



At Your Fingertips

By Renee Kirby

Reading the articles and passages from the **Perkins** website 'WONDERBABY.COM, stirred up some memories from 18 years ago when my daughter, Laurel was born 3 1/2 months early. I wasn't really even showing and we hadn't decided on a name at that point.

Along with the underlying anxiety and worry of her survival (babies born at 24 weeks and surviving at that time was a fairly new occurrence) during that 5 month hospital stay, there was also pure love, joy and faith that everything would be ok.

My oldest daughter, Emma was 2 1/2 at the time and she took great pride in the routines of taking care of her baby sister in that sterile environment - with sounds and smells that linger still in my subconscious. This was "normal" for Emma....she knew nothing else. We made those days traveling back and forth to the hospital our new "normal" and reworked things to find that fine balance that worked for all of us once again.

After Laurel was released from the hospital, I scoured the library & bookstores looking for books on raising a blind child....& inevitably exited empty handed or possibly relinquished to settling for a book focusing on a wide array of disabilities containing, one or two passages touching on the subject of visual impairments and blindness. For references on blindness and individual causes of visual impairments and blindness I was limited to referring to the trifold brochures at the ophthalmologist's office and

occasional suggestions from committed Infants and Toddlers staff.

We, as parents in search of answers and information, can thank Larry Page and Sergey Brin for their knowledge and persistence as the founders of Google.

At times I question the validity of the info I find on the internet which encourages me to just "dig" a little deeper to locate other multitudes of articles on the same subject to back up my initial findings.

This info is literally right at my fingertips—which brings me to one of my new favorite resources for parents of young children who are visually impaired or blind....the website that I mentioned in the very beginning of this article - **www.wonderbaby.org**

The WonderBaby site is packed full of articles and resources for specific eye conditions, sensory activities, Apps & Education, Advocacy & oh so much more! If only this was available to me as a young mother, but at least I get to pass it along to you!

This site even has an area of book recommendations which I strongly encourage you to investigate....you might leave that site or others like it "empty handed", but definitely not disappointed in the resources available to you!

Happy Searching!

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Tips for Families

Taking Your Child Who is Blind Someplace New? Here Are 5 Tips to Help Them and You!

By [Emily Coleman](#) / Courtesy of familyconnect.org

A term we throw around in education is “pre-teach.” You might be wondering what that even means, or how it applies to your child who is blind. Basically, pre-teaching is a way to prepare kids for what’s coming next. So, if you’re taking them on a new adventure, it’s a way to “set the scene” so they can be ready to enjoy the event when they arrive.

Kids who are sighted can often enter a new place, take a look around, and have a fairly good grasp of what to expect. For children who are blind, they need a bit more of an introduction. For example, if you’re going to a movie in a theatre for the first time, there is likely some preparation to be done so your child can feel relaxed when you get there. I’m going to use the movie example to walk you through my tips.

1. Explain the situation. Simply talk to your child about what a movie theatre is and what happens there. Be patient, and answer questions as they come up. Try to describe as much as you can with as much detail as you can.
 2. Provide an example. Find a book about going to a movie, or make up a story of your own. Have a friend or sibling explain to your child a time when they went to a movie. They can talk about what they liked, and what was the best part.
 3. Practice at home. Have a “movie night” at home and pretend you’re at the theatre. Hand out “tickets” and make popcorn. If you don’t have a descriptive audio DVD, ask if they want you to provide some background information about the visual effects. If they do, this is good practice for you both to determine how much is “too much” information.
 4. Let your child make some choices. Let them pick the movie. If they hate musicals, don’t make that their first theatre experience. Let them decide on snacks, and seating, and whatever else is up to the viewer. The more choices your child makes, the more in-control they will feel, and the more comfortable they’ll be in the new setting.
 5. Arrive early! If you get to the theatre ahead of time, you’ll be able to explore before the crowds come in and the lights go out. Let your child climb the stairs, feel the seats, and find out where the exits are. Let them experience how big the theatre is and also where they can find a bathroom!
- Exposing children who are blind to new activities and events helps them determine their own interests, and what they like and don’t like. It also helps build social connections with other kids their age. For this example, everybody goes to the movies sometimes, and your child shouldn’t miss out! Next time you have an opportunity to take your child someplace new, give these five tips a try. It really will help them...and you!



