

SEE Hear  
 FEEL TASTE  
 SMELL  
 Hard Soft  
 SHAKE  
 Smooth  
 ROUGH  
 Bumpy  
 Fuzzy Bouncy  
 Squishy  
 FLASHY  
 Light DARK  
 Clean  
 Dirty  
 Dry WET  
 Sticky Sharp  
 Push PULL  
 Pinch GRASP  
 SQUEEZE  
 TUG Spin  
 Discovery Search  
 CREATIVE  
 RING  
 LOUD QUIET  
 Sour Sweet TART  
 Hot COLD  
 Bitter  
 Shiny SIT  
 Crawl  
 Reach Catch  
 ROLL  
 Hot COLD  
 STRETCH  
 CRUISE  
 IN OUT  
 Release Throw  
 Fingers Toes  
 KICK  
 STOP GO  
 Hands FEET  
 Learn  
 Love SON  
 Grow  
 Family Sibling  
 SISTER  
 Daughter Explore  
 BROTHER  
 DEVELOP  
 LAUGH

# Hold Everything!

Twenty "Stay-Put" Play Spaces  
 For Infants and Preschoolers with  
 Sensory Impairments and Other Special Needs



The Ohio Center for Deafblind Education

Kay L. Clarke

## Published by The Ohio Center for Deafblind Education

The Ohio Center for Deafblind Education (OCDBE) provides technical assistance services at no cost to children, birth through 21 years of age, with combined vision and hearing loss. Technical assistance includes onsite consultation, training and professional development, information dissemination, and other consultative services. In addition, the Center is responsible for maintaining an annual registry of children and youth who have been identified as being deafblind within the state of Ohio. Families, service providers, and agencies supporting children and youth with deafblindness may request services at any time. For additional information, visit [www.ohiodeafblind.com](http://www.ohiodeafblind.com) or call 614-785-1163.

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## Introduction

Welcome to the “Hold Everything!” booklet, based on a workshop by the same name sponsored and hosted by **The Ohio Center for Deafblind Education** in June 2004. The goal of this booklet is to provide parents and early childhood educators with 20 initial ideas for developing “stay-put” play spaces for infants and young children with sensory impairments and other special needs. It is hoped that the readers of this booklet will use some of these ideas and go on to develop additional creative approaches that will encourage self-initiated exploration, play and learning.

“Stay-put” play spaces are play environments that:



- 1) include **high interest, multi-sensory materials** that appeal to a variety of young children, with and without special needs;
- 2) have parts that are **anchored down** in some way so that young children can keep track of them and do not have to rely on adult help to retrieve them;
- 3) facilitate and encourage **repeated, self-initiated exploration** of materials;
- 4) are **easily adaptable** to match individual children’s strengths, needs and personal preferences;
- 5) may be used **individually or with other persons**; and
- 6) are **inexpensive and easy** to make or to put together at home or school.


Lilli Nielsen’s Active Learning philosophy and materials have contributed greatly to the development of these “stay-put” play spaces (see the Resources section on page 43). The premise of the Active Learning approach is that ALL children are capable of interacting with the physical environment around them, no matter what their level of cognitive, motor or sensory abilities may be.

The key to promoting self-initiated exploration lies in structuring the physical environment in ways that children can use their unique abilities to exercise control over the environment. For example, a child who is blind may be unable to visually explore his play space, but may use his hands to find objects that are anchored in place so they won’t roll away when bumped. At the same time, a child who is unable to reach out her arms to grasp an object may be able to use her mouth to explore the qualities of an object that is hanging within reach of her lips.

Adults, then, must be willing to step back and allow children time to discover, problem solve and explore on their own. For some children, this may be the first time in their lives that they have been able to initiate actions independently, without adults coaching them or manipulating their bodies.

Keep in mind that not all “stay-put” activities presented here will be a good match for all children. Pick and choose activities for a particular child that seem to be a good developmental match and that may peak the interest of the child. The activities may also be modified to better fit the abilities and interests of each child and his or her family.

“Stay-put” play spaces provide children with opportunities to practice and develop a variety of skills. The chart below provides a quick reference to the major skills targeted for each type of play environment. The specific activities that are set up within a play space will, of course, determine the actual skills practiced. Use your imagination and prepare to have fun!

Target Skill Areas For “Stay-Put” Play Spaces																
◆ = Targeted Skill																
	Ball Handling Skills	Body Imagery	Cause-Effect	Concepts	Eye-Hand/Ear-Hand Coordination	Fine Motor Skills	Goal-Directed Whole Body Movement	Literacy	Pretend/Toy Play	Self-Initiated Actions	Social Turn-Taking	Spatial Mapping	Tactile Exploration	Tool Use	Visual Skills	Vocal Play
Ball Board				◆	◆	◆				◆	◆				◆	
Bead Cans			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆					◆	
Bib/Smock		◆	◆		◆	◆		◆		◆		◆	◆			
Cookie Sheet			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆	◆	◆			◆	
Curler Board			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆		◆	◆		◆	
Drying Rack	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆				◆	◆	◆	◆		◆	
Frog Plate		◆		◆	◆	◆			◆	◆		◆		◆	◆	
Highchair/Wheelchair Tray			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆				◆	◆	
Hula Hoop Hanger			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆		◆	◆		◆	
Light Board			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆					◆	
Light Box			◆	◆	◆	◆		◆		◆					◆	
Little Play Room		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆			◆		◆			◆	◆
Metal Lap Tray			◆	◆	◆	◆			◆	◆		◆			◆	
Mirror			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆					◆	
Mobile Stand			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆		◆			◆	
Pegboard Tabletop			◆		◆	◆	◆			◆		◆			◆	
Shaker Eggs and Can			◆	◆	◆	◆				◆					◆	
Suspended Beachball	◆		◆		◆					◆	◆	◆			◆	
Texture Board			◆		◆	◆				◆			◆		◆	
Window/Windowsill			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆			◆			◆		◆	

**Special thanks to...**the children, parents and staff of the Nisonger Center Early Childhood Education program in Columbus, Ohio and the Dublin City School District in Dublin, Ohio for inspiring many of these “stay-put” ideas and for allowing the children’s smiling faces to brighten the pages of this booklet.



# Ball Board

## Description:

Have a ball with this board, alone or with friends! Children use soft balls to cover up the holes in the board, as light shines through the holes. It's equally fun to find lights and other "surprises" by removing balls from the holes.



## Target Skill Areas:

Concepts (up/down, in/out); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (reach, grasp, release); self-initiated actions; social turn-taking; visual skills (search, fixation).

## Materials Needed:

- Heavy-weight cardboard, approximately 4 1/2 feet long by 2 feet wide
  - 14 1-inch Metal book rings, available from office supply stores
  - 9 1-inch White curtain rings, available from craft or sewing supply stores
  - 14-16 feet of 1/4 -inch Elastic cord, available from craft or sewing supply stores
- 9 Balls (e.g., soft foam balls, kush balls, splash balls), sized to fit into or through holes in board
  - Flashlight
  - Finger puppet(s)
  - WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 8)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Bend backward about 1 1/4 -feet of cardboard on each end of the length of cardboard to form the flaps or "legs" that will allow the board to stand up. There should be about 2 feet left in the center for the front surface of the board.
2. Cut nine holes in the front surface of the board (one in the center and eight forming a circle around the center hole). Be sure that the holes are cut to match the diameter of the balls being used with the board.
3. Outline the holes with a permanent colored marker that contrasts with the color of the cardboard (e.g., black marker on light brown cardboard).
4. Open five book rings, push one end of each ring through the cardboard and close



them. The rings should be spaced evenly across the top of the front surface of the board.

5. Attach a book ring to each ball (method will vary according to the type of ball used).
6. Tie a length of elastic cord to the book ring on each ball. On the other end of each elastic cord, tie on a plastic curtain ring.
7. Open the metal book rings at the top of the board, place the curtain rings into the book rings, and then close them.
8. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** to the top of the board that reads: "**WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity board.**" Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children's self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. If children using the ball board are able to grasp and maintain a grasp on the balls (or other objects used) and do not throw the objects, then the elastic cords may not be necessary. The balls/objects may be placed in a bowl or other container instead of suspending them from the elastic cords.
2. The ball board may be placed in front of a window, with sunlight shining through the holes. A child may then **cover** the lighted holes ("hide the light") with balls until no lighted holes are left showing. If a child is interested in the light, he/she may wish to **remove** balls that have already been placed in the holes in order to reveal the light behind them.
3. In a darkened room, a flashlight may be shown through one hole at a time. A child can then play a "finding game", searching visually for the lighted hole and **covering** it with a ball or **pushing** a ball **through** the hole.
4. A finger, finger puppet, or other small toy, may be passed through a hole from behind the board and "wiggled" to draw a child's attention. The child may then search for the toy and cover up the hole where he/she sees it.
5. Instead of balls, a child may put toy cars or other favorite objects through the holes.
6. This can also be a fun "buddy" activity, with one child behind the board with a flashlight or object and the other child covering the holes. Two or more children could also take turns covering the holes or removing the balls from the front of the board.
7. Be creative and make it fun!

