marked so I know the contents, age and gender, and the purpose of each one. At home they are easily stored on a bookshelf and take up less space than a multitude of loose toys or storage boxes.

Storing your toys by activity/category means you can choose a purpose or focus easily, also it means you can put some toys away and rotate them so they seem like new again when you get them out.

If you have excess toys, or ones that are not played with often, consider getting together with friends to share toys and create a toy library. If everyone buys a similar size storage box – not too big, you need to fit it in the car and carry it. Mark the toys e.g. TL (toy library) so they don't get lost into the general family ones and are easily retrieved when it is time to rotate. Agree to swap boxes every week or two, the more parents in your network the more toys to share. You may consider pooling say \$5 per week so you can purchase toys that one family only might not be able to afford, but together you can keep a variety circulating. Just agree that if someone opts out of your network, for whatever reason, they can only take back the toys in their own box. The ones purchased corporately stay with the network until it is a unanimous decisions to close it down. Make a decision at the beginning to donate the joint purchased toys to some local Playgroup or charity if there are not enough in the pool to share around or if no agreement can be reached as to how to do that. Build the bridges before you need to cross them.

MY TWO FAVOURITE RESOURCES when my children were small, and now with grandkids:-

1 Bubble Baths – the season does not matter; turn on a heater if needed. Pile them in with lots of pouring implements and paint brushes for the walls AND Bubbles. Most kids will go wrinkly before they want to get out, and you can sit just outside the door for “watch and hear” while you enjoy a peaceful cuppa or catch up on the phone with a friend who may well also have her kids in the bath! A rule of thumb is when the bubbles are all gone from the bath (if you used good bubble bath) then the kids should be also – but you can always add more bubbles if it is hot weather or this is the first moment of peace you have had all day and they are still happy!

2 THE SPECIAL BOX. The Special Box is a box the holds things that only come out to be played with on very special occasions. Fill it with treats like Sticker books, puzzles, fast food shop toys are great, they generally have a short play life in the everyday realm but in the special box they become renewed discoveries. Party favour type toys. Anything a little different from their day to day toys – perhaps some really special toy cars you don’t want lost in the sandpit, or tea sets, you will find boys like the whole cooking/pretend as well.

For me the Special Box was for various purposes. When I really needed a break, a quiet cuppa, or I was pressured to finish an assignment as I studied while the children were growing up. It was also handy when the kids were not well or a bit fractious. Some visitors are not “child friendly” so rather than struggle through that energy, having something special for the children to do while I was entertaining was also helpful. The one rule was that any disharmony and the box went away and they would have to go and play with their day to day toys.

Must have resources:

1. Balls – multiple sizes and textures
2. Hoopla hoops – they are still around in speciality & educational toy shops
3. Ropes – not just shop bought skipping ropes, multiple sizes and textures
4. Chunky chalks
5. Plastic multi- colour pegs
6. A selection of kids action song CDs

When you talk to those grandparents you will find these are things they will remember playing with (well not the CDs, it would have been kids radio then)

When we stopped giving children access to these basic toys, and stopped them marching into school, we took away the simplest co-ordination tools available, not to mention that the cross action of marching integrates the brain at the same time for better concentration.

This list of resources is all very price accessible, collect them slowly if need be, or visit a local charity shop and see what you can find.

Some of the games and activities in the list will need pre-planning to collect resources, and a few will require planned investment. Most just require you, a child, and a Will to enjoy! Have fun.

