



## RECREATION AND LEISURE

Lauren Lieberman, Ph.D.

People join recreational groups for many reasons—for fun, exercise, and meeting others. They look forward to Tuesday bowling, Saturday hikes, Sunday book discussions. Best of all, when people take time off from everyday responsibilities, they return to them later, refreshed. In a way, recreation re-CREATES us.

People who are deaf-blind and have cognitive disabilities enjoy recreational activities just as you and I do. To combat the isolation and lack of independence that often result from their disabilities, they NEED them even more than we do.

A challenge exists to help those who are deaf-blind put recreation into their lives. Everyone—educators, family, friends—should tout the benefits of recreational activities.

---

---

### Start with the Individual

#### What Is He or She Interested In?

- ◆ What types of recreation has he or she participated in previously?
- ◆ What are this person's favorite activities?
- ◆ With whom does he or she prefer to spend leisure time?
- ◆ At what time of day is recreation most enjoyable for this person?

People who are deaf-blind are as diverse in their interests as everyone else. Check the list below for some ideas. Remember, this list is only a start.

#### Fitness Activities

aerobics	running
swimming	cross-country skiing
walking	weight lifting
track and field	gymnastics
wrestling	bicycling
	(stationary/tandem)

#### Outdoor Activities

fishing	camping
hiking	canoeing
kayaking	horseback riding
sledding	rowing

#### Home Activities

cooking	gardening
needlepoint	knitting
arts and crafts	listening to music

#### Table Games

card games	bingo
dominoes	board games (chess, checkers, etc.)

#### Community Activities

bowling	ice skating
roller skating	dances (folk/social)
martial arts	diving

#### Sports

Special Olympics	community leagues
school sports	golf
baseball	softball
soccer	basketball
volleyball	swimming
hockey	rollerblading
beep baseball	goal ball (persons with hearing)

Remember to work with clubs and organizations for those who are deaf to encourage individuals who are deaf-blind to participate in social activities to reduce isolation (Kappen, 1992; Lieberman, 2005).

### Recreation Is More Than Mere Fun!

#### Look What It Can Do

It gives us and others information about who we are (Haggard & Williams, 1992).

It can take the place of inappropriate or self-stimulatory behavior (Honig, 1990).

It can reduce physical, social, and psychological isolation (Sauerburger, 1993).

## What Activities Are Age Appropriate?

Age-appropriate activities are those activities normally found in the individual's culture and geographic location that are geared to the individual's chronological age.

Observe other people of the same chronological age to determine what activities are appropriate. Some examples of age-appropriate activities enjoyed by teenagers in our culture are bowling, dancing, swimming, and playing video games. Activities which are not appropriate for this age are duck-duck-goose, riding children's tricycles, or interacting with preschool toys. Some children who are deaf-blind may choose an inappropriate activity. Our goal is to broaden their experience and move them on to choices that are appropriate.

As you research what is available in the community, be sure the activities you suggest are available for the age of the person you are helping.

## What Is Safe?

If the individual is engaging in a new fitness program, the physician should be informed. If there is a heart condition, a potential for retinal detachment, tubes in the ears, or a shunt, the physician will then inform the staff or parents of any cautions that must be taken. But remember, almost any activity can be adapted for individual needs.

## What Is Available?

Find out what recreational activities are available at the person's home and school (Lieberman, & Pecorella, 2006). Consult with the following groups to see what is available in the community.

- ◆ YMCAs/YWCAs
- ◆ church leagues/synagogue leagues
- ◆ community leagues
- ◆ university- or college-affiliated programs
- ◆ local deaf clubs
- ◆ local associations for the blind
- ◆ Ski for Light

---



---

## Research the Communication Patterns

It is important to determine each person's communication patterns and needs. For example, he or she may use augmentative communication devices such as schedule boxes and communication boards that use symbols, pictures, objects, and/or words. Since each person will have developed unique ways of using these, you will benefit from all the information you can gather. This can be as easy as looking in the files or getting the information from

previous teachers, residential personnel, parents, siblings, or peers.

You'll soon find that each person is unique. For example, a person with residual hearing may only require that you get his or her attention before speaking. The person with usable vision may wish to communicate using signs. If this is the case, you will need to know which mode of signing—Signing Exact English, Pidgin Sign, American Sign Language, or Cued Speech—he or she uses. Some people may require tactile signing into the palm of the hand. For more information about various modes of communication that can be used with persons who are deaf-blind, take a look at D. Sauerburger's book, listed in the references.

