

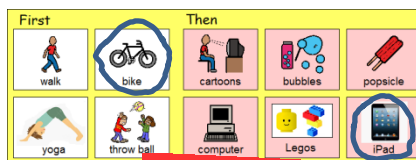


ABC of NC

8 Strategies to Make Exercise More Motivating for Kids with Autism

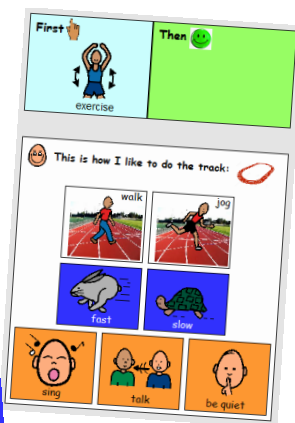
1 Use reinforcement to increase exercise.

- The delayed, abstract benefits of an active lifestyle aren't likely to motivate many children with autism to exercise. Immediate reinforcement will be necessary for most children on the spectrum to enjoy fitness activities.
- Establish motivation prior to placing demands. The first step to a successful exercise time will be to ask your child which reward should follow her/his hard work! (Ask verbally or using visual supports)



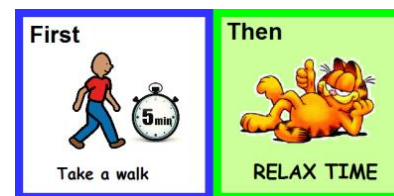
2 Provide opportunity for choice making before and within the activity.

- Giving kids with autism some control over how they will complete a non-preferred activity is key to promoting cooperation.



3 Modify activities for success.

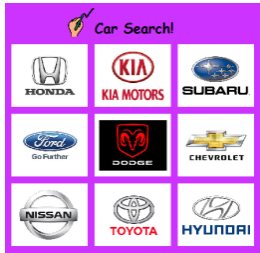
- Start with short activities. Increase time only after success at the current duration has been achieved.
- Begin with activities that require skills that your child has already mastered. When exercise time is more rewarding, you can gradually increase the difficulty of the tasks.



4 Incorporate favorite items and interests into exercise time.

When exercise is paired with existing reinforcers (e.g. music, favorite characters, special treats) the activity itself may become it's own reward.

• *Teaching children with autism to exercise in the context of fun activities, using what is most motivating to the individual child, will make it less necessary over time to continuously provide artificial reinforcement (e.g. tokens, TV time, toys).*



For the car enthusiast!



Incorporate sports cones for a Toy Story fan



Treasure map themed exercise might be very motivating for a child who loves Jake the Pirate



Wander with Waldo! Tally each stop sign passed, or whatever would be interesting for your child.

KidFit



A child who likes numbers might enjoy counting their steps!



Music can make exercise more enjoyable-or even relaxing

5 Build routines around exercise to provide structure and predictability.

Have clearly defined roles to foster independence within the activities (e.g. Dad turns on the music, child gets the ball; Child stands on trampoline, sister starts the timer)

6 Use visual supports to add meaning to your words.

• Children with autism tend to have strong visual processing skills. The use of visual supports (pictures, symbols, objects, etc.) allows for multiple ways of understanding settings and expectations.

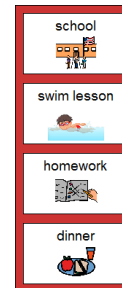


7 Use visual schedules to provide your child with information about what is happening now, and what is coming next.

• Visual schedules can be across activities or within activities.



Within activity schedule



Across activities schedule

8 Teach in advance.

• Pre-teach rules, being sure to emphasize Yes/Can/Do more than No/Can't/Don't.
 • In addition to being a friendlier approach to teaching, we are sending clear messages to the child about what it is that we want them to do.
 • Try video modeling to prepare your child for a new activity or to isolate the skill that you will be working on.



One child practiced sorting kids from adults, deciding who stays in the shallow end of the pool