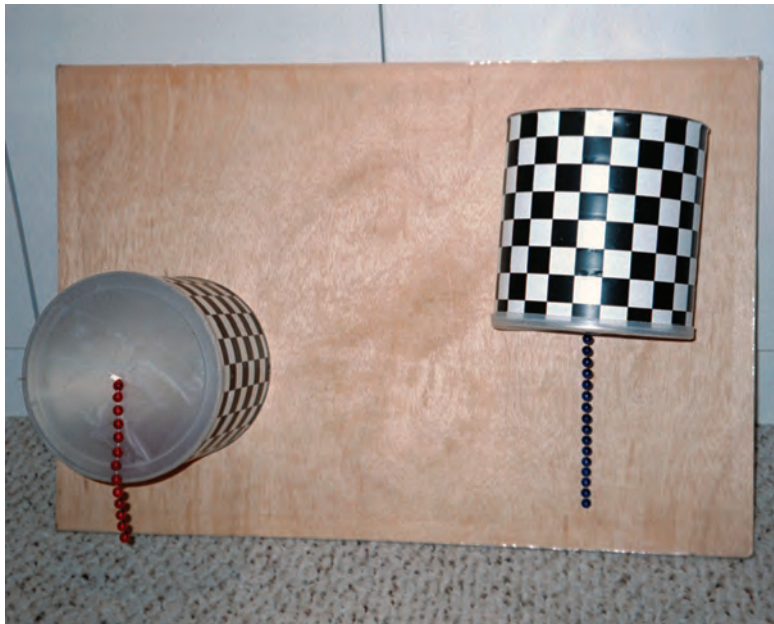
# Bead Cans

## Description:

Figure it out...and pull it out! These two bead cans, facing different directions, are mounted on a backboard. Children figure out which way to pull the strings of beads (upward, downward or outward) to get them out of each can. Pulling the beads creates a fascinating vibration, sound and visual effect as the beads pass through the slits in the lids.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (long/short, right/left, full/empty, up/down, in/out); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, grasp and pull, hand-over-hand pull, release); self-initiated actions; visual skills (fixation, shift of gaze, color comparison).



## Materials Needed:

- 2 Large, empty coffee cans
- 2 18-foot strings of shiny beads (2 different colors, available in “dollar” stores at holiday time as decorative garlands)
- 1 Piece of 1/4- inch plywood, approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide
- 2 Nuts and 2 bolts, long enough to go through the board and coffee can
- Clear mailing tape (3” wide)
- Checkerboard patterned contact paper (enough to cover two cans)
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 10)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Clean and dry the coffee cans. Check for sharp edges and smooth them as needed.
2. With lids removed, cover the sides of the cans with contact paper.
3. Cut “X” shaped slits in the lids of the cans (approximately 2 inches long for each cut).
4. Drill a hole in the bottom of one can (hole should be just large enough to put one of the bolts through) and into the backboard (about 6 inches in from the left side edge of the board and about 6 inches up from the bottom edge of the board).





5. Pass a bolt through the board and the can from the back side of the board. Screw the nut onto the bolt **inside** the bottom surface of the can.
6. Drill a hole in the center of the side of the other can (just large enough to put the other bolt through) and into the back board. The hole should be about 6 inches in from the right side edge of the board and about 6 inches down from the top edge of the board.
7. Pass a bolt through the board and the can from the back side of the board. Screw the nut onto the bolt **inside** the side surface of the can.
8. Place a string of beads into one can. Feed one end of the string of beads through the “X” slit in the plastic lid of the can, and pull about 6 inches of beads through the slit. Then put the lid onto the can, sealing the remainder of the beads inside the can. Repeat for the other can.
9. To prevent children from getting splinters from the edges of the backboard, sand the edges and tape them with 2-3” wide clear mailing tape.
10. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** to the top of the backboard that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity board.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. The backboard with the cans on it may be anchored onto a wall (e.g., with Velcro) or any other vertical surface or may be clamped onto a mobile stand (see page 31).
2. Children should be encouraged to freely explore the cans—pat them and experiment with the beads to cause sound and vibration, and to pull them out. Some of this may happen accidentally at first and become more purposeful.
3. As a child interacts with the beads, an adult may comment on what the child is doing (pulling, batting, etc.), colors the child is seeing, how the beads are changing (longer), sounds the child is creating, etc.
4. The backboard may be rotated 180 degrees so that the bottom of the board becomes the top. The cans would then be facing **outward** and **upward**, on different sides, for a new challenge.
5. If the “X” slits in the can lids begin to rip, a piece or two of mailing tape can help to repair or reinforce the slits.

## Description:

Smocks and bibs can magically become “body playgrounds” by attaching interesting textured, visual and sound objects to them. As a child sits in a car seat or waits for mealtime in a restaurant, s/he encounters “treasures” that have been anchored there—just waiting to be discovered! These smocks are ideal for children who are beginning to explore their bodies and their clothing (e.g., tugging at their shirts, chewing on clothing or mouthing their hands).

## Target Skill Areas:

Body imagery; cause-effect; eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, grasp, manipulation, release); self-initiated actions; spatial mapping; tactile exploration.



## Materials Needed:

### For plastic art smock: (B)

- One plastic art smock, available from a craft store or a teacher's supply store
- Sticky-back soft Velcro (approximately 12-14 inch length, available from a craft store)
- 6 1-inch white curtain rings, available from a craft or sewing supply store
- 6 1-inch metal book rings, available from an office supply store
- Items to attach to smock (e.g., metal measuring spoons, soft slinky, plastic measuring cups), available from a “dollar” store
- WARNING LABEL (See Directions, # 4)

### For cloth art smock: (A)

- One cloth art smock
- 8 1-inch white curtain rings
- 8 1-inch metal book rings
- Needle and thread
- Items to attach to smock (e.g., cluster of jingle bells, wooden clacker, fuzzy soccer balls on a string), available from a “dollar” store.
- WARNING LABEL (See Directions, # 4)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

### For plastic art smock (very simple to make):

1. Using 2-inch pieces of soft sticky-back Velcro, anchor the upper ends of six white curtain rings onto the front surface of the smock, leaving the bottoms of the rings unattached. Space the rings horizontally across the front of the smock in two



lines of three rings in each line. The first line of rings should be placed approximately 2-3 inches below the neckline of the smock and about 4 inches from each other. The second line of rings should be spaced evenly with the rings in the top line and anchored approximately 4 inches below the top line.

2. Open 6 metal book rings and loop one book ring onto each curtain ring.
3. Loop items (see examples on previous page) onto the open book rings and then close the rings.
4. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the smock that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity smock.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

**For cloth art smock (requires some hand sewing):**

1. Using thread and a needle, hand sew eight white curtain rings onto the front of the cloth smock, leaving the bottom end of each ring unattached. As shown, the rings are attached in three horizontal lines across the smock, with two rings in the top line and three each in the middle and bottom lines. The two rings in the top line are attached at about 3 inches below the top of the smock and spaced about 5 inches apart. The three rings in the middle line are attached about 4 inches below the top line and are spaced about 4 inches apart. The three rings in the bottom line are attached about 4 inches below the middle line and are spaced to line up with the rings in the middle line.
2. Open eight metal book rings and clip one book ring onto each curtain ring.
3. Hook items (see examples above) onto the (open) book rings and then close the rings.
4. Affix a WARNING LABEL onto the smock (see Directions, #4 above).

**Suggestions for Use:**

1. Pull the smock over a child’s head and/or tie the smock onto a child’s body. Check to be sure that the child is able to reach all items where they are positioned. Move items, if needed, to position them more appropriately for a child. Check to be sure that the child is able to activate and/or explore the items presented (cause a sound, move items, touch various textures) and that the items selected are interesting to the child.
2. If a child is mouthing objects, check to be sure that items that may be put into the mouth are safe for the child (e.g., no small pieces, no pieces that may be pulled off and ingested; no items that child may cut mouth on or jam into his/her throat; no items that may break apart and become sharp or a choking hazard).
3. These activity smocks are ideal for “down” time (such as riding in a car or sitting in a restaurant) and “free choice” time at school.
4. If a child uses a “drooling” bib, items may be attached to it instead of making a smock.

# Cookie Sheet



## Description:

A shiny metal cookie sheet is an ideal backdrop for play! Add some multi-sensory 3-D magnets and it's an unbeatable space for looking, listening, touching, matching and manipulating.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (on/off, up/down, same/different, objects); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, grasp, bat, pull, place, release); literacy; self-initiated actions; social turntaking; spatial mapping; visual skills (search, fixation, shift of gaze).

