

The Deerfield Public Library:

How to use it successfully with children and adolescents with special needs

WHO KNOWS YOUR CHILD BETTER THAN YOU DO?

Take the time to plan ahead before going to the library. If you anticipate difficulties, talk with a librarian.

1. My child may be noisy or have behaviors that are not compatible with libraries.

Many libraries have quiet rooms and cozy spaces that can help accommodate for your child's difficulties, while allowing your child access to the library's resources.

2. My child is independent, and goes to the library alone.

Be sure that your child understands the rules and the behavioral expectations of the library. Introduce yourself and your child to the library staff and check-in with them periodically to insure that your child has somebody to approach in case of difficulties. Be sure that your child has identification with him/her at all times.

3. My child may have extreme behavioral challenges unexpectedly.

Approach library visits with a plan and advanced preparation. Talk with librarians and establish a relationship with them so they can help in the event of a difficulty. Give clear directions to the library staff about what is helpful.



BENEFITS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The public library can be a wonderful place for individuals with special needs and their families. It has multiple resources, is full of natural visual supports, and has few social demands. These tips are meant to increase the likelihood of successful visits so that the library can become a lifelong destination for your child.

LAYING THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

New and unfamiliar surroundings and situations are unsettling for nearly all children, but they can be especially unnerving for those with special needs. A little groundwork on your part can go a long way toward making your child's library experience more enjoyable and successful.

Prior to your child's visit, make it a point to:

- Visit the location & ask if they have a social story
- Write a social story of your own describing *what will happen, when, and where*
- Become familiar with the layout of the library, and be aware of potentially difficult areas or reinforcing areas (ex. computers)



Children benefit from different levels of preparation. Please customize the above suggestions to fit your child's unique needs.



TIPS FOR TAKING INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS TO THE LIBRARY

While the public library can provide a wealth of activities for your child, preparations can help set your child up for success and reduce the likelihood of challenging routines being established.

Know your child: If your child is uncomfortable in settings similar to the library, visits might need to start out very short and incorporate a highly motivating activity or item. If there are sensory experiences that disturb your child, have a backup plan available.

Have a plan: Give your child plenty of information about the library visit, including how long you will be there, what activities you will do, and what will happen next. If the unexpected happens and your child struggles during a visit, have a plan for how to make a graceful exit if needed.

REASONS FOR USING THE LIBRARY

There are many valuable activities that can occur in the library. Here are just a few:

- Recreational/community outings for the family
- Educational/school-related activities
- Explore special interests
- Obtain resources and materials to use at home
- Choose and check out materials
- Public place to practice social/life skills (quiet voice, waiting, or library behavior)
- Hone computer skills
- Generalize skills to a public place (reading, and puzzles)
- Social opportunities (asking for help, asking questions)
- Special activities (movies, programs)
- Storytime (literacy exposure, social skills practice)

Familiarize yourself with your library, and the many resources it offers.

- Online materials reservation
- Computers with timer systems
- Study rooms or other small nooks
- Online information about the library and its resources

This website provides a wealth of information, including customizable social story books:

<http://www.thejointlibrary.org>



Youth Services Department
Deerfield Public Library
920 Waukegan Road
Deerfield, IL 60015
847-580-8962
www.deerfieldlibrary.org