

the **AUTISM** page.



Building Attention

23 fun activities to boost attention skills

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How to get a child's attention

23 printable attention building activities:

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Attention Building

This activity guide is designed to support anyone working with a child or children on attention skills. The activities can be done at home with parents, by speech therapists, teachers, playgroup leaders or anyone who wants to have some fun.

The guide is designed to be printed out so you have a page for each activity that can be referred to as you set up and complete the activity. The activities are designed to be quick as they are for children with a short attention span.

Attention difficulties in young children

To communicate with someone you need their attention. In fact, the starting point of all speech and communication is attention. If your child has fleeting, ridged or single channelled attention it will be difficult to communicate with them. With my son, I focused on his lack of speech development until it was pointed out that we needed to take a step back and work on attention first.

Shared attention and shared experiences are an important part of how we learn, develop and understand the world around us. If you can follow what someone is pointing to, you can understand what they are talking about.

Shared attention is very difficult for many young children and particularly difficult for those on the autistic spectrum. Some may focus intensely on a limited range of interests and struggle to attend to other things. Many also have difficulty shifting attention or focusing attention on more than one thing. Some people find it very difficult to look and listen at the same time, they need to focus on one or the other.

Most young children have some attention difficulties. These can include:

- Being easily distracted
- Having difficulty shifting attention
- Not being motivated to give attention
- Single channelled attention
- Attending to their own agenda
- Attention varying depending on situation

Motivation to pay attention

Children are only going to pay attention to something they are interested in or excited by. I found it really hard to find motivating things / toys for my eldest child. We started with chocolate and bubbles and over time found more things he enjoyed. If you know a child's interests this is the best place to start. If you don't,

it is trial and error. Introduce lots of things (light up toys, toy cars, posting games) and note their reaction to the items. Take time to try different things and get a good understanding of what works.

If you need to grab a child's attention then you need to be the most exciting thing in the room. You are unlikely to win against the TV or iPad so it is important to reduce any distractions when trying to communicate. Under-fives can rarely focus on more than one thing. I appreciate this can be particularly hard when a child is also trying to do anything other than engage with you.

Tips for getting attention

Activities need to be irresistible to the child if you want them to engage with you. Many autistic people are very visual so being visually appealing, colourful or exciting is a great way to get attention.

Work on shared attention and turn taking. Teaching your child to wait using phrases like 'waiting', '1,2,3, go' and 'ready, steady, go' and using them often will help with understanding. Using consistent phrases will also support speech development. It may seem like it doesn't work for a very long time but it will eventually make a difference and when it does it really is worth it. Make sure you start with short waits or taking turns very quickly. As your child develops their ability to wait, time taken for turns can be increased.

Great attention activities:

- using 'lift the flap' books
- anticipation games like blowing bubbles
- rolling a ball
- simple games including 'my turn' and 'your turn'

A great way to support attention development for children on the spectrum is Attention Autism. This is a therapy designed for autistic children and is a great way to work on attention. These attention building activities are great for stage 2 attention builders for users of Attention Autism.

Remember whatever purpose you are using the activities for enjoy it and have fun.

Jade

You will need:

Flour

Paper

Small containers
such as plastic shot
glasses or toy
shapes

1. Flour Castles or Shapes

Directions

Easy

Fill the shot glass or container with flour.

Turn over onto the paper and tap.

Lift up the container to reveal your flour
castle.



You can then splat the castles and give your child a turn to do this. Splatting the flour castle is my boy's favourite bit.

You can do this activity with any shape.



2. Paint Balls

Directions

Easy

Dip the balls into paint, then drop into the container and roll around to make a pattern.

You will need:

A container such as a plastic box

Paint

Rubber balls or marbles



You could also put paper in the bottom of the container if you want to keep your pattern.

3. Salt Shaker

Directions

Easy

In advance – Make small holes in the base of the plastic cup, this can be done using the end of a corkscrew.