## Materials Needed:

- Metal cookie sheet (be sure that it is the type on which magnets will stick)
- Variety of 3-D magnets:
  - *"Spring" Magnets* - come in a variety of animal, vehicle and other shapes that are mounted on springs so that when they are touched or bumped they "wiggle" (e.g., frog and chicken pictured). The base of the springs are attached to disc-shaped magnets. These are available from discount stores that have refrigerator magnet sections.
  - *Stuffed Animal Magnets* - are small stuffed animals that have magnets sewn into their paws, allowing them to stick to, and stand up on, the cookie sheet (e.g., the dog and tiger shown in picture). These are available from discount stores that carry refrigerator magnets.
  - *"Flying" Bird Magnets* - are shaped like the front portion of birds, with magnets on the tail end of the birds. The wings are on springs, allowing them to "flap" when bumped or touched (e.g., the multi-colored bird pictured above). They are available from discount stores that have refrigerator magnet sections.
  - *"Ringing Telephone" Magnets* - these small model telephones actually ring with a realistic ringer sound when the receiver is pushed down (see black telephone in picture). They are available from specialty cook stores that carry refrigerator magnets.
  - *"Metal Measuring Cup/Spoon Set" Magnets* - this set of small-scale measuring cups/spoons has a magnet on the back of each cup/spoon (see measuring spoon set pictured). These are available from discount stores that have refrigerator magnet sections.
- Sticky-back Velcro (for mounting onto a backboard or wall surface) – approximately 3-6 feet each of soft and scratchy





- One piece of 1/4- inch plywood (approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide) – optional
- WARNING LABEL (See Directions # 3)

### **Directions for Making (as pictured):**

1. Gather the cookie sheet and magnets and place the magnets on the sheet.
2. Velcro the cookie sheet onto a plywood backboard and then clamp the board onto a mobile stand (see page 31) or the cookie sheet (with or without the backboard) may be anchored onto a wall, a slant board or other vertical surface (with Velcro or some other adhesive material).
3. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** to the cookie sheet that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity board.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. Children may search, with their eyes or hands, for magnets “hidden” on the cookie sheet and activate them (cause movement and/or sound). Start with one magnet at a time for visual searching, and add more as a child demonstrates the ability to handle more visual “clutter”. The cookie sheet may be loaded with magnets for beginning hand search skills, so a child may have a greater chance of success in finding a magnet. The number of magnets may then be reduced and they may be placed in “tricky” locations (e.g., in the corners).
2. Children may also pull magnets off of the sheet and put them on.
3. Children may find matching magnets (two that are visually or tactually the “same”).
4. Magnets, representing the characters and events in stories, may be used to act out stories on a cookie sheet.
5. This is a great “buddy” activity, with children taking turns in finding, activating and taking magnets on and off the cookie sheet.
6. Magnets may also be used on a metal lap tray (see page 27), on the side of a file cabinet, on a refrigerator or on any other metal surface.
7. Use extreme caution with children who are mouthing objects. Magnets must be firmly attached to or sewn into the 3-D magnets so that they do not detach and become a choking hazard or swallowed by a child.

# Curler Board



## Description:

Curlers... and scrub pads... and elastic, oh my! Who would think that playing with bristly curlers suspended by elastic cords could be so much fun? Give this curler board a try!

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (colors, sizes, “quiet”/”noisy”; on/off); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (reach, grasp, hand search, release); self-initiated actions; spatial mapping; tactile exploration (hand/mouth); visual skills (search, fixation, scanning, tracking).

## Materials Needed:

- 1/4- inch thick piece of plywood (approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide)
- 12 1/4- inch thick dark green rectangular scouring pads (about 4 1/2” x 5 3/4”), available from “dollar” stores in packages of 6 each, in green, white and multi-colored assortment
- 4 1-inch metal book rings, available from office supply stores
- 8 1-inch white plastic curtain rings, available from sewing or craft supply stores
- 4 Jingle bells, available from sewing or craft supply stores
- 8 Hair curlers (prickly ones that “stick” in hair without fasteners) of varied diameters and colors, available from “dollar” stores and discount department stores in the hair care sections
- 1/8- inch thick elastic cord (approximately 14-16 ft. length), available from sewing supply or discount department stores in the craft/sewing notions sections
- Clear mailing tape (3 inches wide and long enough to go around edge of backboard)
- Elmer’s or craft glue (enough to glue scrub pads to the backboard)
- WARNING LABEL (See Directions # 2)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Sand all edges of the plywood board.
2. Tape a **WARNING LABEL** to the top of the board that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity board.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

3. Tape around all edges of the board with clear mailing tape.
4. Drill four holes in the top of the board, approximately 1/2- inch from the top edge. Space the holes evenly across the top (approximately 5-6 inches apart), being careful not to drill into the WARNING LABEL.
5. Glue the scrub pads onto the front surface of the board, leaving open space around the edges. Be sure the color of the pads contrasts well with the color of the curlers used.



6. Cut the elastic cord into eight pieces (some shorter and some longer). Tie one end of each cord onto a curler (through center hole). For four of the curlers, add a jingle bell onto the cord before tying it off and move the bell so that it is inside the hole of the curler. Tie securely.
7. On the other end of each cord, tie on a white plastic curtain ring.
8. Open four metal book rings and thread one end of each ring through a hole at the top of the board. Loop two curtain rings (with elastic and curlers attached) onto each book ring and close the book rings.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. The curler board may be clamped onto a mobile stand (see page 31) or affixed with Velcro (or another adhesive material) to a slant board, wall or other vertical surface.
2. Children may search (visually or by hand) for the curlers on the board, pull them off and explore/compare them (taste, touch, shake to make the bells jingle, note differences in the diameters). As a child releases the curlers, they spring back onto the board, where they stick to the scrub pads—perhaps in a slightly different location than where the child found them at first!
3. The position of the curler board may be altered to be more accessible for children with limited ability to reach out to the board. For example, the top of the board may be tilted about 45 degrees toward the child, causing the curlers to “dangle” instead of lying flat against the board. Similarly, if the board is positioned in a horizontal position to the front and above a child’s head (like a little “ceiling”), rather than vertically in front of the child, the curlers will hang freely near the child’s head and hands. With the board in this position, a child may use his/her head, mouth, cheek or hands to interact with the curlers.
4. Caution: For safety reasons, stop using the curlers if a child begins to push a curler most of the way inside his/her mouth and/or bites hard enough to crush or tear a curler with his/her teeth. Larger sized curlers work best for children who are exploring the curlers with their mouths because the larger size can be “tasted”, but not pushed completely into their mouths.



# Drying Rack

## Description:

Off come the painted art pictures and on go marvelous things to look at, to touch and to hear! A drying rack can transform into an exciting space for independent exploration and for playing ball with a good buddy.

## Target Skill Areas:

Ball handling skills; cause-effect; concepts (space, direction, objects) eye-hand/ear-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, reach, grasp, manipulation, release); self-initiated actions; social turn-taking; spatial mapping; tactile exploration (hand/mouth); visual skills (search, fixation, scanning, tracking).



## Materials Needed:

- Drying rack (the free-standing type used to hang wet painted pictures in art class, available from educational and art supply catalogs)
- 8-10 Clothespins or clips
- Items to hang (see examples in pictures above)
- Beanbag chair, Tumbleforms seat or other supportive seating
- Large bath towel (optional)
- WARNING Label (See Directions, # 4)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Open a drying rack. Using clothespins or other fasteners, clip interesting visual, auditory and tactile objects to the center strings of the rack. The objects should be suspended (e.g., by elastic cords) so that they hang low enough for the child to reach them.
2. Provide the child with a comfortable, supportive seat that is positioned so that the child can reach the suspended objects.





3. If a child is mouthing objects, check to be sure that items that may be put into the mouth are safe for the child (e.g., no small pieces; no pieces that may be pulled off of an object and swallowed; no items that the child may cut his/her mouth on or jam into his/her throat; no items that may break apart and become sharp or a choking hazard).
4. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the rack that reads: “**WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity rack.**” Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

#### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. The rack may be placed facing a plain wall that contrasts in color with the objects suspended from the rack (e.g., white wall and dark colored objects). Using a blank wall as a backdrop decreases background visual “clutter” and increases a child’s ability to visually locate the objects.
2. A towel, draped over the back of the rack, may also be used to block out background visual “clutter” as an alternative to using a wall.
3. A fan can be set up (ideally activated by the child through a switch) to blow on and move the suspended objects for an interesting visual effect.
4. A soft ball (e.g., foam or beach ball) may be suspended from the rack to create an interactive ball activity. The ball may be pushed back and forth between a child and his/her friend, who take turns catching and throwing the ball.

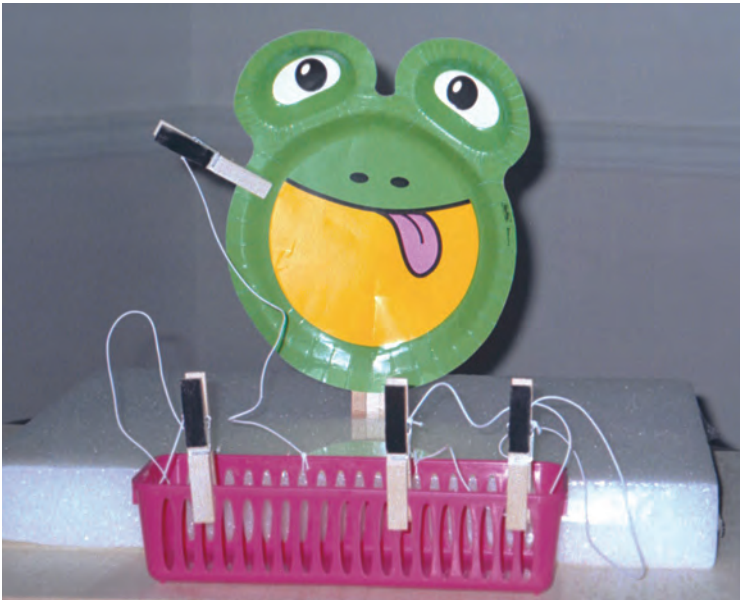
# Frog Plate

## Description:

Keep them hopping with this frog plate activity! Children will be encouraged to coordinate their eyes and hands, explore parts of a face and engage in imaginative play as they gather “bugs” (clothespins) and clip them onto this smiling frog face.

## Target Skill Areas:

Body imagery (face parts); concepts (on/off, top/bottom, squeeze, open/close); eyehand coordination; fine motor skills (pinch, release); pretend play; self-initiated actions; spatial orientation; tool use; visual skills (fixation, scanning, tracking).



