

ENGAGING ACTIVITIES **essential** CHECKLIST

Step 1: Embrace the Motivation Factor

The secret to successful play is following your child's lead. When we focus on their natural, specific interests, we transform a structured "task" into a rewarding interaction.

- ☐ **Identify your child's "anchor" interests:** Take note of the specific objects, themes, or routines that your child naturally gravitates toward.
- ☐ **Validate their focus:** View these narrow interests as true strengths and keys to connection, rather than deficits that need to be "fixed".
- ☐ **Join their world first:** Before introducing anything new, sit with your child and show genuine interest in how they are already playing.

Step 2: Set Up a Sensory-Rich "Toy Car Wash" (For Younger Children)

This clinical strategy transforms your child's favourite figurines, cars, or trucks into a multi-step learning activity using tactile exploration.

- ☐ **Gather your supplies:** Prepare a safe play space with two plastic bins, washable paints, brushes, towel layers, and soapy water.
- ☐ **Execute the Painting Phase:**
 - Let your child paint their beloved toys with a brush or their fingers.
 - Use this time to label colours and name parts of the objects (like wheels, doors, or eyes).
 - **Get silly:** Paint a truck a bright rainbow or completely purple to capture their imagination and keep it fun.
- ☐ **Execute the Washing Phase:**
 - Move the painted toys into a large bin of warm, soapy water to give them a "bath".
 - Work on communication and language naturally as you splash, clean, and dry the toys together.

Step 3: Map Out a Neighbourhood Scavenger Hunt (For Older Youth)

For older children, a structured community treasure hunt provides a predictable "mission" that helps them safely navigate and engage with the world around them.

- ☐ **Build a concrete visual list:** Write down or draw a specific list of items to find based on things your child already notices or safety signs you want to practice. Examples include:
 - Three neighbourhood animals (like squirrels or birds).
 - Two vital community safety features (like stop signs or crosswalks).
- ☐ **Practice language & safety in the environment:** As you walk, help your child identify, label, and respect real-world signs like "Stop" in context.
- ☐ **Track progress visually:** Give your child a marker to cross items off the list, fostering a strong sense of goal-orientation and personal accomplishment.
- ☐ **Celebrate with a final prize:** End the neighbourhood hunt with a rewarding prize to celebrate their hard work and build lasting confidence.

Step 4: Align with the "F-Words" of Childhood Development

True inclusion means focusing on what your child *can* do and making sure learning feels joyful. Use this quick check to align your playtime with clinical best practices:

- ☐ **Function:** Is the activity focused on what my child can currently do, letting them participate actively?
- ☐ **Family:** Does this activity build a stronger emotional bond between the caregiver and the child?
- ☐ **Fun:** Is the interaction genuinely joyful, keeping it from feeling like rigid "work"?



You are doing an incredible job. Stepping into your child's world and sharing a "silly" moment takes beautiful dedication and love. Remember, you don't have to navigate this alone.

Connect with your Monarch House team today, and let's collaborate to bring more functional, family-centred fun to your everyday routines.