American Printing House
for the Blind, Inc.



APH is proud to partner with the Dolly Parton **Imagination Library**
to share the joy of reading!

Braille Tales is a free print/braille book program that ships six books a year directly to the home of the child. To be eligible, a child must be under the age of 6 and be blind or visually impaired or have a parent who is blind or visually impaired.

If you know any families who meet these criteria, please visit or send them to our website: <http://www.aph.org/dolly-partons-imagination-library/apply/>

The carefully selected print-braille books support oral language development, enthusiasm for reading, and awareness of print or braille. The program currently serves over 1,000 children now and we are working with our donors to serve more than 1,300 by the end of 2016. Please sign up as many families as you can!

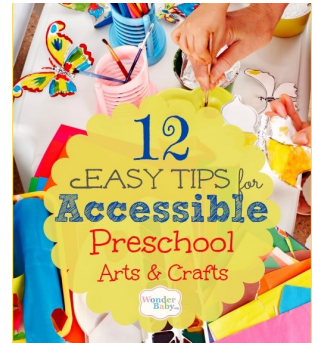
Thank you for helping us spread the joy of reading!

Best regards,

Nathan Hernandez
Braille Tales Coordinator

12 Easy Tips for Accessible Preschool Arts & Crafts...

for kids who are blind or visually impaired



Can a blind preschooler be included in preschool arts and crafts? Of course!

Preschool art projects usually involve simple fine motor skills (drawing or gluing), beginning planning skills (figuring out what to draw or where to glue) and constructive play (building something). Do these sound like skills any child should be learning, blind or sighted? Yes!

You will want to plan ahead to make sure the project is accessible. Also, if your child has issues with different textures, you should probably work on addressing that problem now. You can find tips on wonderbaby.com.

But if your kiddo doesn't have problems with touching different types of textures, then you're already way ahead of the game. And messy play can be really great developmental play too! Keep reading for some tips on making preschool art time accessible for kids who are blind or visually impaired.

Some Tips for Drawing

1. You can purchase raised line coloring books.
2. Or you can take a regular coloring book and just outline the lines with puffy paint or [Wikki Stix](#).
3. You can also purchase a [raised line drawing board](#), so that anything your child draws can be felt on the paper after he draws it.
4. Or get a raised line sketchpad.
5. Or you can always make a drawing board yourself by just placing the paper on top of a screen so that when you draw on it the lines are bumpy and you can feel them.
6. It can also be fun to draw with [scented markers](#), so your child can smell what he's drawn

Some Tips for Gluing

7. Start by getting your child used to the idea of sticking objects to paper. You can try this [sticky collage project](#) with packing tape. The entire surface is sticky, so no matter where you place an object, it'll stick.
8. Then work up to using glue. I think glue sticks are great because you can make a large area on the paper sticky and then your child can find the glue with one hand while placing objects on the paper with the other.

12 Easy Tips.... Cont'd

9. You can also dab a little glue on the object for him (like, say, a dried flower) and then have him place it on the paper. Eventually, as he begins to understand the concept, you can work up to him applying the glue himself, but **he will need** help to start with (as would any child).

10. And yes, glue will be messy and sticky, but we just have to be OK with that! My son made a scented collage in school the other day (they started with a paper plate, brushed glue over the whole surface, then had Ivan place different scented dried herbs on the plate). He came home with glue in his hair... but that's OK!

11. I remember when I was a child that the teacher would keep a sponge in a small bowl with water that we could use to wipe our fingers on in between applying the glue. Maybe if you have a little "wash station" set up that could help with the mess too.

12. And one more idea: You could also create a glue "template" by cutting out a small circle area in a larger piece of cardboard. Your child can place the template on the paper where he wants to place the glue and just put the glue in the circle space. Now he knows exactly where the glue is!



A page from a raised line coloring book.



Getting used to the idea of sticking objects to paper.

"For informative posts on development , eye conditions, Apps and Education, more fun projects and recreation, please visit wonderbaby.org—an awesome resource from Perkins for parents and caregivers of blind or visually impaired pre-schoolers!





Bee-ginnings

Maryland School for the Blind



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