1. **Bubble blowers.** Cheap detergent will make an endless supply of refills. Try chasing the bubbles, counting how many are coming out, go out in the wind and see how far they fly.
2. **Balloons.** Empty a room of breakables and fill it with coloured balloons, they will last a few days. Don't blow them up too hard so they can be "squished" without breaking. Show any nervous child the noise one will make when it breaks so they are prepared. There are lots of great games of catch, throw, and if you make a bat from rolled up newspaper you have a safe indoor game. If you buy some little craft bells you can push them inside before blowing them up, or use rice, for extra sensory experiences. You will see in the photo beside the balloons a patchwork ball –this is a material "ball" with a hole to insert a balloon, then inflate it, the balloon will last longer and it is another tactile experience to just the texture of the balloon, it also makes the balloon a little heavier for small ones to throw.
3. **Clothes Pegs.** Plastic coloured ones are great for colour recognition, counting and making patterns. You can tie some rope down low, between poles, tress even chairs and get the kids to peg on patterns, or numbers, when the line is full have races to see who can get all of one colour off the fastest, then you are ready to start the game again. If you can get wooden pegs, the old "dolly" type they can be used to make puppets both of people and animals, then you just need a tray of sand or dirt to stick them in and start telling a story with them. Rope tied to the side of the washing trolley is a great way for littlies to help with the washing. Get them to peg the socks, cloths, hankies and other light small things out for you.
4. **Dominoes.** There are now large foam dominoes available very cheaply. They are each about the size of a breadboard. Alternatively get some heavy duty Cardboard boxes and make your own. Don't just play dominoes; also use them for counting, patterns, and making buildings much the way we used to make houses out of packs of cards. They are soft so the falling house won't break anything or hurt anyone. You can also turn them over and use them as a memory game of how many dots were on each end.
5. **Yoga/camping Mats.** These make great hopscotch mats. Draw on your pattern in permanent marker; use multiple colours and different shapes so that you can ask the children to call out the numbers or shapes as they jump. The mat can be used inside or out, and if you have a multiple children and find there a times when one play park does not meet everyone's needs this is one of those activities you can take with you. Use both sides to have two different jumping patterns. If you are into camping, now you have a game and a camp map in one! You can also use the mat in the bean bag throw game that is next.

6. **Bean Bags.** Bean bags are easily made from old socks and some rice or dried peas/seeds. Just be sure to tie the end tightly. You can use the yoga mat as targets to throw them in to, or the hoopla hoops. If you tie some ribbon on as tails they are even more fun to throw, just watch the kids don't think the tails are the launching end! If you use hoops, use two, one to stand in and one to throw to, when all the bags are in the opposite one, they can change to that hoop and throw again.
7. **Chunky Chalk.** Use the chalk to draw hopscotch on the driveway, targets for the bean bags, pictures by scribbling the colours then spraying on a little water to mix into patterns. You can also lay yourself, them or objects on the ground for them to trace around for great spatial awareness play. Draw a "path" that they have to follow, not just straight lines, but swirls to walk around, or shapes they have to name. Draw faces showing different emotions (use the emoticons MSM to get ideas) and ask them to tell them what the face is "saying", see if they can make a similar face –this will help with exercising face muscles as well as better interaction and communication skills as they learn to recognize body language cues.
8. **Hoops.** Hoops have so many uses – body twirling, the challenged can often learn to skip easier with a hoop. Use them for bean bag targets, If you have a few, lay them on the ground, touching, for them to walk on and around, or to jump in and out of. Hold them up for them to jump through, raising the height a little as they get better. Hoops can be the "Safe place" in games, when they want some time out. In the pool, you may be able to get a child to go under water to go through a hoop when they won't otherwise put their face under water; it is a fun distraction from their fear. Also having a hoop to hold, like a ball, may be just enough security they need to venture out, especially if you are holding the other side to get them started.
9. **Ropes.** Shop bought skipping ropes are good, but leave little to the imagination, and if the handles are wooden or solid can be dangerous. Go to a Marine supplier and buy some good quality marine rope. It won't twist and buckle and is heavy enough to be easier to bring over the head. The rule of thumb for measuring a skipping rope is to stand on the rope and holding the ends, bring your hands to your ears, that is the right length. Ropes of different textures can be used to make paths to follow, to have multiple children hold and play follow the leader, to hold up sheets to make make-shift tents. Try getting them to hold one end and wiggle the rope along the ground like a snake. If they can't jump yet, that's ok, hold both ends in one hand and make figures of eight, helicopters, windmills and other patterns. Google Rhythmic Gymnastics on YouTube for some basic patterns to form. Show them to the kids, there will be ones too difficult but the inspiration will be fun. The same with the balls and the hoops. Lighter ropes can be tied to toys to pull them along and expand their application – wait to you hear the laughter of a child dragging teddy around the house and watching him go bump – just keep the rope short!

