

## Preparing for Summer Outings Starts at Home!

By: Ina Lee, Instructor Therapist

As adults, most of us have become experts at waiting due to practice in our daily lives, but this is often an area of difficulty for children. Teaching skills in manageable steps helps your child to be successful. Start slowly with what he can do. If your child can wait up to 10 seconds, begin at 5 seconds. Begin to teach waiting in settings where your child is comfortable and the least distracted, such as at home. For example, if your child wants a treat this is a teaching opportunity. Ask him to wait while you fumble with the bag for 5 seconds. If he is waiting appropriately give him a treat and lots of praise. As your child shows success, gradually increase the required wait time by a manageable amount of time. Continue to increase the

time until you reach your goal. Once your child is comfortably waiting at home, practice in the community in an easily controlled situation. For instance, practice waiting in the corner store while you talk to the cashier for a minute and then reward your child's success. Finally, generalize your child's ability to wait with different people, in different settings, and with different instructions (e.g., "wait", "hold on", etc.). Share your child's progress with teachers, siblings and caregivers, so everyone can practice waiting with your child in a



consistent manner. Before long, 5 seconds can turn into appropriate waiting for the swing at the park, in line for the washroom at an amusement park or at the zoo. .  
*Contact your Supervising Therapist to discuss what strategies would work best for your child.*

## Shaping-What is it and why is it important?

By: Andrea Paszti, Supervising Therapist

Children with autism often experience difficulty with tasks that may be perceived by others, as simple. These tasks may include skills needed in the community such as, waiting and lining up. These areas of need can be addressed successfully by reinforcing steps that are closer and closer to an end goal. It may be necessary to break a skill down into smaller, more manageable parts, and reinforce as your child is able to perform increasingly appropriate versions of the skill. This is referred to as shaping.

When planning to shape behaviours there are several steps to keep in mind.

- 1. What is the end goal?** Pick an area where your child has difficulty and determine what skills are necessary for him to learn to have increased success.
- 2. What can my child already do?** Observe your child completing the skill and identify the level at which he is already successful. For example, he can

- wait for 5 seconds.
- 3. Where do I start teaching?** Look for opportunities to praise or reward the level at which he is already successful. Begin to slowly increase the level of difficulty that is expected of him to receive praise and/or rewards. For example, praise or reward waiting for 10 seconds.

The key is to make sure that you are rewarding steps that are closer to the final goal. You will want to teach that better responses receive better rewards. This is the basic idea of shaping, which can be used to teach a large variety of skills.



*For more information on using this technique, see the Chaining and Shaping Behaviour tip sheet at <http://www.connectability.ca/connectability/library/documents/chaining-shaping.pdf> or speak to your Supervising Therapist*

## Out and About in the Summer

By: Eric Marier, Instructor Therapist, and Ginnine Robertson, Transition Coordinator, TPAS

**S**ummertime is a great time for you and your child to get out and have some fun. Here are a few things to do in the summer.

### Waterplay

Set up a plastic pool in the backyard and invite some neighbourhood kids. Add some music and a bubble machine and you have a water party! Take a walk to the local park to indulge in the waterplay area with a picnic afterwards. For the very adventurous, pack up the towels and head out to Wild Water Kingdom or Ontario Place.

### Movies

Turn your living room into your own personal theatre with freedom to roam. For videos that are designed to help your child learn new skills, check out the Parent

Library. For the more seasoned movie goers, the Regent Theatre has nights just for children with autism, hosted by the Geneva Centre for Autism.

### Animals

Your child may love to see animals, and discover where they live and what they do. Riverdale Farm gives free tours and has a wide variety of farm animals including horses, ducks, and goats. If you're up for a bigger adventure, the Toronto Zoo now features the Kids Zoo, an interactive wildlife experience.

### Reading

Snuggle up and read a great book! Summer is a great time to catch up on some reading with your children. Reading books with

your child can help him better understand how to deal with social situations and community outings. Try some of these titles:

- Now I Get It: Beach and Playground (by Natural Learning Concepts)
- Now I Get It: Restaurant and Movies (by Natural Learning Concepts)
- King of the Playground (by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor)
- Andy and His Yellow Frisbee (by Mary Thompson)

These books and many others are available through the Parent Library.

Whatever you want to do, there's a way to have fun in the summer with your child!

For more detailed information on some of these activities ask your Transition Coordinator.

## A Parent's Experience: Summer Fun

By: Mandy Yeung, Parent

**S**ummer is a great time to try new things or to explore new learning and play opportunities, such as visits to the zoo, an amusement park, or perhaps camping. I like to take advantage of the warm weather and break from school to expose my child to new environments, like summer camp. There, my child can learn new skills and have fun too. I determine what goals I would like my child to work on based on the activities that he enjoys. I need to be sure these goals are small and achievable, such as taking turns when playing with other kids, or riding a bicycle. Whatever the goal is, it needs to be realistic. You can choose from a variety of summer camps offered in the community or through Toronto Parks and Recreation that

focus on specific goals: social skills, music, swimming, or sports.

To help my child stay focused and engaged, the activities we choose need to be interesting. Also, it helps to have someone there to redirect him back to task when needed. There are programs in our community that can help with this. Toronto Parks and Recreation offers two weeks of one-on-one support to your child in their summer camp.

My child has many opportunities to enjoy new activities and learn new skills during the summer, and nothing helps more than preparation. Storybooks, videos, and activity planners can prepare my child for his day in summer camp or any other summer activities. A journal can also help to set the

day's expectations and give him an idea of what his day will look like. To help my child gain some familiarity, I can talk to him about his summer camp, or take him there in advance to run around and play.

Summer activities should always be fun and rewarding for your child and your entire family. A bit of planning ahead will take away some of your worries and make the summer experience successful and memorable.

For more information on planning summer camps and other activities, take a look at the *Toronto Fun Guide (Adapted & Integrated Service information)* - <http://www.toronto.ca/parks/torontofun/fun-guide-descriptions.htm#adapted> or speak to your child's Transition Coordinator.

## Upcoming events:

Please visit [www.surreyplace.on.ca](http://www.surreyplace.on.ca) for more information & other events

**Fall Festival:** September 11, 2010, 11 am -2pm – Join us at the second annual Fall Festival. Look for your invitation in the mail.