## Materials Needed:

- 1/4- inch Plywood board, approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide
  - Piece of 2-inch thick Styrofoam, approximately 1 1/2- feet long by 1 foot wide
  - Plastic rectangular basket, approximately 9 inches long by 2 inches deep by 2 inches high
  - 4 Spring-type clothespins
  - 4 Feet of thin elastic cord
  - 1 Wide tongue depressor or 3 narrow popsicle sticks
  - 1 Paper frog face plate (or other animal face)
  - Clear mailing tape
- Sticky-back Velcro (enough to anchor the Styrofoam piece and the basket)
  - WARNING LABEL (See Directions, # 7)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Sand the edges of the plywood board and tape around all edges with clear mailing tape.
2. Leaving the plastic covering on the piece of Styrofoam, attach the Styrofoam to the board with strips of sticky-back Velcro. The Styrofoam piece should be positioned so that its back edge is aligned with the back edge of the board.
3. Attach the basket to the board with sticky-back Velcro. The basket should be placed against the center of the front edge of the Styrofoam.
4. Cut the elastic cord into four 1-foot lengths. Tie one end of each cord onto the spring section of a clothespin. Tie the other end of each cord onto the side of the basket that touches the Styrofoam.



5. With a black marker, darken both flat surfaces of the ends of the clothespins that are used to pinch and open them. This helps children to identify the end that they must squeeze to open the clothespins. A textured material could be added on these surfaces for children who are blind. Clip the clothespins onto the front edge of the basket or place them into the basket.
6. Using clear mailing tape, affix the tongue depressor (or popsicle sticks) to the back of the frog plate, leaving at least 2 inches of the stick length to press into the Styrofoam. Insert the frog plate into the center of the piece of Styrofoam.

7. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** to the base of the frog plate activity that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity board.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

#### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. The clothespins may be placed into the basket or clipped onto the front edge of the basket.
2. The clothespins can become “flies” or “bugs” and can be “fed” to the frog by clipping them onto the frog plate. Realistic-looking plastic bugs could be securely anchored onto the bottom portions of the clothespins for a more realistic “eating” experience.
3. As a child clips the clothespins onto the frog, face parts may be identified and talked about.
4. The elastic cords attaching the clothespins may be eliminated for children who are able to maintain a suspended grasp on them and who are not throwing them.
5. As an alternative to a stationary activity, the frog plate may be removed from the Styrofoam and be held by a play partner. The frog may, then, “hop” to different locations, encouraging a child to visually follow the movement. The child then must figure out how to spatially reposition the clothespins to clip them onto the plate with each change. This activity requires removing the elastic cords from the clothespins or using longer cords.
6. For children who are unable to squeeze spring-type clothespins hard enough to open them, slide-on clothespins or clips that are more easily squeezed could be used.



## Highchair/Wheelchair Tray



### **Description:**

What better way to turn “wait” time into a great time! With shiny, sound-producing, touchable objects anchored to a highchair or wheelchair tray, children can readily find fun stuff to explore—and not have to worry about objects rolling away!

### **Target Skill Areas:**

Cause-effect; concepts (textures, actions, locations) eye-hand/ear-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, reach, grasp, release); self-initiated actions; tool use (string); visual skills (search, fixation, scanning, tracking).

### **Materials Needed:**

- Highchair with a tray (or pushed up to a table) or a wheelchair with a lap tray  
Toys, household items and other objects to attach to the tray  
Materials for attaching items:
  - To tie items on: elastic cord; string; yarn; scarves; plastic “baby links”; etc.
  - To stick items on: suction cups; suction soap holders; sticky-back Velcro strips; magnetic strips (for metal trays); etc.
- Wedge or slant board (optional)
- WARNING LABEL (See Directions, # 5)



### **Directions for Making (as pictured):**

1. A rattle or other sound-producing toy may be tied on with a piece of yarn.
2. A suction rattle may be affixed to the surface of the tray.
3. Two pot pie tins (with rice or dried beans inside and securely fastened together) may be tied onto the highchair with a soft scarf.
4. Care must be taken in selecting items for children who are mouthing objects (e.g., no small objects that may be swallowed; no items with pieces that may be pulled off and swallowed; no sharp objects or objects that may become sharp if broken by the child).
5. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the tray surface, that reads: “**WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when playing with activities on this tray.**” Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. When tying objects onto a highchair, begin with short lengths of string (or other materials used to tie them on) and then gradually lengthen the string.
2. When a child is beginning to find and explore items on the tray, keep the items in consistent locations on the tray each time so that the child (especially if s/he is visually impaired) may begin to “map” out the space and find things on his/her own. Gradually, then, items may be moved around to various places on the tray.
3. Small holes may be drilled around the edges of the tray for tying on objects.
4. A wedge or a slant board (at approximately a 45 degree angle) may be affixed onto the tray and then larger, flat toys (e.g., busy boxes) can be attached onto this raised surface with Velcro. This setup may help to position some toys at a better angle for seeing them.

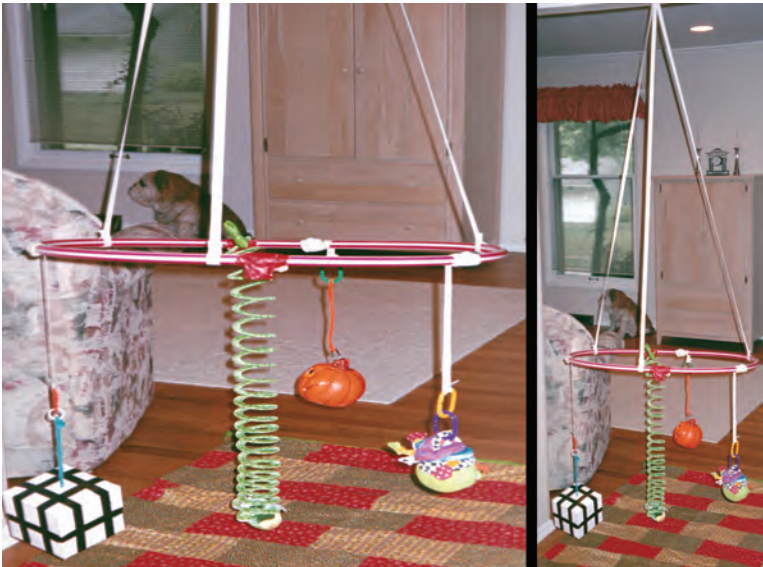
# Hula Hoop Hanger

## Description:

Create your own playground suspended in space! Hung from a door frame or the ceiling of a room, this hula hoop hanger surrounds a child with enticing objects to see, to touch and to hear.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (spatial, objects); eye-hand/ear-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, reach, grasp, manipulation, release); self-initiated actions; spatial mapping; tactile exploration; visual skills (search, fixation, scanning, tracking).



## Materials Needed:

- One Large hula hoop (red and white peppermint striped one pictured)
- Piece of PVC pipe (slightly longer than the outside diameter of the hula hoop)
- Duct tape (enough to cover center PVC pipe and attach it to hula hoop; red colored tape used in pictured hanger)
- 3/4- inch Elastic (enough for three long pieces for suspending the hula hoop and three shorter pieces for suspending the objects from the hoop).

- 4 Plastic “baby links” (e.g., Fun Links by Kids II Company, available from baby supply stores)
- Needle and thread
- Sturdy hook for top of door frame or ceiling
- Items to suspend from hoop (e.g., soft slinky; white box (with a bell inside) striped with black electrical tape; plastic jack-o-lantern (with bells or rice inside and sealed securely); stuffed bug that lengthens when pulled and then vibrates as it “shrinks”), available from toy stores
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 8)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Wrap duct tape around the entire length of the piece of PVC pipe. Lay the covered pipe across the center of the hula hoop and tape the ends securely to the hoop, using duct tape.



2. Cut three long pieces of elastic (length will depend on where the hoop will be suspended). Wrap one end of each piece of elastic around the hula hoop, spacing the elastic cords evenly around the hoop and hand sew them so they are anchored onto the hoop.
3. Bring the free ends of the three pieces of elastic together, loop them through a “baby link” (or another type of loop) and sew the ends together to secure them onto the link.
4. Cut three shorter pieces of elastic (about 1 foot in length each). Wrap one end of each piece of elastic around the hula hoop, spacing them evenly around the hoop, and hand sew them so they are anchored onto the hoop. Note: A fourth piece of elastic may be attached to the center PVC pipe piece, if desired.
5. Loop the free end of one of the shorter pieces of elastic through a “baby link” and sew the elastic so that the link is firmly attached to the piece of elastic. Repeat for the 2-3 other short elastic pieces.
6. Attach interesting items to the baby links (see ideas in Materials section on previous page).
7. Screw a sturdy hook into the top of a door frame or into a room ceiling. Hang the hula hoop hanger on the hook by its loop at the top.
8. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the hanger, that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this hanger.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### Suggestions for Use:

1. A child using the hula hoop hanger may lay on the floor or be seated in various types of seats (beanbag, Tumbleform, highchair, etc.). Sitting upright will give the child a spatially different experience than when laying down (e.g., different place for “finding things” and objects will look different from different body positions).
2. The height and position of the hanger should be adjusted to match the strengths and needs of each child (e.g., some children will benefit from having the objects positioned closer to their bodies or on a certain side so that they may be able to contact the objects).
3. Care must be taken to select hanging objects carefully for children who are mouthing objects (e.g., no small objects that may be swallowed, no sharp objects, no objects that can be pulled apart and swallowed).