10. **Balls.** Balls come in many shapes, sizes and textures. They are great for more than just throwing or kicking although I seriously recommend more of these activities as well. The light coloured plastic multiple packs that often come with play tents and can be bought as refill packs are great. They can't do much damage inside and you can use them for throwing at each other with little risk of harm. String a rope between two chairs, and cover it with a blanket, make one shelter on either side of the room and then "fire" on each other with the balls; or get two buckets, fill them up with balls, put them at either end of the room, and then use a timer or piece of music, you have to take as many balls from your own bucket and fill up the other persons. The one with the least balls at the end of the timer/music wins. Line up a row of chairs one behind the other, and roll the balls to each other through the chairs. Have one person at the bottom of the stairs and one at the top, take turns in each position, roll the ball down the stairs and count how many stairs it bounced on, throw the ball back up and see how close to the top you can get. Giggles may impede the throwing back up when the kids are at the bottom, or you may have to come down a few stairs to compensate! Throwing balls help with hand eye co-ordination, the skill we need to read and write. Kicking balls helps with eye foot co-ordination, a skill we need for spatial awareness and co-ordination.
11. **Sleeping bag slide.** While we are talking about stairs, sitting inside a sleeping bag and sliding down (feet first) the stairs can be supervised fun. As can crawling around like a caterpillar in one. Or playing caterpillar soccer, where you have to stay in the sleeping bag while either lying, or jumping around chasing the ball and trying to score a goal. If your child was not a natural, canal birth, some of its primal reflexes triggered by the turning and raising of the head through the birth canal may be switched off, lying a baby on its tummy and getting it to look up and reach for toys, or getting a toddler/child to crawl around the floor in a sleeping bag, where they will be naturally be looking up and forward, may aid in stimulating these reflexes. They are not only important for neck strength and mobility, but influence other muscles in that body systems which may become inhibited or recruit for those not performing as intended. Getting your child to roll around in the sleeping bag, or investing in a tunnel like the one in the picture and getting them to climb through and roll in it will be a physical stimulant and exercise as well as fun.
12. **Rebounders.** These small indoor exercise trampolines are fantastic for exercise and co-ordination. Use music of different rhythms that they need to jump in time with, and add special jumps such as stars, knees up, close your eyes, twist, turn. Hold hands with the timid or less able. When they are more confident try getting them to catch a ball from you, or to throw one up and down in their own hands while jumping.

13. **Wading Pools.** Those little blue things with metal legs, not very deep and easy to move around. They make great outdoor bubble baths, and water play. They can be filled with sand, or better still – in Australia we call it Milo Seed – its like Maize or corn. It can be bought in bulk from a produce store. Walking on it bare feet is a great tactile and acupressure experience in one. “Swimming” in it, is very tactile, and it stays cool, and is a great pouring texture. The best part is you can have the pool indoors, and there is no water or dirt so the kids can play any time of the day in pretty much any play clothes. You can also fill it with balloons or those plastic balls. Empty it is a great way to contain play dough or Leggo/ blocks play!
14. **Pop tents, sunshades and small tents.** Camping at home can be great fun. Put the tent up in the back yard, take out some toys, and have picnics for morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. If it is a nice night you might even be able to barbeque dinner as well. Spread a rug and lie on the ground and cloud watch – try to find shapes and animals in the clouds. If you are still out there at night – do the same with the stars, and try counting them. Spot the planes in the night sky. On less nice days, the grandkids and I have put the tent up in the lounge room during the holidays, TV looks so much better from inside a “cubby” or “fairy castle”, and sandwiches taste better eaten in a “fort”. If you let them sleep in the tent inside overnight, it will introduce them to the fun of camping without the fear. Give them a torch to go to the toilet or come to you if they need to during the night.
15. **Craft.** Use one of the mesh laundry baskets to collect toilet rolls, kitchen rolls, tissue boxes, string, wool all sorts of bits and pieces that are not such a problem when contained in a basket. Buy a multiple pack of sticky tape from the cheap shops. It’s amazing how much fun sticky tape and a free range can be to kids. When you get foam packaging, use a sharp knife to carve it into shapes to either use in the construction projects or to make soft fall blocks. Macaroni is great for threading and jewellery or making pictures; paper cups and Patti papers make great mobiles. Old socks can be turned into puppets, and bulk Nappy Boxes into puppet show stages.
16. **Painting.** Make your own paint by mixing flour, water, detergent, and food colouring – find the consistency that suits what you will use it for. Detergent helps with the later washing off, check the food colouring is washable. Thick paint is great for finger painting, thinner for painting fences and driveways, and tiles on the bathroom wall while you are having that “bath break” Mixing some more detergent in spray bottles means they can play fireman and wash it all off when the game is over. Hot days they can paint each other.