You will need:

Salt

Plastic cup

Paper (black or dark paper works best)



Put some salt into the plastic cup and shake from height over the paper.

If you want to make more of a shape with the salt, then just make one small hole in the base of the cup. This will give you more control.

4. Flower Pot Rocket

You will need:

2 small plastic flower pots

Foam soap or shaving foam

Parcel tape

Directions

Easy

In advance – cover the holes in one of the flower pots with the parcel tape.



Spray the foam on top of the taped up base of the flower pot (see above).

Then swiftly place the second flower pot on top. As it is pulled down the foam will shoot out of the holes in the flower pot creating a rocket.



5. Fizz Balloon

Directions

Needs a practice run

You will need:

Empty small plastic bottle

A balloon

Funnel

Baking soda

Vinegar



In Advance: Place the vinegar into the small plastic bottle (2/3rds full). Use the funnel to fill the balloon with baking soda. Carefully place the balloon over the rim of the bottle without releasing any of the baking soda.

When ready to go, lift the balloon over the mouth of the bottle so the baking soda falls into the vinegar. The reaction should cause the balloon to inflate.



6. Flour Shaker

Directions

Easy

In advance: cut out shapes using the paper or card. You can do this with the child if appropriate.

You will need:

Flour (or icing sugar)

Flour shaker or sieve

Paper / card

Scissors



Shake the flour over your shapes with a shaker or sieve. Do this from height.



Remove the card / paper and reveal your flour shapes.



You will need:

Black Treacle

Cling Film and or
paper

Spoon

7. Treacle Dripping

Directions

Easy

Put the cling film or paper down as your base.



Using the spoon drop / drip the treacle from height making shapes on your film or paper.



You can use any thick liquid for this such as ice cream sauce.

You will need:

Soap foam or shaving foam

Paper

Ice cream cones

Sprinkles (optional)

8. Ice Cream Splat

Directions

Easy

Fill the ice cream cones with shaving or bath foam.

If using add sprinkles on top.



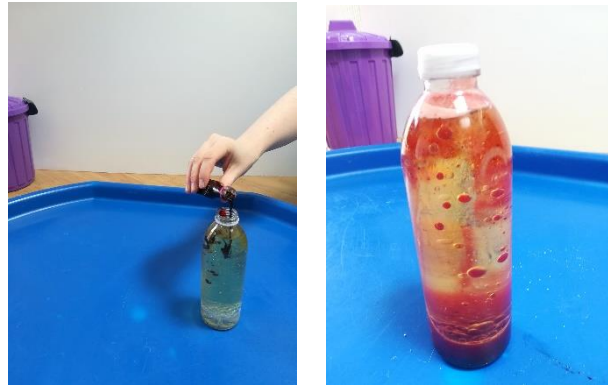
Then splat the ice cream onto the paper.

9. Lava Lamp

Directions

Easy

In advance: Fill the bottle almost to the top with oil and add a little water on top.



When ready add a few drops of food colouring. Then drop in your effervescent tablet. Put the cap on the bottle and enjoy your homemade lava lamp.

You will need:

Empty small plastic bottle

Oil

Water

Food colouring

Effervescent tablet such as fizzy vitamin C or Alka-Seltzer®

10. Skittles Rainbow

You will need:

A packet of
Skittles®
A small plate
Warm water

Directions

Easy

Create a circle of Skittles around the edge of the plate. Add a little warm water so it touches the Skittles. Watch your rainbow appear.



11. Tea Sprinkle

Directions

Easy

Snip the teabags and sprinkle the tea from height onto the paper.



Spread the tea around with your hands releasing more smell.



You will need:

Herbal teabags
(strong smelling is best)

Paper

Scissors

12. Volcano

Directions

Easy

Combine the vinegar, food colouring (if using) and baking soda in the container. Watch it fizz up like a volcano.

You will need:

Bowl or container

Vinegar

Baking Soda

Food colouring
(optional)



You will need:

Kitchen sponge

Paint

Paper

13. Rainbow Sponge

Directions

Easy

Put thin lines of the paint together on the sponge. Run the sponge swiftly over the paper creating your rainbow.