Depending upon the person's type of communication it is also important to set up clear communication during the recreational activities (Arndt, Lieberman, & Pucci, 2004).

## Steps to clear communication

1. Experience the activity yourself so you know what to communicate. For example, if you are teaching rock climbing, doing it first will give you clear ideas about how to explain and direct the activity.
2. Allow time for exploration of the space, equipment and boundaries. Include terminology and describe the rules.
3. Use experts for information such as the consumer themselves, an SSP, parent or intervenor.
4. Make continuous activities discrete. Short or discrete skills such as archery, bowling, or shot put have built in time for feedback, but activities such as swimming, biking, running, or canoeing do not. For example, if a child is learning how to ride a bike make sure you tell them that in 5 rotations, or ½ way around the track they can stop for feedback (Arndt, Lieberman, & Pucci, 2004).
5. Ensure that receptive and expressive communication is available during the activity. This must be set up and planned ahead of time. For example, if a child is swimming, how will they communicate to the instructor or intervenor if they are using a kickboard?

---



---

## Develop a Plan

Once the above steps have been taken, you can develop a recreation plan. This plan should include short- and long-term objectives that have been developed, if possible, by a team consisting of the individual, the family, and the staff. Remember that the overall goal is to find an activity (or activities) that will be fun and will provide relaxation. Be sure to set the stage for successful recreation. For ideas on recreational activities for children in the home (see Lieberman & Pecorella, 2006).

---



---

## Maintain Interest

### Establish a Time Period

Establish a period of time that is appropriate for trying out a new activity. At the end of the period, let each person evaluate the pleasure derived from the activity. He or she can then decide whether or not to continue. Use of a time period helps prevent feelings of failure; it also ensures that enough time is given to the activity to provide adequate information for making a good decision. For example: 17-year-old Robert chooses Tae Kwon Do in the community club. The parents suggest a 6-week session to determine if he enjoys the activity. At the end of the 6 weeks, Robert may choose to continue, or he may end the session and choose another activity.

### Select the Proper Time of Day for the Activity

Try to schedule the recreational activity for the time it is most needed to meet individual needs. For example: Amy is a 14-year-old who is in an educational setting. She is faster than her peers at getting dressed in the morning. As a result, Amy has 20-25 minutes every morning when she has nothing planned, and there are not enough staff to direct her play or an activity. She used to engage in self-abuse and became intensely agitated. When the recreation specialist noted that Amy loves to ride the stationary bike, the bike was made easily accessible to her. Now, every morning, Amy gets on the bike and rides for 20-25 minutes. She does not become agitated, and her self-abusive behavior has disappeared.

### Modify the Activity When Necessary

Most recreational activities were developed with hearing and sighted people in mind. In many cases, an adaptation that is relatively minor can make these activities enjoyable and safe for those who are deaf-blind (Lieberman, 2007). For example, the children in Shannon's Girl Scout troop go roller skating every week. Shannon, like many young individuals who are deaf-blind, has difficulty keeping her balance. By using a skate aid device Shannon can safely participate in roller skating.

Ask each person if he or she prefers the help of a guide or assistance from peers. However, be aware that some persons may prefer activities that promote personal independence.

---



---

## Discover the Best Ways to Teach

The following teaching strategies will help each individual succeed and make the learning process more effective.

### Orient the Individual to the Playing Area

Give each person the opportunity to explore and become familiar with the equipment involved, other persons in the room, and the physical site. The absence of reliable visual and auditory input makes this a time-consuming process, but it is essential (McInnes & Treffry, 1993).

### Explain

Select language (oral, sign, or augmentative systems) appropriate to the pupil's functioning level and communicate the key points of the skill.

### Demonstrate

This is a practical teaching strategy only for persons with usable vision (Lieberman & Cowart, 1996)

### Use Tactile Modeling or Feeling and Imitation

Allow the student to feel a peer or the instructor execute a skill or movement that was previously difficult to learn using the three previous approaches (Lieberman & Cowart, 1996). Tell the student where and when to feel you or a peer executing a skill (O'Connell, Lieberman, & Petersen, 2006). For legal purposes, document how much assistance was given, when and where the student felt you or a peer, and why. Repeat tactile modeling as many times as necessary to ensure understanding. Combine tactile modeling with other teaching methods to increase understanding (Lieberman, 2005).

