

# Helping Children with Physical Disabilities



Working with young children with physical disabilities requires intentional planning. Children with physical disabilities have differing needs and require diverse types of support. For best results, educators should collaborate with the child's parents as well as other professionals, who work with the child, to determine and implement the most effective accommodations for the child's specific needs. Like all children, a child with physical disabilities requires opportunities to make choices and participate independently. Adults must resist the urge to do everything for the child, providing appropriate help, while simultaneously encouraging the child to try do things independently. The ability to act self-reliantly promotes self-confidence and independence (Copple & Bredekamp 2009; PED, 2019; Specific Ideas, 2015).

Easy Maneuvering in the Classroom	Adapt Learning Activities	Teach Peers How to Help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use stable furniture that cannot be easily knocked over.</li> <li>• Secure area rugs with tape or remove them to prevent tripping.</li> <li>• Arrange classroom furniture so that wide aisles exist between them, allowing children to move freely.</li> <li>• Provide safe space for walkers, crutches, and wheelchairs so other children do not trip.</li> <li>• Adapt instructional delivery and activity placement, so all children are sitting and participating comfortably.</li> <li>• Secure materials, such as taping paper to the table, as a child draws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide tools for grasping, holding, transferring, and releasing.</li> <li>• Provide materials of different textures to stimulate the sense of touch.</li> <li>• Provide ample lighting and add lamps if needed.</li> <li>• Plan activities that encourage movement of all body parts.</li> <li>• Add tabs or large paperclips to books to facilitate page turning.</li> <li>• Place tape on crayons and markers to make them easier to grasp.</li> <li>• Secure paint brushes into a glove or provide paint brushes with large knobs on the ends.</li> <li>• Provide scissors that open automatically when squeezed.</li> <li>• Provide spray bottles to practice squeezing motion.</li> <li>• Keep items contained, such as playing with blocks on a cookie sheet or pass-rolling a ball inside of a hula hoop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach peers how to respectfully offer help.</li> <li>• Encourage peers to find creative ways to include a child with a physical disability in their play, such as moving blocks to a table to play with a child in a wheelchair.</li> </ul> 

References:

Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs: Serving children from birth through 8*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

PED. (2019). New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines.

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