



# Ideas for managing the holidays with your child with SEND

School holidays can be a difficult time for parents with SEND children, as routines change and time is less structured than during term time.

DSPL4 has asked parents for their tips on how they manage during the school holidays and compiled this list of ideas for you to try.

# General

## Planning your holiday

- Some children have no concept of time so make a “countdown to holiday” chart which they can use to cross off the days. This can be used for the last week of term or to count down to when you go away on holiday.
- Get prepared early. Print out a blank calendar and put in what you can now, such as weeks when you are going away.
- Research things which may be suitable for you to do and make a list. You can then slot these into the planner.
- Make sure you have a valid carers passport / HAND card / DLA letter to obtain discounts at places you want to visit.

I make a list of places to go, people to visit, jobs to do. Then I spread them across the holiday, first by week and then as the time gets closer, by day.



- Make a timetable of what you plan to do each day. The level of detail will depend on the age of your child but it can be best to just put things in the order they will happen rather than putting specific times. This way, you may be able to avoid meltdowns if your plan slips and lunch isn't on the table at exactly 12.05. There are some good websites which allow you to download visuals for free.
  - <http://www.sparklebox.co.uk/special-needs/visual-timetable/home-routines.html#.WR2G1GjvIU>
  - <http://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-c-081-visual-timetable-for-home>
- If you are a split family, make sure your child knows when they will be with each parent. Where possible, work together to ensure that the rules are consistent and the same planning method is used whichever parent your child is with.
- When arranging visits to/from family, try to keep them to pre-determined lengths of time, and allow your child recovery time afterwards.

# Staying at home

- Balance down time with activity time – some children are so worn out by the time the holidays arrive, they just need to spend time relaxing in a way of their choosing.
- Try to break the day up by going out for part of the day. It doesn't need to be anything expensive – going for a walk, feeding the ducks, treasure hunts, going to the park etc can stop the boredom of being stuck indoors.

When my child was younger, I made a rainy day box containing lots of craft materials, kits and other activities. This only came out on rainy days during the holidays and so she found it exciting to explore what was in the box.

- For older children and teenagers, give them an incentive to leave their bedroom. This doesn't need to be monetary – it could be they get to choose dinner / activity / bake a cake / take the dog for a walk. Whatever motivates your child.

# Going Out

- Go to places early in the day when they first open as they tend to be less crowded.
- Remember to take ear defenders, sensory toys with you. Check wheelchair accessibility, potential sensory issues and so on in advance.
- Avoid places which are likely to be very busy – go to soft play when the weather is hot (air conditioned) and splash parks when the days are cooler.
- Go to specific SEND sessions. These do not usually have flashing lights, or loud music.
- Take a picnic with you or check the menu where you are going in advance to ensure there will be something your child will eat.
- If you want to go to a theme park, check their website for details of how to obtain a carer discount or fast track pass. Some will accept a DLA letter or HAND card, but others require specific letters from a doctor.



# Going Away

- Show child pictures of the accommodation, resort, beach in advance so they know what to expect.
- Show child a visual timetable of what will happen on journey – get into car, drive to Dover, go on ferry, arrive in France....

We were so apprehensive undertaking such a long journey but the special assistance was amazing – really could not have coped on such a long journey without it

- If flying, ask your airline for “special assistance”. This is not just for those with physical disabilities but can be used for people with autism or those with other “hidden” disabilities.
- Remember to take a copy of your child’s prescription or a doctor’s letter, particularly if you are taking controlled drugs with you.
- Take ear defenders, sensory toys, calming music.....

I have a laminated card that goes in my passport case with "I am autistic, please give me space" written on it in the major European languages


- Consider an outing to the airport in advance of booking / travelling. Most airports will arrange a visit for your child if you contact them. In general, airports are becoming more SEND aware and some now have special lounges for those with additional needs.
- When you get to your destination, identify a “quiet place” for your child to use if overwhelmed.
- Consider taking your child’s own bed linen with you if they are sensitive to different textures.
- Use a medical alert bracelet / card to detail your child’s needs along with your phone number.

We were going to a French camp site where they had a children’s club. F was keen to go but we were not sure the staff would have enough English to understand what he needed. I wrote a short paragraph about his condition and got a French speaking friend to translate it. Staff were great.

- Use “Dry oil” or powdered sunscreen if your child hates the feel of traditional versions.

# Activities

- CHIPS run holiday playschemes for SEND children and their siblings <https://chipsplay.org/>. You need to use SBLO funding. [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/support/short-breaks.aspx](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/support/short-breaks.aspx).
- Mudlarks– Gardening, craft and outdoor activities for young people with learning disabilities or autism aged 16-25. Contact [lucyh@mudlarksgarden.org.uk](mailto:lucyh@mudlarksgarden.org.uk)
- Herts Young Mariners Base do lots of activity days. Whilst not SEND specific, they are brilliant with SEND and will try to meet the needs of your young person. <http://www.hymb.com/hymb-outdoor-centre/>
- The Hang Out – A place for young people with SEND aged 16+ to socialise. Open Mon- Fri 3.30-9.30pm. <https://www.thehangoutactivitiesandeventsLtd.com/>



Rye-assic additional needs session was brilliant.

# SEN sessions

- Rye-assic: Dinosaur themed soft and outdoor play area in Rye Park. More suited to younger children. <http://www.rye-house.co.uk/rye-assic-news/soft-play-sessions-children-additional-needs>
- Jump City Cheshunt: Autism friendly sessions every Saturday morning [www.jumpcityuk.co.uk](http://www.jumpcityuk.co.uk)
- Herts Disability sports hub are running sessions through the holiday [www.hertsdisabilitysportshub.com](http://www.hertsdisabilitysportshub.com)
- 360 Play in Stevenage: SEND sessions 6.30-8.30pm on the first Friday of the month <http://360play.co.uk/schools-and-clubs/special-needs-children/>
- Airspace Stevenage: Autism friendly sessions from 9-10am every Sunday <https://air-space.co.uk/autism-sessions>
- Special needs swimming sessions at John Warner and Laura Trott centre. <https://www.broxbourne.gov.uk/leisure-leisure-centres/special-needs-activities>

# SEND friendly

The following places have been recommended by SEND families as being very good and accessible.

- Shepreth Wildlife Park [www.sheprethwildlifepark.co.uk/](http://www.sheprethwildlifepark.co.uk/)
- Adventure Island, Southend on Sea. [www.adventureisland.co.uk/](http://www.adventureisland.co.uk/)
- Hatfield Park Farm <http://www.hatfieldparkfarm.co.uk/>
- Cambridge computer museum [www.computinghistory.org.uk/](http://www.computinghistory.org.uk/)
- Paradise wildlife Park [www.pwpark.com](http://www.pwpark.com)
- Lee Valley Park farms [www.lvfarms.co.uk](http://www.lvfarms.co.uk)
- Cedars Park [www.broxbourne.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-green-spaces/cedars-park](http://www.broxbourne.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-green-spaces/cedars-park)
- Lee Valley White water centre [www.gowhitewater.co.uk](http://www.gowhitewater.co.uk)

Don't forget, some of these attractions will take Tesco Days out tokens.

# Back to School

- Do a countdown for going back to school. Include activities like shopping for new shoes/shirts etc, packing the school bag, doing homework, getting used to the morning wake-up times again.
- Spend time going through any transition information given to your child such as new classroom, new teacher....
- Make a scrapbook of what you have done during the holiday. You can then use this next year to remind your child of what a holiday involves.



KEEP  
CALM  
AND HAVE A  
GREAT  
HOLIDAY