



Your Pocket Park Guide



ERINOAKKIDS
Centre for Treatment and Development

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Citations

Rosenbaum, P., & Gorter, J.W. (2012). *The 'F-words' in childhood disability: I swear this is how we should think!* Child: Care, Health and Development, 38(4), 457 – 463. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2011.01338.x; CanChild's F-words Knowledge Hub: www.canchild.ca/f-words

Preparing for your trip to the park

Tips for a succesful trip

- Choose quieter times of day
- Invite another trusted adult for added support, or supervision of siblings.
- Children may fatigue faster in new environments - go at their pace and follow their cues!
- Consider showing them how you do the activity with your body first to help your child learn through imitation.
- Set clear expectations with your child - “we’ll try two activities together, then you can play on your own”

What to bring

- ☐ Small toys or sensory items for breaks (bubbles, fidgets, stuffed toy)
- ☐ Any assistive devices your child normally uses (orthotics, mobility aids)
- ☐ Preferred snacks and water/liquid of choice to support energy needs
- ☐ Wet wipes and hand sanitizer



Did you know: Kids who play outside are more likely to meet their physical activity goals!



What it benefits

- Weight shifting and balance
- Lower body strength and endurance
- Balance and coordination

Activity Instructions

- Encourage walking or wheeling up/down slowly
- Add pauses throughout to work on body awareness and control
- Consider adding things for them to pick up off the ramp as they go

Adaptations

- Add support at hands or trunk as needed to support with mobility
- Consider gradually reducing the use of railing to increase challenge

Safety considerations

- Ensure the surface is dry and clear of debris
- Watch out for quick descents – help control speed as needed

Tips and tricks

1

Try different animal walks: bear crawl, crab crawl for added fun

2

Add in different steps: stomps, tiptoes, big steps, little steps

3

Introduce directional movements: backward walking or wheeling

My F-avourite Words for Park Play

Friends

Bringing **FRIENDS** along and bonding over a shared interest in the park allows children to connect over climbing, swinging, or even waiting in line — and strengthens their sense of **FITNESS** through active, social play.

Fitness

Every piece of equipment supports physical **FITNESS** and development while still being playful and **FUN** — from muscle strength on the stairs to core engagement on the swings.

Fun

The heart of every park visit! Whether it's silly games on the ramp, songs on the slide, or imaginative play. Its incredible how everyday **FUNCTION** can be so much **FUN**.

Function

Playing on equipment gives your child the opportunity to practice **FUNCTION**, providing insight on what they can do. Having **FAMILY** involvement makes these moments more joyful, comforting, and connected.

Family

Building connections by inviting **FAMILY** members to join the play experience and form shared memories. Simple park routines create bonding moments through encouragement, teamwork, and joy that positively impact your child's **FUTURE** development.

Future

Every park visit offers a chance to grow. As children explore, they discover what works for them, build new skills, and gain confidence for the **FUTURE**. These moments of progress are even more powerful when shared with **FRIENDS**, who inspire, encourage, and celebrate each step forward.



Just like the links of a swing chain, the F-Words are connected — each one supporting the next to hold up your child.

When they come together, they create a strong, balanced experience that helps every child thrive.

For more info about the F-Words framework, scan the QR code or visit:
www.erinoakkids.ca/favouritewords



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Swings

What it benefits

- Core and trunk control
- Shoulder and arm strength
- Coordination

Adaptations

To give more support around the trunk, tie the sleeves of their jacket or sweater to each side of the swing. This will help hold them up if they lean back.

Safety considerations

Secure your hands over your child's on the chain if they are still working on grip strength.

Activity Instructions

- Have the child sit on your lap to experience the motion of swinging before trying it out themselves
- Have them grasp to swing chains with both hands and provide support at the trunk and hands as needed
- Encourage them to “pump” their legs
- Add verbal cues to help with learning (i.e. “legs out/in”)

Tips and tricks

1

Look for playgrounds with adaptive swings to support your child's needs

2

Switch up positions: sideways or tummy-swinging to work on different muscle groups and sensory experiences

3

Try a see-saw or rocking horse as an alternative



Slides

What it benefits

- Core and trunk control
- Motor planning
- Movement and balance

Adaptations

- Use a smaller slide for less height and distance down
- Support thighs and trunk as needed; gradually reduce support to build independence

Activity Instructions

- Help child sit at the top of the slide
- Encourage them to use arms to push off
- Add a ball or toy to catch at the bottom

Safety considerations

- Ensure shoes are tied and no clothing gets caught
- Always supervise sliding, especially when working on new skills
- Avoid going down slides with your child on your lap or between your legs

Tips and tricks

1

Slow it down to challenge their core strength

2

Provide gentle support on their back if needed to ensure safety

3

Make it fun and engaging by adding songs or toy play to the experience



Stairs

What it benefits

- Leg strength and endurance
- Balance and coordination
- Motor planning

Adaptations

- Use shorter or taller steps if available
- Add support at hands or trunk as needed to support with stepping on the stairs
- Consider gradually reducing the use of railing to increase challenge

Activity Instructions

- Support/supervise your child as they take steps
- Use a toy at the top/bottom as a motivator
- Count steps out loud to encourage engagement
- Practice stepping up/down slowly to focus on control

Safety considerations

- Take extra caution when descending
- Choose stairs with railings and barriers

Tips and tricks

1

Try side-stepping to challenge different muscle groups

2

Try progressing to one hand on the railing

3

Guide their foot to help them clear the step while they're still learning

4

Let the child lead when possible to help build confidence

Explore your community

Build your child's skills in a community-based environment while staying active and having fun. Enjoy the advantages of staying connected to the community to meet your child's activity needs all while taking in the added social benefits.

Keep it simple

Simplify activities by sticking to common equipment that is accessible in most community playgrounds.