### Use Physical Guidance/Hand Over Hand

Assist the student physically through the movement. Record which skills require physical assistance, including how much and where on the student's body assistance was needed. If asked, the teacher can explain when, where, and why the teacher touched a student (O'Connell, Lieberman, & Petersen, 2006). To avoid startling the student, forewarn him or her before giving physical assistance. Fade assistance to minimal physical prompts as soon as possible.

### Enable Choice Making

Many people who are deaf-blind go through their days with someone else making decisions for them. When they get involved in recreational activities, they must use choice-making skills. Begin with simple choices. First, offer two activities and allow him or her to choose the order in which they

will be done. Next, give a choice of two or three activities and let him or her choose which one to perform. As each person increases in ability to make choices, remove prompting and allow more independence in decision making (LaWare, & Wiley, 2003; Lieberman, Modell, & Jackson, 2006).

### Use Additional Strategies

- ◆ Begin with the amount of assistance that will ensure desired performance and success.
- ◆ Combine teaching techniques to ensure the individual is learning as much as possible. For example, Eddie is 16 and learning the game of T-ball. He is deaf and has some residual vision. When standing at bat in the game, Eddie needs to be reminded of which way to stand and when to bat the ball. The instructor models which way to stand, signs "hit the ball," and taps Eddie on the elbow. Eddie then bats the ball off the T. In this case, both explanation and physical guidance techniques are used.
- ◆ Be aware of the individual's responses. Try to minimize assistance as soon as you feel the individual is learning the skill in the appropriate manner.
- ◆ Provide immediate and accurate feedback so that he or she can make necessary adjustments before the next attempt (Arndt, Lieberman, & Pucci, 2004; McInnes & Treffry, 1993).
- ◆ Allow each person to practice the skill in an environment that is as normal as possible. This will allow the transfer of skills to occur much more easily.
- ◆ Be patient. Progress may be slow due to learning the new skill as well as learning new terminology to go with it.
- ◆ Decrease physical cues to cues that are natural or typical to initiate desired performance. For example, in a dance unit, start with physical guidance (unless he or she has enough ability to start with a less intrusive cue) and work toward a touch cue to initiate desired movement.
- ◆ Be sure hearing aids and glasses are on and functioning (unless, of course, you are in the pool).
- ◆ Be sure to select leisure activities that are chronologically age appropriate and also are utilized by the general population (Hamre-Nietupski, Nietupski, Sandvig, Sandvig, & Ayres, 1984).
- ◆ Consider featuring individuals who are deaf-blind who have special recreational tal-

ents on local news shows to raise public awareness (Kappen, 1992).

---



---

## References

- Arndt, K.L., Lieberman, L. J. & Pucci, G. (2004). Communication during physical activity for youth who are deafblind. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, 1(2), Article 1.
- Hamre-Nietupski, S., Nietupski, S., Sandvig, R., Sandvig, M. B., & Ayres, B. (1984). Leisure skills instruction in a community residential setting with young adults who are deaf/blind severely handicapped. *TASH Journal*, 9, Spring, pp 49-54.
- Kappen, B. (1992). Independent living: Presentation. In J. Reiman & P. Johnson (Eds.), *Proceedings of the National Symposium on Children and Youth who are Deaf-Blind* (pp. 187-196). Monmouth, OR: Teaching Research Publications.
- LaWare, F., & Wiley, D. (2003). What's your pleasure: Teaching leisure skills. *Vibrations*, spring, 5-7.
- Lieberman, L.J. (2007). Recreational Activities for Children and Youth Who Are Deafblind. *Deaf-Blind Perspectives*, Spring 2007, 14 # 2.
- Lieberman, L.J., & Pecorella, M. (2006). Activity at home for children and youth who are deafblind. *Deaf-Blind Perspectives*, 14, #1.
- Lieberman, L.J. (2005). Visual impairments. in J.P. Winnick (ed.). *Adapted Physical Education and Sport (4th ed.)*, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Lieberman, L.J. (2005). Deafness and Deafblindness in J.P. Winnick (ed.). *Adapted Physical Education and Sport (4th ed.)*, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics .
- Lieberman, L., & Cowart, J. (1996). *Games for people with sensory impairments: strategies for including individuals of all ages*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- McInnes, J. M., & Treffry, J. A. (1993). *Deafblind infants and children: A developmental guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto.
- O'Connell, M., Lieberman, L., & Petersen, S. (2006). The use of tactile modeling and physical guidance as instructional strategies in physical activity for children who are blind. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 100(8),471-477.
- Sauerburger, D. (1993). *Independence without sight or sound: Suggestions for practitioners working with deaf-blind adults*. New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Lauren Lieberman is currently an assistant professor in the physical education department at the State University of New York College at Brockport, Brockport, N.Y. She teaches adapted physical education, undergraduate and graduate classes, and specializes in physical activity for individuals who are sensory impaired. She runs a sports (*Camp Abilities*) for children who are blind and deaf-blind.

