



## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY RESOURCES—WINTER BREAK

*This packet is intended to provide general resources and tips for how to maintain skills that your child may be working on in occupational therapy over the extended break. Additionally, resources are included to help your child better participate and engage in holiday-related and other daily activities during the time off. Activities are provided as a resource only and should not replace direct and individualized occupational therapy services. Please reach out to your child's occupational therapist should you have any specific questions. Thank you and enjoy your holiday season!*

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# HOME TIPS TO TRY DURING BREAK

*Below you will find ideas and tips to help your child stay engaged, regulated, and well-rested during the winter break!*

## Sensory Seeking—Maintaining Regulation During Changing Schedules

During the holidays, our schedules are often not the same from day to day, and that can be very difficult for children on the autism spectrum. It's important to continue to give them an idea of what is coming up each day through a visual schedule or calendar. As you probably know, many of our kiddos benefit from deep pressure throughout their days to stay regulated. Below are some ideas of ways to provide heavy work opportunities at home during break.

- Have a family pillow fight
- If there is snow, encourage them to roll snow to make a snowman
- Have child help stir cookie dough or other thick-consistency mix
- Have your child make up silly "animal walks" to get around the house. Pressing weight through hands can provide deep pressure. Examples for winter can be polar bear walk, penguin walk, narwhal swim, etc.
- Have kids push or pull each other in their sled

## Promoting Fine Motor Skills During Time at Home

Our muscles, including small muscles in the hands, need consistently worked in order to maintain strength. Therefore, it is important for our children to keep practicing fine motor tasks over break to not lose the skills they've developed! Below are some ideas:

- Many board games have fine motor components! Favorites include *Operation*, *Don't Break the Ice*, *The Sneaky, Snacky Squirrel*, and *Kerplunk*.
- Encourage your children to make their own holiday cards for friends and family! Drawing, placing labels, and peeling stamps are all engaging these muscles.
- Children can have a blast helping decorate cookies or gingerbread houses! Squeezing icing or placing candy and sprinkles are great fine motor tasks.
- Kids can complete coloring/doodling activity on page 6 of packet to challenge fine motor precision!



## Improving Sleep Quality During Breaks



Sleep can often be challenging for our kiddos, but this can be even more exacerbated during times with schedule changes. Consider the following strategies to help your child fall asleep more easily!

- Continue the same bedtime routine you normally do, even during the break. This should be a predictable routine—pajamas, brushing teeth, etc.
- Limit access to television or technology for at least 1 hour before bedtime. Instead, consider relaxing activities, such as reading a book, a warm bath, or calming music near bedtime.
- Page 8-9 includes some visuals you may consider using to promote a consistent bedtime routine each night






## Limiting Screen Time

Too much screen is something we are all guilty of, and this can be especially troublesome during when there is extra time off. We challenge you to do as many of the below activities as you can during the break, as they can challenge our kiddos in fun ways!

- Read 10 books together
- Play a board game(s) 3 times
- Bundle up and play outside at least twice!
- Go on winter scavenger hunt (see page #3)
- Build a blanket fort
- Make and drink hot chocolate together
- Create an indoor obstacle course. Walk around blanket barriers, crawl under a table, hop over a pillow—the opportunities are endless!

# ACTIVITY #1: FAMILY SCAVENGER HUNT

This activity can safely get everyone out of the house and promote attention and visual scanning! Drive around the neighborhood and have the kid(s) search for the following objects. Bonus if the activity is done after dark—you can all enjoy the holiday lights together!!

<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Claus on a roof 	<input type="checkbox"/> A recycling bin 
 <input type="checkbox"/> House with white lights	 <input type="checkbox"/> An open garage door
<input type="checkbox"/> Mailbox with a specific number on it 	<input type="checkbox"/> A fire hydrant 
 <input type="checkbox"/> Inflatable snowman decoration	 <input type="checkbox"/> A house with two chairs on porch
<input type="checkbox"/> A person walking a dog 	<input type="checkbox"/> A wreath on the front door 
 <input type="checkbox"/> A flag	 <input type="checkbox"/> A speed limit sign

Have each family member draw a picture of their favorite thing they saw on the scavenger hunt when you get home!



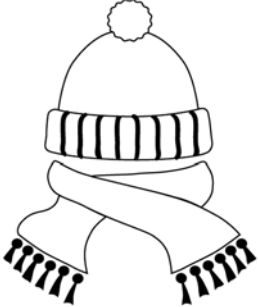

## ACTIVITY #2: WINTER "CREATE A SCENE"

Using the below words, pictures, and household objects, have your child create and/or build a winter scene, story, or creation! Children may be encouraged to write or tell a story about what they make, or to simply play. This multisensory activity encourages creativity, motor skill development, and flexible thinking.

Consider providing any of the following supplies you may have on hand:

- Cotton balls-kids can pull apart to make snow
- Wax paper-could be glued down to create an "ice rink"
- Cardboard-cutting cardboard is a great strengthening activity, and options of what to make are endless!
- Markers/crayons-let kids draw their own pictures or trace below pictures
- Legos/building toys
- Toy animals/figures

Words and Pictures for Inspiration:

Penguin	Ice	Hot Chocolate	Snowman	Polar Bear	Gloves
Fireplace	Snow Globe	Sled	Slippers	Reindeer	Igloo
					
					

## ACTIVITY #3: MOVEMENT IN READING

Does your child have a favorite book? This activity encourages you to read that book, and then incorporate movement in specific ways! This is a great way to get extra movement in, challenge motor planning, and promote attention.

### Option 1: Pick a Buzzword!

Read your child's favorite book aloud. Every time the book mentions a specific word, encourage your child to do a specific movement!

For example, if you are reading *The Night Before Christmas*, every time you say the word "THE" have your child jump five times, clap their hands, or even just wiggle!



### Option 2: Act it Out!

Another idea to incorporate movement into reading is to act out the pictures on each page of the book. A couple great books for this include *Barnyard Dance* by Sandra Boynton and *Dinosaurumpus!* by Tony Mitton.

### Option 3: Read in a New Place/Position

You don't always have to read in the same spot! If you've been sitting on the couch for a while, try reading a book while your child lays over an exercise ball, lays on his/her stomach, sits on a stack of pillows—anything new! This will incorporate different muscles than usual and it will provide some different sensory input.

You can find many books read aloud on YouTube if you don't have them at home. A couple channel options include *Miss Sofie's Story Time* (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChilBU2vzkTjDicpXUdUZjg>) and *NomNomReadRead* (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4HWZdPYtoLoy-uPgQklcPQ/videos>), but there are many to choose from!

## ACTIVITY #4: DECORATE A HOLIDAY SWEATER

Grab some markers, colored pencils, crayons, or other art supplies and decorate the below sweaters. Add a snowman, stripes, or anything you want!