17. **Play dough, plasticine or moulding clay.** There are plenty of easy recipes out there now for make your own play dough and some can be cooked to keep the creations a little longer. Again go to charity shops or garage sales and get cheap cooking utensils and cookie cutters. Plastic cutlery is also good. If you have a handy person, cutting up some different dimensions plastic plumbing pipe makes good cutters also. Keep the lids off plastic ice cream containers and the like for the pretend baking dishes.
18. **Garden hose.** No, it does not need to be turned on during water restrictions, but like a rope it can be made into patterns for the children to walk on. Get them to walk forward, backwards, sideways, leading with each leg, eyes closed or open, balancing with a broom, putting a toy on their shoulder or their head (soft toys are easiest)
19. **Magazines and old books.** If your child tends to tear books, just go to the charity shops and buy old ones you won't worry about being damaged. When they get too worn, cut them up for the pictures. Do the same with magazines and keep the pictures all together in a container. You can make collages, jigsaw puzzles, or new story books where you write simple words about the pictures to aid their word recognition and language skills. A great game is to let them pull out pictures randomly and you have to invent one continuous story to match the pictures. They can help you invent the characters and the events as well. There are as many stories in the box as the pictures you collect.
20. **Egg Cartons.** Egg cartons can make a great variety of animals or objects with just a few other resources like Patti cake papers for the wheels of vehicles or the eyes of "monsters", collect pipe cleaners, wool, tooth picks for legs and antennas. Tie a series of them together – the tops make great boats and train carriages, the bottoms make good snakes, caterpillars etc., or Rockets, houses, and other buildings. Also the egg holders can be used to plant different seeds in to watch them grow
21. **Cotton wool gardens.** Use either the Styrofoam trays that food comes on, or bottles for temporary window sill gardens. In the trays, use a layer of cotton wool, then some seeds or carrot tops, then another layer of cotton wool. Keep it reasonable damp but not saturated, and watch the seeds grow. You may be able to plant them out in the garden when they outgrow the tray. Planting in cotton wool in a jar means that you will be able to see the root system as well.
22. **Seed heads.** Use either fine gauze or stockings. Lay the material flat, pour some wheat or similar seeds over the material, then place a handful of soil in the middle, draw the material round the soil to make a ball and secure it. Dampen the whole lot by dunking it in water, but not soaking it. Now you can add some eyes & nose with pins and buttons, and draw on a mouth if you want. Either stand the ball over a glass of water with some of the material actually in the water so it will draw up moisture into the ball, or stand it on a saucer of water. Keep the ball moist and in the coming days the ball with sprout "hair" through the material.