# Light Board

## Description:

Let there be light! This irresistible light board is ideal for attaching toys and other objects to explore, especially in a darkened room.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (lights on/off, movement and positions: up/down/around, right/left, above/below, textures, sounds, colors); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (reach, grasp, manipulation, release); self-initiated actions; visual skills (fixation, search, scanning, tracking).



## Materials Needed:

- Piece of sturdy cardboard (large enough to cut out a 2-foot diameter circle)
- Aluminum foil (the kind used to cover food when baking)
- String of 40-50 twinkle lights, used for holiday decorations (small ones that do not get hot)
- Clear plastic wrap (the type used to wrap food)
- Three Metal book rings or plastic “baby links” (e.g., Fun Links by Kids II Company)
- Clear mailing tape
- Items to attach to board (see picture for ideas)

- Extension cord (as needed)
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 8)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Cut a 2-foot diameter circle out of the cardboard.
2. Gently crinkle pieces of aluminum foil and cover the front surface of the cardboard circle with the foil. Pull the foil over the edges of the cardboard and tape the ends to the back side of the cardboard.
3. On top of the aluminum foil, spread out and tape down the string of twinkle lights. Be sure that the plug and about 1 foot of the plug end of the cord is left hanging off the edge of the circle so that the lights may be plugged in.
4. Cover the entire front surface of the lights and board with clear plastic wrap. Pull the wrap tight and over the edges of the board to the back side. Tape the ends of the wrap to the back side of the cardboard





5. Open the three book rings and punch them through the cardboard circle, spacing them evenly across the top, within about 1 inch of the edge and about 6 inches apart.
6. Attach small toys and multi-sensory materials to the book rings so that they hang down onto the cardboard circle.
7. An extension cord may be added to the plug end of the string of lights to allow the board to be moved around.
8. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the light board that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this light board.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. This activity is ideal for children who are visually impaired, but are able to see lights. It is also attractive to many children who are fully sighted, but require strong visual targets in order to actively use the vision that they have.
2. A switch may be hooked up to the light board so that a child may turn the light on and off independently (an adaptor is needed to plug the board and the switch into, since the lights are run by electricity, not batteries).
3. The board may first be used without objects attached. Be sure that the child is positioned close enough to touch the board, so s/he is able to contact the (covered) lights that s/he sees. A darkened room is the best place in which to use the board. Children must be closely supervised when using the light board.
4. The board may be moved slowly (up/down/around/side-to-side/above), allowing the child to follow it with his/her eyes and touch it as it changes positions. An adult should verbally label the direction(s) it moves and the new position(s) in which it stops. The board may then be “hidden” somewhere within reach of the child (or further away if the child is able to see the board from a distance and is able to move to find it) and the child is encouraged to “find” it.
5. When objects are added to the light board, children begin to learn that the lighted area is a “place for finding things”. This encourages self-initiated search for, and manipulation of, textures and objects when the lights go on.

## Description:

This light box serves as an ideal looking and exploring space. It is a visual “hook” for many children, with and without visually impairments, who require a little extra “pizazz” to use their eyes as they play and learn.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (in/out; on/off; shapes, colors, corners); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (reach, grasp, pull, manipulation, release); literacy; self-initiated actions; visual skills (fixation, scanning, shift of gaze).



## Materials Needed:

- Light box or Mini Light Box, available from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) catalog (see Resources section on page 43)
- Suction hooks (suction cups approximately 2 inches in diameter)
- 1/4- inch Elastic cord
- Sticky-back Velcro
- Items to attach to the light box (e.g., Pegs and Pegboard from the APH catalog; a Plexiglas)

- spinner from the APH catalog; multi-colored, see-through decorative rubber bathtub appliqués from “dollar” stores)
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 10)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. The “making” part of this activity consists of anchoring items onto the surface of the light box so that they do not fall off, move around or roll away.
2. The pegs and pegboard pictured above may be purchased from the APH catalog (see the Resources Section on page 43).
3. Cut the elastic cord into pieces (long enough for the beads to reach the frame when attached).
4. Drill a small hole, from front to back through each bead, about 1/4- inch down from the top (hole should be just big enough to string the cord through).
5. String one end of a cord through each hole and tie securely.
6. Tie a plastic curtain ring onto the free end of each elastic cord.



7. Loop the curtain rings onto the suction cup hooks and, with pliers, bend the hooks so that the rings will not slip off.
8. Affix the pegboard frame onto the center of the light box, using small squares of Velcro in the corners of the frame.
9. Press the suction cups onto the top of the Plexiglas surface of the light box, with the beads and cords hanging down.
10. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** to the top of the light box that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this light box.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. The activity pictured in this section illustrates a way of turning commercially-available materials into a “stay-put” activity for children who may have difficulties holding onto and/or visually keeping track of the materials while engaging in this activity. Other APH light box materials may be similarly adapted (e.g., the colored cups and Plexiglas blocks in the Light Box Level I Materials Kit). The APH Plexiglas spinner comes with suction cups to hold it in place on the surface of the light box.
2. Children using the “stay-put” version of the APH Pegs and Pegboard activity may explore and compare the various shapes and colors of the pegs with their eyes and hands, put the pegs into the pegboard and take them out, place pegs in the “corners” of the pegboard, line up pegs across the board, etc. Adapting the activity, so that it “stays put” allows children to direct their own actions without frequent adult intervention.
3. As an alternative to using the APH materials on the light box, other objects for children to explore and manipulate may be secured onto the surface with suction cups, Velcro, “sticky tack”, etc. Multi-colored, see-through decorative bathtub appliques in various shapes may also be attached for children to put on, take off, match shapes and colors and act out stories. Use your imagination!
4. A window (or a window wall) serves beautifully as a natural “light box”, especially on a sunny day. To be used in this way, windows or window walls must be located where children can get up close to them (see ideas in Window/Windowsill Section on page 41).



# Little Play Room



## Description:

This little play room is a secure space for independent exploration, using hands, feet, a whole body, a mouth, cheeks, a head—anything that works for a child! Sensory-rich objects are hung within reach from the ceiling and attached to the inside walls to be discovered and manipulated. This play space is adapted from the “Little Room”, designed by Lilli Nielsen, which is available for purchase (see Resources section on page 43).

## Target Skill Areas:

Body imagery; cause-effect; concepts (spatial/directional, textures, colors, sounds, sizes); eye-hand/ear-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, reach, batting, grasp, manipulation, release); goal-directed whole body movement; self-initiated actions; spatial mapping; visual skills (fixation, search, scanning, shift of gaze, tracking); vocal play.

## Materials Needed:

- Sturdy large cardboard appliance box (e.g., refrigerator or stove)
- Piece of Plexiglas (large enough to fit on the top of the box)
- Contact paper (wood grain look or other; enough to cover outside of box)
- Velcro (to attach Plexiglas top onto box)
- 1/4-inch Elastic cord (approximately 12 to 18 inches per item to be hung), available from craft or sewing supply stores
- 1-inch White plastic curtain rings (one for each item to be hung), available from craft or sewing supply stores
- Spring-type clothes pins (one for each item to be hung)
- Assorted Items to be hung from the Plexiglas and attached to the sides of the box (see Directions, # 10 for ideas)
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 11)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Cut the cardboard box so it stands at a height of about 2 1/2 feet for the little play room to be tall enough for a child to lay down in. Use the box at full height for the little play room to be tall enough for a child to sit up in.
2. Cut an 8-inch diameter hole in one of the sides of the box (for ventilation).
3. Cut a large square hole in the top of the box, leaving about a 3- to 4-inch rim remaining around the four sides of the top edge of the box.
4. Cover the outside of the box with contact paper.
5. Cut the piece of Plexiglas so that it is approximately 2 inches longer on all sides than the square hole on the top of the box.





6. With an electric drill, drill holes (large enough to string the elastic cord through) in the Plexiglas. The holes should be drilled in rows, with the holes spaced approximately 3 inches from each other. No holes should be drilled in the outer 4 inches of each side of the piece of Plexiglas.
7. With squares of Velcro on the four corners of the piece of Plexiglas, affix it onto the top of the box.
8. Tie a 12- to 18-inch piece of elastic cord onto each item that will be hung on the ceiling of the little play room. On the free end of each of these elastic cords, tie on a white plastic curtain ring, leaving several inches of loose cord extending beyond the curtain ring.
9. *To hang items:* From underneath (inside the box), string the loose cord for each item up through a hole in the piece of Plexiglas until the curtain ring on the cord rests against the underside of the Plexiglas. Wrap the length of the loose cord (now on top of the Plexiglas) several times around one half of an open clothes pin and then close the clothes pin, securing the cord in place.
10. *To make items to hang (some ideas):*
  - a) String of spoons – tie four or five metal spoons (overlapping) by their handles on a piece of elastic cord.
  - b) Stove pan with beads – tie a string of shiny, colored beads onto the cut-out portion of a metal stove pan and hang by an elastic cord
  - c) Two hard plastic plates – drill a hole in two plastic plates that differ in size and tie them together with elastic cord
11. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** to the front of the little play space, that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this play space.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. All items **MUST** be positioned (height and location) correctly for each individual child who will be using the little play room. Arrangement of the objects is crucial for assuring that each child is able to reach the objects and interact with them, using his/her own unique abilities. Appropriate placement of the objects is also important for challenging children to develop new skills and problem-solving strategies.
2. Children may lay down (in the shorter version of the play room) or sit up (in the taller version of the play room) to use the little play room.
3. Textures, lights and other items may be affixed to the inside walls of the play room.
4. Instead of building a cardboard or wooden little play room, a play space may be put together, using two bookshelves (back-to-back, spaced about 3 feet apart), with a piece of Plexiglas suspended across the top between them. The piece of Plexiglas may be anchored to the top of the bookshelves with Velcro strips. The big advantage of this arrangement is that it may be disassembled when not being used and it is easy to put back together.