14. Bubble Snake

You will need:

Empty plastic bottle

Scissors

A small sock

Plate or container

Bubble mixture
(washing up liquid
and water)

Directions

Easy

In advance: Cut the plastic bottle in half. Place the sock over the top half of the bottle, with the bottle mouth poking out of the top of the sock.

Put the bubble mixture on the plate / container.



Dip the bottle / sock into the bubble mixture. Blow into the bottle to create your bubble snake.



15. Car Painting

Directions

Easy

Put some paint onto the tin foil or paper.



Drive the cars through the paint creating paint tracks. The tin foil adds a noise element to the activity.

You will need:

Toy cars

Paint

Tin foil or paper

You will need:

Paper (black or dark paper works best)

PVA Glue

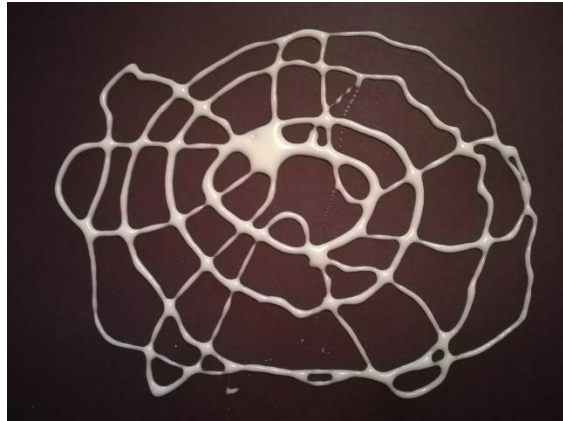
Glitter

16. Glue & Glitter

Directions

Easy

Drop the glue from height onto the paper. Creating a shape like a spider web works well.



Sprinkle the glitter onto the glue to create your glitter picture.



17. Milk Drop Swirls

You will need:

Milk

Food colouring

Shallow container

Washing up liquid

Directions

Needs a practice run

Fill the shallow container with milk. Add a few drops of food colouring.



Add five small drops of washing up liquid into the colouring and watch the colours swirl.

You will need:

Plastic cups

18. Cup Pyramid

Directions

Easy

Slowly build a pyramid out of the plastic cups. Say 'ready, steady, go' and on 'go' knock the tower over.



19. Cornflour Worms

You will need:

Cornflour

Water

Jug

Spoon

Colander or sieve

Bowl

Directions

Easy

In advance: mix the cornflour (2/3rds) and water (1/3rd) until you have a thick gloop in the jug using the spoon.



When you are ready pour the cornflour mix through the colander or sieve from height over the bowl. This will create your cornflour worms.



You will need:

Paint

Paintbrush

Paper

20. Painted Butterfly

Directions

Easy

Using the paint do a simple half butterfly on the paper.



Then fold the paper in half over the paint. Put pressure on the paper then open it to reveal your whole butterfly.



21. Paint Flick

Directions

Easy

Put the paint into pots. Lay the paper down on a tray or sheet. Flick the paint onto the paper using paintbrushes.

You will need:

Paint

Paint pots

Paintbrush

Paper

Tray or sheet



22. Cake Tin Drum

You will need:

Cake tin, metal tray or drum

Rubber balls or marbles

Directions

Easy

Put your cake tin, tray or drum on the floor. Drop the balls or marbles from height onto the tin creating a loud drumming noise.



23. Candles on the Cake

You will need:

Playdoh®

Cupcake paper case

Cake candles

Directions

Easy

Put the paper case down. Roll the playdoh into a ball (making a cake shape) and put it into the case.



Then put the candles onto the cake.



I hope you have enjoyed these activities and they are helping to develop attention skills.

You can find out more about Attention Autism and motivating / attention grabbing items at The Autism Page.

www.theautismpage.com

Don't forget to tag me in your attention building activity pictures.



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