23. **Nature Collage.** Go on a nature hunt/walk and collect as many interesting things that you can – leaves, sticks, flowers, feathers and make a collage. Talk to your child about what you have collected, its place in nature, why it may have fallen, or why it is the colour it is eg leaves may be brown, green, red why? Talk about what animals might have eaten your treasures or lived and nested in them.
24. **Treasure hunt.** Treasure hunts can be inside or out. They can be as simple as unshelled peanuts (check visitors for allergies), balloons not inflated, messages you have written them on cards or pictures of animals. You can turn the treasure hunt into hide and seek by hiding some of their stuffed toys around the house and letting them find them. Add “hot or cold” to give them a hint if it is getting difficult for them.
25. **Theme days.** Decide that tomorrow is going to be ... “Blue day” or “Pirates day” etc, talk about it before bed so they know the next day right from when they get dressed they have to think about the theme. Some of your crafts might be preparation, such as making masks. If you are having a colour theme, then dress in the colour, try food dyeing scones, biscuits, the sugar, even the glasses of milk, make it a challenge to find how many “blue” words or things there are in your house, or how many times they can make “blue” fit into the conversation. You can even have blue pasta for dinner! Summer holidays in USA are long, Australia’s are not as long, but one theme day a week will help the weeks pass quicker and they can become a pseudo party time, for inviting friends over, the party you can pretend to be having, while not having the expense and effort! Challenge the friends to come with ideas also.
26. **Obstacle course.** Making an obstacle course inside or out can be easy and fun. Outside things like ropes, hoses, hoops, and chalk lines can be used to make the path and then buckets, or toys, even pegs space out along the line, can be obstacles to step over, add a chair for climbing under, if you have a bunk bed with a removable ladder, or a single outdoor ladder, lay that down to step through, planks of wood leaning on bricks can be small bridges or inclines. Inside apply the same basic ideas, a bridge of pillows can add another tactile experience, and hanging blankets between chairs can make tunnels, as well as the chairs themselves, make them climb under or crawl along a series of chairs. You can use washes as “stepping stones” Use your imagination the possibilities are endless and you will have things unique to your own home to add. I have seen a great idea with an internal stair case, using coloured string create a web as though it is laser beams, they have to climb through up and down the stairs without touching the string.
27. **Straws and ping pong balls.** This can be played on a table or hard surfaced floor. In its simplest for just blow through the straw and try to get the ball from one end of the table to the other. You can cut out some cardboard with archway holes to try to get the balls through. Put sides on the back target board that will not only hold it up but will also keep the balls guided towards the holes. If you tape the sides on like a hinge you will be able to fold it away and use it again. If blowing the ball through the

straw is too hard, try just blowing straight onto the ball, or get those little super balls and roll them towards the target.

28. **Hopscotch Variation.** If you can, get some boxes of heavy cardboard cut them into shapes such as triangles, circles etc., big enough for a child's foot, and lay them on the ground to walk along or jump through. Add bean bags or soft toys to step over. Again, vary the walking, backwards, forwards, eyes closed sideways, catching or balancing while they go.
29. **Plastic Bottle Shakers.** Plastic bottles of varying sizes can be filled with different objects – rice, pebbles, water, bells, buttons – the options are endless. Tape the lids closed so there are no accidents, Crawling babies will love chasing them around the floor as they will flip away from them as they slap them. They can be used as instruments to make sounds alone, or to accompany music, and they can also be used for a home version of ten pin bowls for older kids. Take them in the pool, some will sink some won't and again, hopefully the children will be so focused on having fun it will get them water confident.
30. **Wax Candle Painting.** There are a few ways to do this. You can draw a "mystery" drawing that the children then discover when they paint the page (the paint will not stick to the wax of the candle) or, trace pictures onto paper with a pencil, turn the paper over, and let them "trace" the picture with the candle. When that is done, rub out the pencil lines, and let them paint on the wax side – no one will know they had some help to produce their picture. Just let the kids free draw with the candles and then paint and see what comes out!
31. **Art Wall.** Get a sheet, nylon curtain or similar and attach it to a wall from the ceiling down. Add all the art work to this "hanging" with pins, when the room runs out, either take away a few yourself quietly or let them choose what must go to make room for more. This is not just a display wall. Educate family and friends you trust so that the children can take them to the wall when they visit and talk about what is there, what they made, how, why, what colours – anything that develops conversation and language skills, as well as trust that they will be "heard and listened to" These are important for special needs kids – they may never have a trophy in the traditional sense, but what they have created themselves are their trophies. Making the "wall" and choosing the first things to go up there can be an activity in itself. You may like to do something similar with photos of them, the family and their friends so you can create conversations there also. If you create a safe trust environment for your children to express their opinions, emotions, and ambitions with yourself and other significant people in their lives while they are young you will find the teenage years just that little bit easier.
32. **Fairy Bread.** Every holidays, or any other time there is an excuse, needs fairy bread. All you need is white bread, butter, and those coloured sprinkles you use on cakes, alternative to bread are plain flat biscuits. Use a table cloth because those sprinkles can end up in lots of places besides bread and tummies. There is very little sugar or

