

There are literally thousands of possible adaptations. Think of the adaptations in *CARA's Kit* as a starting point. This tool provides you with two resources you may use when finding adaptations. These are:

- **General adaptations.** These adaptations may be implemented throughout the classroom on a regular basis (see below).
- **Adaptations specific to classroom learning areas.** Adaptations are provided for the following learning areas: language and literacy; arts and creative expression; science and nature; water and sand; math and manipulatives; dramatic play; block play; music; and active learning and movement. In each case, the adaptations are presented as a mini-poster you can hang in the particular classroom area.

In both resources, adaptations are organized according to CARA's Adaptation Continuum, from least intrusive to most intrusive.

General Adaptations

Adaptations to the Environment

- Arrange the room so that there are interesting things at eye level for all children to see and touch.
- Arrange space so that children using wheelchairs or crutches can navigate in and out of the space as well as turn around in the space.
- Position shelves, tables, and chairs at comfortable levels. Make sure children's feet are touching the floor or foot rests. Adjust tables for chair heights.
- Make sure equipment and fixtures are sturdy and can hold the weight of a child.
- Ensure that the sound level is adequate for children with hearing impairments and that there are quiet areas in the room.
- Make toys and materials accessible to the children.
- State classroom rules positively. Post them in pictorial form or another form that is understandable to the children.
- Place toys and materials in easy-to-manipulate containers. Put labels or pictures on the shelves to designate where toys are to be located.

Adaptations for Activities and Routines

- Choose the activity or modify an activity so that it best meets all children's abilities.
- Limit the number of children doing an activity at one time.
- Add movement to an activity that might otherwise not be interesting to the children.
- Shorten, lengthen, or compartmentalize an activity.

Adaptations for Materials

- Use non-skid rug material to keep toys steady on a flat surface.
- Use Velcro to help stabilize materials (e.g., place on blocks to make sticky, place on the palm of a glove or mitten for easier grasping, etc.).

- Attach cloth or heavy elastic bands to puzzle pieces or other small toys to make them easier to manipulate.
- Glue small spools or blocks to puzzle pieces and toys that are hard to pick up.
- Use a felt board or tray to help children with visual or spatial boundary challenges.
- Punch a pencil or paint brush through a Styrofoam ball to make it easier to hold.

Adaptations for Requirements or Instruction

- Ensure the children have predictable routines.
- Pretend the children are engaging in a purposeful way (e.g., give them something they say they want even if you don't believe that is what they really want).
- Encourage the children to prolong interactions with peers and/or toys.
- Provide models and reward models for complex play and exploration.
- Play often, be playful, and provide children with affection.
- Let the children initiate interactions. Wait for the children to initiate.
- Take turns with children.
- Follow the children's lead.
- Imitate the children.
- Repeat the children's phrases (e.g., word for word, or add a word or a phrase).

Provide Assistance

- Pair children together.
- Provide physical guidance (e.g., assist children with hand-over-hand support).
- Sit with children and provide verbal prompts.



Language and Literacy Learning Area



Adaptations

Adapt Environment

- Make sure children have enough space to look at books without being too close to the other children.
- Define the space with carpet squares, bean bags, soft chairs, etc.
- Enhance the mood by using draped curtains to lower the ceiling and/or add lamps or assorted lighting fixtures.
- Post picture reminders to place books back in their correct storage location.
- Use baskets or bins on the floor to hold books.

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Create a class talk book by including pictures, objects, or photos of daily activities in a photo album. Allow children with limited speech to talk about their day by pointing to the album page.



Adapt Materials

- Use unusual items to draw attention to the area (e.g., puppets, a tent, etc.).
- Include a variety of books about children with disabilities in the library area.
- Provide the children with “tearable” books like magazines or catalogs.
- Make laminated, two-sided, single-page books using pictures, magazine clippings, or children’s drawings.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Make available books on tape and ear phones. Color code the play and stop buttons for easy use.
- Include books that use sign language.