# Metal Lap Tray



## Description:

Stand it up or tip it on its side! Versatility is the joy of this metal lap tray, used to mount toys and multi-sensory 3-D magnets.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (spatial, colors, objects); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (grasp, manipulation, hand search, coordinating two hands together, release); self-initiated actions; spatial mapping; toy play; visual skills (search, scanning, shift of gaze).

## Materials Needed:

### For metal lap tray with toys:

- Metal lap tray with folding legs, available from Wal-Mart or other discount department stores
- Sticky-back Velcro strips
- Learning Patterns Stacking Surprise Octopus toy – Fisher Price #73468 (pictured)
- See ‘n Say Farm Animal toy (pictured) or other flat manipulative toy that will fit onto the tray
- 2-3 inch wide Mailing tape or masking tape
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 4)

### For metal lap tray with magnets:

- Metal lap tray with folding legs
- Dark green magnet board (that comes with magnet letter sets)
- White contact paper
- 4 Sticky-back Velcro squares
- Magnets (see ideas in Cookie Sheet section, page 9)
- Warning label (see Directions, # 4)

### To mount tray onto a wooden base (optional):

- One Piece of 1/4- inch plywood (approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide)
- 4 small Metal “U” pipe hangers (metal fasteners used to attach pipes to wooden joists under a floor)
- 4 Sets of nuts and bolts (to fit the holes in the metal pipe hangers)
- 2-inch Spring clamps
- Rubberized shelf lining material (enough to cover the bottom of the plywood board)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

For a metal lap tray with a toy anchored to the top surface:

1. Anchor a toy of choice onto the tray with several strips of sticky-back Velcro (enough to cover the bottom surface of the toy).



2. Unfold the legs of the tray so that the tray stands up. To use the tray standing up on its legs, securely tape the bottom of both legs to a table or highchair/wheelchair tray surface, with mailing or masking tape.
3. To use the tray tipped over on its side, anchor the side edges of the tray legs (edges resting on the table or highchair/wheelchair tray surface when tipped) securely to the surface with mailing or masking tape.
4. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the tray, that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be Supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this activity tray.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

**For a metal lap tray, with interchangeable backgrounds, to use with magnets:**

1. Cut a piece of white contact paper to fit the top flat portion of the tray and affix it to the surface. Velcro the green magnet board onto the contact paper-covered surface of the tray.
2. Add magnets, using the background (white or green) that is greater in contrast to the color of the magnets used.
3. Affix a WARNING LABEL onto the tray, as in #4 above.

**To mount a metal lap tray onto a wooden base:**

1. Slip a metal “U” pipe hanger over each end of the legs of the tray. Mark the holes of the pipe hangers on the board, as a guide for drilling holes and then remove the tray from the board.
2. Drill holes (just big enough for the bolts to fit through) in all eight marked spots on the board.
3. Replace the metal pipe hangers and tray onto the board. From the under side of the board, slide the bolts through the board and the holes in the metal pipe hangers. Securely screw a nut onto each bolt. A small piece of stick-on foam or soft sticky-back Velcro may be used to cover each nut and bolt that is sticking up on the surface of the board.
4. Tip the tray (with the board attached) over on its side so that the bottom of the board is tipped up vertically. With Elmer’s or craft glue, adhere the rubberized shelf lining material onto the bottom of the board. Let it dry.

**Suggestions for Use:**

1. The lap tray may be used to anchor down a variety of types of toys and activities. It may be used in a upright position or tipped onto its side, depending on which position offers a child the best angle for seeing and manipulating a particular toy on the tray.
2. For use with magnets, two backgrounds (white and dark green) may be interchanged (the green magnet board is Velcroed on in order to be easily taken on and off ). This allows for the greatest figure-ground contrast for the magnets used (light colored magnets on the green background and dark colored magnets on the white surface) so that children may more easily see them.
3. If the tray is mounted onto a plywood base, the ends of the plywood base may be clamped onto a high chair or wheelchair tray with large spring clamps.





## Description:

Mirror, mirror on the wall—it's smooth, it's shiny, it's got it all! Suction on some “touch-ables” and let the fun begin!

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (on/off, textures, colors, sounds, shapes, sizes); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (reach, hand search, grasp, pull, manipulation); self-initiated actions; visual skills (fixation, scanning, tracking, shift of gaze).

## Materials Needed:

- Unbreakable mirror
- Sticky-back Velcro
- One Piece of 1/4- inch plywood
- Items to suction onto the mirror (as pictured):
  - Suction rattle, available from toy and baby supply stores
  - Stuffed black and white “orca” toy with suction cup attached, available from “dollar” stores
  - Suction hooks to hang up: a plastic cat ball on an elastic cord; a bristly curler on an elastic cord; a plastic toothbrush holder with suction cups (All are available from “dollar” stores.)
- WARNING LABEL (See Directions, # 3)



### **Directions for Making (as pictured):**

1. Cut the Velcro into approximately four strips (each long enough to extend across about 3/4 of the length of the mirror). Velcro the back of the mirror securely onto a piece of plywood.
2. Suction/attach items onto the mirror.
3. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the top of the mirror or plywood board that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this mirror activity.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. The mirror may be affixed onto a wall, slant board or another vertical or slanted surface, rather than (or in addition to) being anchored onto a piece of plywood.
2. The mirror, and attached plywood board, may be clamped onto a mobile stand (see page 31), using small spring clamps. It may then be used on a table or wheelchair/highchair tray surface.
3. If a child is interested in looking at the shiny surface of the mirror or his/her own image in the mirror, you can set up a “peek-a-boo” or “hide and find” game. Attach one edge of a scarf or piece of cloth (could vary textures) to the top edge of the mirror with Velcro, letting the rest of the scarf/cloth cover the surface of the mirror. A child must then move or remove the cloth in order to view the mirror and his/her face.
4. Selected objects suctioned onto the mirror surface may be used to encourage a child’s independent comparison of textures, sizes, colors, sounds, etc. A child may also pull objects (e.g., bath appliqués) off of the mirror, combine objects hanging on the mirror (e.g., putting a bristly curler on an elastic cord into a suctioned-on toothbrush holder), and experiment in using the objects in a variety of ways. The objects/materials should be carefully selected and positioned on the mirror to match each child’s abilities and to stimulate problem-solving.
5. Extreme care must be taken when selecting items to use with children who are mouthing objects. Be sure that there are no small parts or parts that may be pulled or broken off that may become a choking hazard or may be swallowed by a child. Also avoid objects with sharp edges and/or those that may injure a child in any other way.

# Mobile Stand



## Description:

Simple to make and fun to use! This PVC pipe mobile stand offers an inexpensive alternative to commercially available ones. It's ideal for hanging objects that a young child can find independently and manipulate over and over again. Other “stay put” play spaces in this booklet may be anchored onto the mobile stand, using spring clamps.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (positions, sizes, textures, sounds, shapes, colors, objects); eyehand/ear-hand coordination; fine motor skills (reach, hand search, grasp, batting, release); self-initiated actions; spatial mapping; visual skills (fixation, scanning, search, shift of gaze, tracking).

## Materials Needed:

- 1/2- inch white PVC pipe (approximately 6 feet in length)
- 2 1/2- inch white PVC pipe elbow joints
- 2 1/2- inch white PVC pipe “t” joints
- 2 1/2- inch white PVC pipe caps
- 5 Plastic “baby links” (e.g., Fun Links by Kids II Company), available in baby supply stores.
- 4 1/2- inch Metal “U” pipe hangers (used to anchor pipes underneath floors)
- 8 Nuts and bolts sets (sized to fit through holes in metal pipe hangers)
- 2 2-inch Spring clamps
- Rubberized shelf liner material (enough to cover the bottom of the piece of plywood)
- 1 Piece of plywood (approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide)
- PVC pipe glue
- PVC pipe cleaning solution
- White Elmer’s or craft glue
- Items to hook onto stand (see ideas in Directions, #15)
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, #10)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Wipe lettering off of PVC pipe with PVC cleaning solution. Wash pipe with soap and water to clean thoroughly.
2. Cut the PVC pipe into the following pieces:
  - 1 1-foot, 8-inch piece (for top bar)
  - 2 1-foot, 5-inch pieces (for side bars)
  - 4 6-inch pieces (for legs)
3. Drill five holes through the top bar piece, spaced evenly across the length. Drill the first and the last holes approximately 4 inches in from the ends of the bar.
4. With PVC pipe glue, attach an elbow joint onto each end of the top bar. Glue a side bar onto the other end of each elbow joint. Glue the base opening of a t-joint onto the bottom of each side bar. Glue a leg piece onto the two parallel side openings (top of the “t”) of each t-joint. Glue a cap onto each end of the leg pieces.