colouring in the quantity of sprinkles your child will eat so this is a great treat without the sugar overdose and they get to make them themselves. Just spread the bread or biscuits with butter or margarine, give them a plastic knife for safety, and then let them pour on the sprinkles which may need a little help sticking by pressing them into the spread. Cold glasses of milk and you have a great "I made it myself" morning tea treat. I know lots of grown-ups who still like to see fairy bread at the kid's birthday parties! This is a really cheap and easy "cooking experience"

33. **Egg and Spoon.** I would recommend a ball as the egg replacement, but I am sure you remember the game. "Egg" on the spoon, race to the other end and put it in the bucket, come back for the next one, if you drop it start again. Great co-ordination game. A variation is the balloon held between the knees that you have to get to the other end and drop into the bucket without touching it with your hands.
34. **Targets.** Balls or bean bags and your chunky chalk. Either draw the targets on the ground or on a wall. Draw the circles with enough room between each one that the ball or bean bag will fit into it and give each ring and space a value, keep the numbers under 10 for the littlies so they are learning their numbers at the same time.
35. **Dancing Partner.** You are going to make a puppet approximately the same size as your child. You will need three pairs of old stockings, some rubber bands, and some old play clothes that can be spared until the novelty wears off, also a cap. Fill one leg of the stockings with screwed up newspaper to make a head, the other leg will help tie the body together. Use another pair of stockings to make the arms, and the third pair to make the legs. Tie them all together to make a "person". Dress it in the clothes. Use the rubber bands to make feet and hands by sectioning off a small part of each limb. Use safety pins to attach the hat and you can make a face any way you want. Use either large strong rubber bands or some elastic and make an 8 shape, one part of the eight will be attached to the puppet, the other part will go around your child's shoe so that the puppet is standing on his/her feet. They can hold the hands or the body, and dance, play, move around as they want and of course the puppet will move with them!
36. **Parachutes.** If you can buy one from an army disposals, great. If not just use a coloured sheet. You will need some help with this one for part of it. You can lay the parachute on the ground, with some soft toys on top and then crawl around under it trying not to tip the toys off, or alternatively to tip them off; or with help, get around the edge and keep moving the parachute up and down in the air, the goal is to make the toys (or Balls) jump but not lose them off the sides, or alternatively to try to get them all off the sides. A variation is to have one person trying to keep the toys on by throwing them back as they fall off, while everyone else is trying to get them all off and the chute empty. Parachutes can also make great cubbies.
37. **Foam letter squares.** There are packs of foam letters that are like large simple puzzles. If you have these, use them for stepping stones, and ask the kids to tell you what the letters or numbers, or colours are when they step on them. You can also

have challenges where a colour, or either stepping on a number or letter, means you have to do something like wriggle, star jump, sing a nursery rhyme, catch a ball without moving off the square. Learn to use the toys you already have, better. You can also use these squares for a safe version of musical chairs.