Provide Assistance

- Have a “librarian for the day/week” who is in charge of collecting the books when it is time to clean up.
 - Have book buddies choose books together and read to each other during library time.
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Arts and Creative Expression Learning Area

Adaptations



Adapt Environment

- Adjust the height of the tables and chairs so children's feet touch the floor and the table top sits at the level of the children's stomach.
- Tape drawing paper to the artwork table/area if more stability is needed.
- Use tape or paperclips to attach paper to the easel.

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Select open-ended, free-expression activities.
- Line a box lid with art paper, place marbles dipped in paint in the lid, and tip the lid to make the marbles paint the paper.

Adapt Materials

- Experiment with using other materials that may be easier to grasp (e.g., raw potatoes, sponges, squeeze paints, drinking straws to blow paint around on paper, spin art with a switch adaptation) in painting projects.
- Make paint brush handles easier to grasp (e.g., lengthen or shorten, built up with pipe insulation, attach to the hand using a Velcro strap, attach to a glove with Velcro on the palm, etc.).
- Tie markers or brushes to the table or easel.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Allow children to stand at the table rather than sit.
- Break down the activity so that children can complete one step per day.
- Allow extra time to complete the activity.

Provide Assistance

- Pair children or have an adult complete tasks together with the child (e.g., one to stabilize while the other completes the task; one to mix the paint while the other paints; one to cut the clay while the other molds it; one to put glue on the feather while the other pastes it on the object; etc.).



Science and Nature Learning Area

Adaptations



Adapt Environment

- Place materials at varying levels (e.g., floor, table, shelves, windowsills, etc.).
- Provide ample table top space for children to experiment and spread out materials.
- Use task lighting (e.g., lamps, flashlights, etc.) so children can inspect materials under direct light.

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Show pictures of items you have hidden in other areas of the room and ask children to find them.
- Introduce new materials at group meeting time.
- Allow children to practice using new equipment (e.g., microscopes, tongs, etc.).



Adapt Materials

- Use high contrast materials or place light color materials on a dark surface, or visa versa.
- Supply easy-to-grasp tools (e.g., scoops, tongs, magnifiers, etc.). Build up handles if necessary.
- Place novel items in the area on a regular basis.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Set up two- to four-step projects for children to complete.
- Provide a time for children to present the results of their project to other children.
- Allow children more time to complete a project by using a sign that says “project in progress, please do not disturb.”

Provide Assistance

- Pair children together to complete a project.
 - Provide children with pictures of how to use materials and/or how to complete projects.
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Water and Sand Learning Area



Adaptations

Adapt Environment

- Raise the table so that wheelchairs can fit under it.
- Make sure all adaptations to tables are stable.
- Use small bins or buckets filled with sand and water if tables cannot be adapted.
- Use a plastic pool to hold sand and water.

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Use a variety of textures other than sand and water (e.g., dried beans, rice, shaving cream, gelatin, mud, etc.).
- Introduce materials during instructional time (e.g., group meeting/circle).

Adapt Materials

- Make sure the toys in the sand and water table fit a range of abilities.
- Have a range of simple to complex pouring, sifting, and squeezing toys.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Limit the number of children allowed to play in this area to two or three at one time.

Provide Assistance

- Ask children to repeat what you have said to them or to demonstrate what it is you are asking them to do.
- Guide children to engage in activities with a buddy.



Math and Manipulatives Learning Area



Adaptations

Adapt Environment

- Adjust the height of the tables and chairs so that children's feet touch the floor and the table top sits at the level of their stomach.
- Place the toy in shallow tray to help keep all pieces together and define the play area.

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Do the activity on a vertical or slanted surface.

Adapt Materials

- Use adaptive scissors that can be used hand over hand or operated by squeezing.
- Help children grasp toys (e.g., build up handles with sponges, hair curlers, or pipe insulation; attach the handle to the hand with the use of a Velcro strap; etc.).
- Use puzzles with knobs or handles—or adapt with knobs from the hardware store.
- Stabilize toys (e.g., use Velcro, double-backed tape, or a C-clamp to hold the toy in place).

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Make up a new song to the rhythm of a familiar song (e.g., *Row Row Row Your Boat*) to help remind children to use both hands together.
- Allow children to finish an activity later in the day. Use a “please do not disturb” sign on unfinished activities.
- Have children stand rather than sit to do the activity.