5. Slip a metal pipe hanger over each end of the legs of the stand. Mark the holes of the pipe hangers on the board, as a guide for drilling holes, and remove the stand from the board. Drill holes (just big enough for the bolts to fit through) in all eight marked spots on the board.
6. Replace the metal pipe hangers and stand onto the board. From the under side of the board, slide the bolts through the board and the holes in the metal pipe hangers. Securely screw a nut onto each bolt. A small piece of stick-on foam or soft stick-on Velcro may be used to cover each nut and bolt that is sticking up on the surface of the board.
7. Tip the mobile stand (with the board attached) over on its side so that the bottom of the board is tipped up vertically. With white Elmer's or craft glue, adhere the rubberized shelf lining material onto the bottom of the board. Let it dry.
8. When the PVC glue and Elmer's glue are completely dry, thread a "baby link" through each hole in the top bar. Attach items to the "baby links" (see pictured ideas on previous page: a) string of spoons; b) feather duster; and c) animal plates (two plates glued back-to-back, with a string of bells attached to the top)).
9. Large spring clamps may be used to clamp the plywood board onto a table or highchair/ wheelchair tray.
10. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the wooden base of the mobile stand that reads "**WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this mobile stand.**" Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children's selfinitiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. A small wedge (foam or wooden) may be used under the plywood base to tilt the mobile stand toward a child who cannot reach the items when the stand is in an upright position. Be sure that the tilted mobile stand and wedge are clamped or secured in place with Velcro so that the mobile stand does not tip over onto the child.
2. If the major goal of a mobile stand activity is to encourage a child to look while interacting with item(s) on the stand, then start with just one or two items. Too many items may cause visual "clutter" and may make it difficult for a child to use his/her vision. If the goal of the stand activity is to help a child to contact and manipulate items with his/her body, then it is preferable to hang many objects on the mobile stand. Having many objects present increases a child's chance of finding objects and combining them in varied ways.
3. Choose items carefully. Be sure that they are safe for children who may put them into their mouths. Select objects (and where they are placed on the stand) with an individual child's personal preferences, physical abilities and developmental level in mind. Specific items may be hung up to enable a child to experiment with and compare various textures, sounds, colors, sizes, shapes, and/or common household objects in his/her own way.
4. A child may use the stand while sitting up or while laying down directly under the mobile stand. The stand could also be positioned by a child's feet (for kicking) or beside a child, who lays on his/her right or left side while interacting with the objects on the stand.
5. The Bead Cans (p. 5), the Cookie Sheet (p.9), the Curler Board (p.11) the Mirror (p. 29), the Shaker Eggs and Can (p. 35) and the Texture Board (p. 39) may be clamped onto the mobile stand with small spring clamps.

# Pegboard Tabletop

## Description:

“Hole-y” cow! This one’s for little cruisers and other tabletop explorers. Fun stuff, anchored in consistent locations around a low table, may be just the ticket to motivate little ones to pull up and travel — and to keep track of their changing locations as they move.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, reach, grasp, manipulation, release); goal-directed whole body movement; gross motor skills (pull to stand; cruising); self-initiated actions; spatial mapping; visual skills (search, fixation, scanning, shift of gaze).



## Materials Needed:

- 2 Sheets of pegboard (each 4 feet long by 2 feet wide)
- 1 4-foot long hinge
- 16 Soft aluminum rivets with large heads
- 1/4- inch Elastic cord
- White plastic curtain rings
- Sticky-back Velcro or rubberized shelf liner material
- Items to attach (see Directions, #7)
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 8)

## Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Place the two sheets of pegboard side by side. Trace a 4-foot diameter circle (or vary to fit a smaller table) onto the pegboard.
2. Using a saber saw, cut out the two halves of the circle.
3. Attach the two halves of the circle together with the hinge, using the soft aluminum rivets to anchor the hinge in place. To attach the rivets, drill a 3/16-inch hole for each one. Insert the rivets, big head up, from the top of the pegboard. Turn the board over and hammer the small ends of the rivets until they have flattened and spread enough to hold tight in the holes.
4. Glue rubberized shelf liner material onto the back sides of each half of the circle (do not cover the hinge) or affix Velcro pieces to the back of the pegboard and to the table surface to prevent the pegboard tabletop from sliding off of the table.





5. Cut the elastic cord into 1 to 1 1/2- foot pieces. Tie one end of each piece onto an item to be anchored onto the tabletop. At about 3 inches from the other end of each cord, tie on a white curtain ring.
6. Space the items to be attached around the pegboard surface (one in the middle and about five spaced evenly around the outside of the circle). To attach the items, feed the loose 3 inches at the end of each elastic cord down through one hole and up through another. Tie off securely on the curtain ring.
7. The following (pictured) items may be attached: a) metal stove pan with beads attached; b) long handled skin massager brush; c) plastic seasoning shaker with handle; d) musical pull toy; e) two colorful hard plastic plates (small and large); and f) toy pom pom.
8. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** on the pegboard that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this tabletop.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Using:**

1. Toddlers who cruise around a low table will find unique objects anchored on the pegboard at consistent locations along the way. Finding the items may motivate children to move, help them to map their changing positions around the table and encourage them to explore.
2. The pegboard tabletop may also be placed on the floor to anchor toys. Children may then sit or lay on the pegboard and play with items attached to it.
3. When not in use, the tabletop may be removed from the table, folded in half and stored away.

# Shaker Eggs and Can

## Description:

Pull 'em off, shake 'em up and pop 'em in! This shaker egg activity provides children with lots of visual, sound and tactile feedback as they explore the plastic eggs and push them into the mounted coffee can.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; concepts (“quiet”/”noisy”, colors, sounds, textures, on/off, in/out, pull/push) eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (reach, hand search, grasp, release, two hand use); self-initiated actions; visual skills (fixation, scanning, shift of gaze).



## Materials Needed:

- 1 Piece of 1/4-inch plywood (approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide)
- 1 Large empty coffee can
- 6 Flat, dark green rectangular scouring pads (“Scrub Buddies” available from “dollar” stores)
- 10 Plastic, snap-open colored eggs (two each of the same color)
- Contact paper (enough to cover the coffee can)

- Elmer’s or craft glue
  - Clear 3-inch wide mailing tape
  - Sticky-back Velcro (approximately 6 inches of scratchy-type per egg)
  - 1 Nut and bolt set (long enough to go through the plywood board and coffee can)
  - Rice/dried beans/bells (or other items to put inside some of the eggs to make a sound)
  - WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 8)
  - Directions for Making (as pictured):
1. Sand the edges of the plywood board and tape around all edges with the mailing tape.
  2. Clean and dry a large coffee can. Smooth any rough or sharp edges. With the lid removed, cover the sides of the coffee can with contact paper. Cut an “X”-shaped slit in the lid of the can (approximately 2 inches long for each cut) with a sharp knife. Highlight the “X”-shaped slit with a black permanent marker.



3. Drill a hole in the plywood (just large enough to put the bolt through), at about 5 inches in from the left side edge and centered from top to bottom. Drill a hole in the center of the bottom of the can.
4. Match up the holes in the plywood and the can and pass a bolt through the board and can from the back side of the board. Screw the nut onto the bolt inside the bottom surface of the can.
5. On the right side of the plywood board, glue on six scouring pads (two across and three down). Let them dry.
6. Open one egg of each color and put dried rice, dried beans, bells or other sound-producing materials inside the eggs. Seal with glue and snap them closed.
7. Cut the Velcro into 6-inch strips. Wrap one strip around each of all 10 of the eggs, sealing the eggs closed. Stick the eggs onto the scouring pads.
8. Affix a WARNING LABEL onto the plywood board that reads “WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this egg board activity.” Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### **Suggestions for Use:**

1. This activity may be simplified in the beginning by using only one or two eggs at a time, to reduce visual clutter.
2. Children may experiment with the eggs and compare their qualities (e.g., match colors, compare the “noisy” (sound-making) and “quiet” (empty) eggs).
3. Children may pull the eggs off of the scouring pads and push them into the coffee can through the “X”-shaped slot in the lid of the can. If a child is unable to do this whole task independently in the beginning, an adult may partially feed the eggs into the slot and the child may push the eggs the rest of the way into the can.
4. An adult may comment on what the child is doing (e.g., shaking, pulling eggs off, pushing eggs in) and the sensory qualities of the eggs being manipulated (e.g., “noisy”, “quiet”, colors) as the child participates in this activity.
5. A preschooler who is physically able may be taught to use one hand (“finding” hand) to “mark” the opening in the lid of the can while the other hand (“doing” hand) places the egg into the slot and pushes it into the can. This is the beginning of learning to use two hands efficiently together.

# Suspended Beach Ball



## **Description:**

No sand? No ocean? No problem! Suspend a beach ball anywhere, add a few bells, and you can create one “hot” space for ball pushing, snaring, throwing and catching—alone or with others.

## **Target Skill Areas:**

Ball handling skills (search, reach, batting, throwing, catching); cause-effect; eyehand/ear-hand coordination; self-initiated actions; social turn-taking; spatial mapping; visual skills (search, fixation, tracking).

## **Materials Needed:**

- One Beach ball
- 1/2- inch Elastic cord (long enough to suspend the ball)
- One Hook
- String of jingle bells or other sound-maker
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 3)





### Directions for Making:

1. Inflate a beach ball. Tie one end of an elastic cord to the stem of the ball and securely tie a string of jingle bells onto the elastic cord (so the bells hang on top of the ball).
2. Anchor a hook into the top of a door frame or into a room ceiling. Tie the loose end of the elastic cord onto the hook.
3. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the beach ball that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this beach ball.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### Suggestions for Use:

1. Position the child on the floor under the ball, either on a blanket or in some type of supported seating. Adjust the height of the ball so that the child may push it away (with hands/feet/head) and catch or bat it when it swings back. This is also a great way for two good buddies to play ball together!
2. The beach ball may also be suspended from a drying rack (see Drying Rack section on page 13), so that it may be moved from place to place indoors or outdoors.
3. This is a great activity for use during gym, recess, and/or motor time for preschoolers and young school age children. Children may stand up or sit down to play.
4. Supervise carefully until the child understands that the ball will come back and bump his/her head or chest and is not frightened by this. Pair with a “gentle” partner if playing ball with a buddy.
5. A Mylar balloon may be substituted for the beach ball for slower movement and softer contacts with the child’s body.