---



---

## National Organizations

**American Association of Adapted Sports Programs**

P.O. Box 451047  
 Atlanta, Georgia 31145  
 (404) 294-0070  
<http://www.adaptedsports.org>

AAASP's mission is to enhance the health, independence and future economic self-sufficiency of youths with physical disabilities. They facilitate a national disabled sports movement and assist communities in creating programs for physically disabled youth to compete in team and individual sports on a local, regional and national level.

**Best Buddies International**

Global Headquarters  
 100 Southeast Second Street, Suite 2200  
 Miami, FL 33131  
 (305) 374-2233  
<http://www.bestbuddies.org>

Best Buddies® is a non profit organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities for one-to-one friendships and integrated employment.

**Camp Abilities**

SUNY Brockport  
 350 New Campus Dr.  
 Brockport, NY 14420  
 (585) 395-5361  
<http://www.campabilitiesbrockport.org/StaffPage.html>

Camp Abilities is a one week developmental sports camp for children who are visually impaired, blind, or deafblind. The camp is set up to provide a 1:1 instructional situation for each child. Camps are currently operating in New York, Iowa, Alaska, Arizona, and Vermont. Efforts are under way to create new camps in Columbus, OH; Puerto Rico, Wales and Toronto.

**Disabled Sports USA**

451 Hungerford Drive Suite 100  
 Rockville, MD 20850  
 (301) 217-0960 Phone  
<http://www.dsusa.org>

Disabled Sports USA is a nonprofit organization that provides sports and recreation services to children and adults with physical or mobility related disabilities.

**International Paralympic Committee**

Adenauerallee 212-214, 53113  
 Bonn, Germany,  
 Tel.: +49-228-2097-200  
<http://www.paralympic.org/>

The IPC is the global governing body of the Paralympic Movement. The IPC organizes the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games, and serves as the International Federation for nine sports.

**Little League Challenger Division**

Contact through Little League Regional Headquarters  
<http://www.littleleague.org/learn/about/divisions/challenger.htm>

The Challenger Division was established in 1989 as a separate division of Little League Baseball to enable boys and girls with physical and mental disabilities, ages 5-18 or the completion of high school, to enjoy the game of baseball. Teams are set up according to abilities, rather than age.

**National Lekotek Center**

2001 N. Clybourn, Chicago, IL 60614  
 Phone: 773-528-5766  
 Toy Resource Helpline: 800.366.PLAY  
<http://www.lekotek.org/>

Lekotek uses interactive play experiences, and the learning that results, to promote the inclusion of children with special needs into family and community life. Nationwide, there are 32 Lekotek sites that offer family play sessions, toy lending libraries, Compuplay family computer centers, and other innovative community-specific programming.

**DisabilityInfo.gov**

<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/digov-public/public/DisplayPage.do?parentFolderId=204>

Provides links to information about recreation, sports and travel for people with disabilities. It includes a comprehensive resource listing related to sports and disabilities. It also has information about specific adapted sports like "Beep Baseball" and "Accessible Golf".

**Special Olympics**

1133 19th Street, N.W.  
 Washington, DC 20036  
<http://www.specialolympics.org>

Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition.

This publication is available on the web at  
<http://nationaldb.org/NCDBProducts.php> (see *Topical Publications*).

This fact sheet is available in standard print, large print, grade 2 braille, and on our website. To request your free copy, or for additional copies, contact:



**NCDB**  
**345 N. Monmouth Ave**  
**Monmouth, OR 97361**  
**Voice (800) 438-9376**  
**TTY: (800) 854-7013**

**E-mail: [info@nationaldb.org](mailto:info@nationaldb.org)**  
**<http://www.nationaldb.org>**



*Funded through award #H326T060002 by the U.S. Department of Education, OSERS, OSEP. The opinions and policies expressed by this publication do not necessarily reflect those of The Teaching Research Institute, or the U.S. Department of Education.*