



## Using the Active Learning PlaySpace

The **Active Learning Play Space** is a multi-sensory learning tool in which children with visual impairments can learn to reach out and not fear their surroundings. It is used by both teachers and parents to improve confidence and environmental interaction. The **PPS** has proven to be an invaluable tool.

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## Use:



The Active Learning PlaySpace is a teaching tool that is simple to use. In this section we will cover how the PPS can encourage growth both physically and mentally in your child.

### ***Varying the Toys:***

When a child first begins to use the PPS parents should choose toys that are familiar to the child. They will get more out of their PPS experience if the toys and objects within the Playspace are eventually varied. It is very important that the toys you chose for your child differ in weight, texture, and sound. Infants learn from reaching out and exploring their world through all of their senses. Keep this in mind when purchasing items for the PPS. Make each toy have its own unique quality. This ensures that your child will have a greater understanding and level of comfort with objects of all kinds inside and outside of the Perkins PlaySpace.

### ***Resonance Boards***

In the Active Learning PlaySpace sound is just as important as touch. Many times an aide will recommend a resonance board for use in conjunction with the PPS. The enclosed area coupled with the board creates a space in which sound is greatly magnified. Because the PPS is both comfortable and has this quality of sound, children often become very vocal inside of it. Sometimes children who rarely ever make a sound, start laughing, and making all sorts of noises. To this end, the PPS is extremely beneficial to a child's development. It allows for a space where a child is able to explore and try new things.

### ***Movement***

It should not be surprising to see your child moving around in the PPS a good amount. Parents and aides of children using this device should see an improvement in motor skills and activity. The goal of the PPS is to increase a child's comfort with his or her surroundings. As a child becomes increasingly comfortable he or she may begin to do many new things. You might see them wriggle around, bang toys together or on the ceiling, reach out to find toys, kick their feet, and, of course, play with the toys. Sometimes the PlaySpace might need to be repositioned if the child is strong enough to move it around. If this occurs often, it may be time for a larger PPS.

## Parent's Role:

A parent's role in using the PlaySpace is to be an observer. There are a few things to keep in mind when preparing the PPS and while the child is active in the unit.

### **Observing**

A child's time in the PPS should be considered their own. The ability to use their own devices and to explore independently is what makes the PlaySpace a good environment for learning. This is why a parent should not interrupt a child while they are inside. A parent should not tap on the walls, shake toys, look down at the child, or move the child until they are ready to come out. This does not mean that the child be left unsupervised. A parent always needs to be in the same room with the child and observe from a distance.

### **Toys and Mapping**

The way a child becomes comfortable with the PPS is through a technique called *memory mapping*. Each time a child is placed inside the PPS they search for the toys they remember are there. It is important the arrangement of toys remains consistent for proper orientation. Often you'll find your child seeking out their favorite toy or systematically moving from one toy to the next, checking that everything is in the same spot. Because of this, it is important that a parent not rearrange the toys. This confuses a child and creates discomfort. That is not to say that adding new toys is not a good thing.

New toys should be introduced into the PPS only occasionally, because doing it too often would have the same effect as rearranging the toys. It would be discomfoting for the child. Anything with an interesting texture, sound, or noise is good for using inside the PlaySpace. Things such as Koosh® balls, stuffed animals, toys with pull strings, and even household items like plastic measuring spoons are perfect.



## Progress:

The PPS gives a child the opportunity to develop play skills and the confidence that their space is predictable. It also opens a child up to all sorts of different textures and gives them security in touching different things, reaching out, and making sounds. After some time of use, you should see your child making progress in different areas.

It is difficult to define the degree in which a child should make progress while using the PlaySpace. Most results are related to how vocal the child is, the child's willingness to explore, memory mapping, confidence, and the strength of their arms and legs. Time spent in the PPS should facilitate improvement in some of these areas if not all of them.