38. **Blocks.** If you have a local building site, or carpentry workshop, they will often have timber off cuts that with a quick sand can be made into great building blocks, that can be used outdoors if it is hardwood. If your child is able, it can be a great way to learn to use a hammer, even if you predrill the holes and use chunky nails.
39. **Guess What.** Place some familiar items on a table and cover them with a cloth. Let the children feel them, but not see them, and see how many they can guess. They can also hold an object themselves, covered with a tea towel. They know what it is and have to describe it to you for you to guess.
40. **Compatibility.** There is a commercially produced game and is about \$25 Australian. It is a great family game. You can make a similar simpler home version by collecting images/photos of as many different things as you can – scenes, nature, animals, advertising, people. Try not to use photos of people or places your children are very familiar with as they will make a common association with the photo instead of having to use their imagination. Compatibility is played as a team, but your home version can be played singularly. I call my version “Perceptive Awareness” (I have added some sample images at the end of this book. You won’t have any difficulty Google searching free ones to download yourself.) The idea is to use a word eg Warm, and then everyone has to sort through the pictures to find three that mean “warm” to them, then take it in turns to explain why you chose the pictures you did. The more pictures you add to the game set the more variations you will have. You can just choose words as you go, or make up some cards with words written on them and place them in a pile face down and take turns in choosing the next card. I use this game with my students to help them with their listening and communication skills, because what we perceive and what someone else perceives as “warm” may be totally different and that is how miscommunication occurs. This will be a great language, communication and listening development game for all the family. You will also find out how your child perceives life and possibly what brings him/her joy, sadness, or fear that you did not know about.
41. **Fit Balls.** Exercise Balls used in gyms and offices are great for children as well. Sit them crossed leg on top, and hold their arms for support while you rock them forward and back and side to side, as well as in circular motions. Get them to lie on the ball on their tummy and put toys out in front of them to reach for, again supporting them so they do not fall off the ball. Get them to reach forward as you roll them forwards, and then back till their toes touch the ground. They may like to pick up the toy on one movement and replace it on the next. Get them to spread their arms like a plane and support them while you roll them side to side. As they get more confident they will be able to touch the ground on each side. If you are trying

to teach your child to curl for somersaults, get them to “wrap” themselves around the ball and to try to hang on for as long as possibly curled up like a ball while you roll them over on the ball – make sure you are rolling on carpet or similar for padding. Again co-ordination as well as spatial awareness combined with fun.

42. **Massager.** If you have a hand held massager this can be great for tactile and body awareness. Be aware that in an area at the base of the spine near the tail bone there is a “reflex” spot that can cause involuntary bowel movements so avoid that area unless there is a medical reason for needing that help. Also at the base of the skull where it connects to the spine is an area one should avoid unless you have clear medical advice that this will not trigger seizures in relation to you own child’s special needs. Apart from that, use the massage all over the body, around the jaw line helps with both speech and digestion, on the feet are acupressure points for the whole body systems, on the chest and between the shoulder blades can help with lung and asthma issues. Ask the child to close their eyes and tell you where you are using the massager. Let the child give you a massage as well.

43. **Some golden oldies.** Don’t forget the oldies, like Pin the Tail on the Donkey, Simon says, follow the leader and Action songs.

I hope these ideas have helped to stimulate your own imagination and inspire you to remember when play was not sitting in front of a TV or computer.

Many of the “old” games had the dual purpose of development of language, co-ordination, brain interaction and integration, fine and gross motor skills, and preparation for reading and writing. When we take away the play we also take away the developmental tools they represent. It is a 21st century fallacy that education and occupation require technology and expensive toys. These enhance but do not replace imagination, activity and people interactions.

Technology also provides resources to help with creative play and I am listing a few websites you may find helpful for free resources and information.

Have fun playing with your children, and allow your own inner child to be in the moment. Although it does not seem so at the time, our children are very quickly grown and we only get one chance to be there in their childhood as relevant contributions to their growth.

Thank you to those who have inspired me to write this EBook, and to my children, grandchildren and the children of clients who have both allowed me to play, and to learn alongside them. It has been and still is fun.

Peace and blessings for the journey Suzanne T

The Pictures are at the end.

Resources.

<http://video.about.com/specialchildren/Special-Need-Coordination-Game.htm>

<http://video.about.com/specialchildren/Special-Needs-Balance-Games.htm>

www.fisher-price.com/us/special-needs

www.about.com/specialchildren/Special-Needs-Children

www.kidspot.com.au/slideshow/kids-activity-sheets

www.free-colouring-pages.com/

www.games.kidsplay.net

www.do2learn.com

www.4kidz.org

Storage/carry bags for toys sorted by purpose and focus



Commercial Tunnel, Foam Dice – great for counting, varios balls, slinky and the outer cover for a balloon ball. If you know someone in airconditioning you may be able to purchase some airconditioning duct from them to use as a tunnel or they may have some left over from a site/job



Hoberman balls expand as they are thrown – another special awareness tool



Perceptive Awareness Images ideas: Use images that have enough information to inspire thought, not just “pat” answers.