Provide Assistance

- Pair children to complete tasks together.
- Have one child stabilize while the other completes the task.



dramatic Play Learning Area

Adaptations



Adapt Environment

- Include safe equipment related to disabilities in the dress-up area (e.g., glasses, canes, braces, hearing aids, a wheelchair, etc.).

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Conduct a disability awareness day event and invite other classes to visit.
- Set up the learning area to be a hospital, a doctor's office, etc.

Adapt Materials

- Provide a variety of materials that represent multiple role models.
- Ensure that clothing has a variety of fasteners—some easy, others more difficult.
- Include dolls with disabilities in the area.
- Include books with examples of people with disabilities in various roles and occupations.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Allow children to take the dramatic play materials outside (have baskets or crates for easy transport).
- Allow children to wear dramatic clothes throughout the day.

Provide Assistance

- Provide assistance to children when they are putting on and taking off dramatic play attire.
- Ask children to tell you what they are imagining and help them expand their ideas.



Block Play Learning Area

Adaptations



Adapt Environment

- Provide ample space for block play, particularly for children who use a walker, stander, or wheelchair.
- Set up boundaries so block building is not interfered with by other active play.
- Provide a variety of surface heights for block building.
- Provide bolsters or wedges for children to be able to “lay” on the floor and build.

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Use blocks for counting; comparing sizes, shapes, weights; learning about leverage and force; experimenting with gravity; etc.



Adapt Materials

- Provide children with disposable cameras or take digital photographs of their work. Display the photos.
- Provide children with blueprints, building magazines, and architectural supplies (compass; rulers; calculators; graph paper) for drawing and designing buildings.
- Provide a wide array of block materials and accessories (big, small, familiar and odd shaped, heavy and light, hollow and solid) to help children explore the science of building.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Allow children to stop and return to their work in progress. Use a sign to inform other children not to touch.
- Provide children with additional time to complete the project.
- Limit the number of children allowed to play in this area to two or three at one time.

Provide Assistance

- Pair or group children of varying abilities together for block play.
 - Sit with children to find a picture of something they would like to replicate, then position the picture so they can use it as a model.
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Music Learning Area

Adaptations



Adapt Environment

- Make musical instruments and sheet music available in a variety of learning areas.
- Play a variation of music types, styles, and genre during various activities and routines throughout the day.

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Have children make their own musical instrument during art or manipulative play to help entice them to explore other instruments and to take responsibility for instrument care.
- Combine music and movement so children can “feel” the music.

Adapt Materials

- Include a wide variety of musical instruments—some that require minimal physical or cognitive skill (e.g., egg shakers or bells) and others that require higher level skills (e.g., flutes or keyboards).
- Provide ear muffs to muffle the sound for children who become overwhelmed by noise.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Allow children to use musical instruments and accessories such as sheet music or music stands during various activities.
- Imitate the child and play “call and response.”

Provide Assistance

- Provide hand-over-hand guidance to help children play instruments.



active Learning and MoveMent area



Adaptations

Adapt Environment

- Have a variety of activity areas available that range from low energy requirements (e.g., rolling down a hill or swinging) to high energy requirements (e.g., climbing or running).
- Make sure equipment can be used for different purposes (e.g., things to slide down but also to hide under; things to climb on or to experiment with; etc.).
- Create pathways that are accessible and wide enough for walkers and wheelchairs as well as strollers and rider toys.
- Make sure that the ground cover is easy to move on (e.g., no bumps, divots, or soft materials).
- Designate areas for things that move (e.g., separate the rider toys from open play space for ball play).

Adapt Activity or Routine

- Use the learning area multiple times a day.
- Minimize sedentary activities as much as possible.
- Set up challenges for children of varying abilities (e.g., use treasure hunts, games like “Simon Says,” and obstacle courses).

Adapt Materials

- Provide a variety of sand, rider toys, wagons, loose parts, and other active play materials.
- Provide opportunities to drink water during active learning.

Adapt Requirements or Instruction

- Provide non-active materials (e.g., dress up clothing, construction materials, drawing materials, etc.) so children have options other than movement play.

Provide Assistance

- Guide children through movement activities and provide guidance in using equipment.