# Texture Board



## Description:

Let little fingers stroll across this texture board! Loaded with all sorts of textured materials, this board offers a tactile treat for little hands—and a place to find toys and other objects to explore along the way.

## Target Skill Areas:

Cause-effect; eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, reach, grasp, manipulation, release); self-initiated actions; tactile exploration; visual skills (search, fixation, scanning).

## Materials Needed:

- 1 Piece of 1/4- inch plywood (approximately 2 feet long by 1 foot 4 inches wide)
- 3 inch wide clear mailing tape
- Scraps of textured materials (varied in texture and color/pattern)
- Elmer's or craft glue
- “Baby links” plastic rings, available from baby supply stores and toy stores
- 1/4- inch Elastic cord
- Items to attach to the board
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 4)

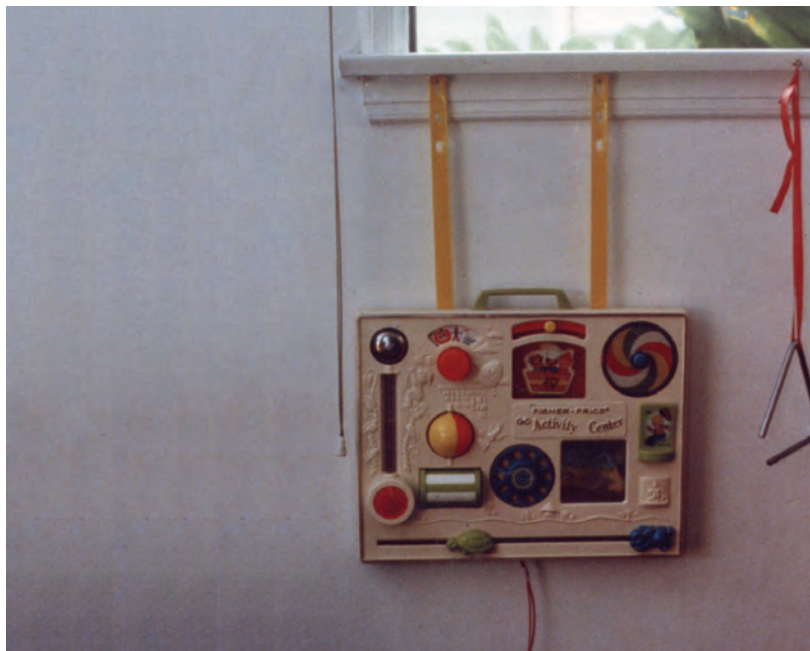


### Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Sand the edges of the plywood board and tape around all edges with the mailing tape.
2. Arrange the scraps of material so that they cover the surface of the plywood board, leaving room at the top for the warning label. Glue them securely to the board.
3. Attach items onto the board, using the “baby links” to anchor them to the top of the board (ideas pictured on previous page: wooden beads and blocks toy; metal hand bell with a soft net bath scrubber attached).
4. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** onto the board that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this texture board.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure that children are safe.

### Suggestions for Use:

1. The texture board may be used as a “feely board”, without items attached.
2. Hanging interesting objects on the board may increase children’s interaction with the board. Children (who may not initially enjoy touching the various textures) may accidentally find the textures as they explore the objects attached to the board. Increased, purposeful interaction with the textures generally follows.
3. The texture board may be Velcroed onto a wall of a room at home or school, onto a side wall of a Little Play Room (see page 25), or onto a slant board.  
It may also be clamped onto a Mobile Stand (see page 31), using small spring clamps.
4. Some children may initially prefer to start exploring the textures with a part of an arm, the back of a hand or with a cheek instead of using their fingers.
5. 18-inch pieces of textured material may be knotted and attached to the board (e.g., with Velcro on the knotted section of the material). This increases the “grasp-ability” of the materials on the board and creates a more 3-D experience.



### **Description:**

Try “dressing up” a window, bay window or window wall! Natural light from a window is generally a strong attraction for children who are visually impaired (but able to see light), as well as many fullysighted children. Windows may double as places to find interesting texture, sound and visual objects to interact with as a child looks or moves toward the window light.

### **Target Skill Areas:**

Cause-effect; concepts (size color, textures, up/down, light); eye-hand coordination; fine motor skills (hand search, reach, grasp, manipulation, release); goal-directed whole body movement; self-initiated actions; tactile exploration; visual skills (fixation, scanning).

### **Materials Needed:**

- Window, window wall and/or windowsill
- Sticky-back Velcro/small nails/suction hooks/other materials for attaching items
- Items to attach
- WARNING LABEL (see Directions, # 5)





### Directions for Making (as pictured):

1. Locate a window or window wall to which a child would be able to get close. Windows that extend down to (or near) the floor, glass doors, bay windows and windows with ledges or sills work well.
2. Affix items directly onto the glass surface.
3. Affix items onto the top and/or side surface(s) of the ledge or sill of the window.
4. Attach items onto the pushbar of a glass door (see picture on previous page).
5. Affix a **WARNING LABEL** to the window area that reads: **“WARNING: Children MUST be supervised by an adult at ALL times when using this window play space.”** Please remember that adults should not interfere unnecessarily with children’s self-initiated exploration and play, but must always watch to be sure children are safe.

### Suggestions for Use:

1. A window may serve as a natural Light Box (see Light Box section on page 23) when items are affixed to the glass surface. Examples of items that may be affixed to the window glass include: a) window “clings” (thin plastic pieces, with pictures on them, that stick to a glass surface); b) APH Plexiglas Spinner (see information in Resources section on page 45); c) suction hooks with items attached (see ideas pictured in Mirror section on page 29); d) colorful bathtub appliqués in various shapes; and e) suction rattles.
2. The top of a windowsill is the perfect spot to anchor items that may be found by young children as they use the windowsill to pull up to stand. A child’s favorite small toys and other sound, texture and visually interesting objects (see ideas pictured throughout this booklet) may be Velcroed or nailed securely to a windowsill or ledge located below the window.
3. Busy boxes, musical instruments and other toys and objects (see the picture on previous page) may be hung from a windowsill so that they rest against the wall below the window. A child, then, may sit directly on the floor or in a supported seat on the floor and reach up to interact with the suspended items.

## Resources

### **For information on the “Active Learning” approach:**

Books on the “Active Learning” approach are available from:

Vision Associates  
2109 US Hwy 90 West  
Suite 170 # 312  
Lake City, Florida 32055  
Web site: [www.visionkits.com](http://www.visionkits.com)

See the Web site or contact Vision Associates for details on the following titles:

#LNFS Functional Scheme: Functions Skill Assessment  
#LN-EL Early Learning – Step by Step  
#LN-SR Spatial Relations in Congenitally Blind Infants  
#LN-EA Educational Approaches  
#LN-AY Are You Blind?  
#LN-SS Space and Self  
#LN-CH The Comprehending Hand  
#LN-POEL Visual Impairment – Understanding Needs of Young Children

### **To order Lilli Nielsen’s “Active Learning” equipment:**

Dr. Nielsen’s “Active Learning” materials may be ordered from:

LilliWorks Active Learning Foundation  
1815 Encinal Avenue  
Alameda, CA 94501  
Phone: (510) 814-9111  
Email: [info@lilliworks.com](mailto:info@lilliworks.com)  
Web site: [www.lilliworks.org](http://www.lilliworks.org)

### **To order materials from the American Printing House for the Blind:**

Items (listed below) that were mentioned in this booklet are available from:

The American Printing House for the Blind Products Catalog  
1839 Frankfort Avenue  
P.O. Box 6085  
Louisville, Kentucky 40206-0085  
Phone: 1-800-223-1839  
Email: [info@aph.org](mailto:info@aph.org)  
Web site: [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org)

# 1-08670-00 Light Box Materials: Level I (contains colored cups)  
# 1-08665-00 Pegs and Pegboard  
# 1-08663-00 Plexiglas Blocks  
# 1-08664-00 Plexiglas Spinner

For more information contact:

The Ohio Center for Deafblind Education

Phone: (614) 897-0020

Web site: [www.ohiodeafblind.com](http://www.ohiodeafblind.com)

## **About the Author**

Kay Clarke is a certified teacher of children who are visually impaired, an orientation and mobility specialist, an early intervention specialist, and a pre-K special needs teacher. She earned a Master's degree in child development and a Master's degree in special education (orientation and mobility) from California State University, Los Angeles. She also holds a Ph.D. in special education from the Ohio State University, with an emphasis in the areas of early childhood, visual impairments and multiple disabilities.

For nearly 20 years, Kay has run a private practice, contracting with programs to serve infants through school-age children who are visually impaired or blind, and their families, in central Ohio. She is also a part-time instructor at The Ohio State University and a VIISA trainer for Ohio. Previously, she developed and directed a home-based program for infants and toddlers with visual impairments and additional disabilities at the Foundation for the Junior Blind in Los Angeles, California.

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