

# Four Tips to Get the Most Out of Pokemon Go for Your Child with Autism



Maureen Bennie, December 2016

As you all know by now, Pokemon Go has become this summer's sensation. Not only is the game making headlines as being beneficial play for those with autism, but the game's creator has autism himself. Fifty year old [Satoshi Tajiri](#) (from Japan) almost didn't graduate from high school because of his obsession with bugs and video games...an obsession that later turned into the multi-billion dollar Pokemon franchise.

## HOW POKEMON GO CAN BE USED TO HELP THOSE ON THE SPECTRUM

This game takes the original idea of catching Pokemon creatures (imaginary animals with different kinds of "powers"), and takes it outside into the real world. Tajiri has created a [FREE app](#) for your mobile device that allows you to walk around your city, town, or neighbourhood, while looking for virtual creatures to appear on your phone. The game is map-based, and challenges the user to find PokeStops which have been created globally by using local landmarks in each community. Personal interactions with other Poke-users are encouraged through the technology at the various PokeStops.

While there have been a number of stories of the [pitfalls](#) of walking around while staring intently at your phone, there have also started to be [heartwarming](#) stories of people with autism and anxiety finding a drive or purpose to get out into the real world and practice their life-skills. Many people with autism have a fascination with technology; in fact, the hard part is to get them away from it, outside and interacting with others. This app has the best of both worlds. It is showing so much success that it is even being used in some [schools for children with ASD](#). Below are some tips that outline how best to use this new game safely and to the most benefit.

## **1) Supervise**

This might seem obvious, but going with your child/youth while they explore is essential. Either you or a caregiver should be around them while they explore and “catch’em all”. Many PokeStops are near bodies of water, or require crossing busy streets, etc....

## **2) Encourage your child to come with you on errands by giving them a chance to play**

One of the best ways to supervise is to offer your child/youth a chance to play in environments where you have errands to run. This allows the person with autism to be included in day-to-day activities while doing something that is engaging for them. There will be opportunities to connect with other players, and give your child/youth a chance to practice social interactions with people who are interested (and maybe just as fascinated) with the game as they are!

## **3) Take the opportunity to teach road safety and stranger danger**


This app can create the perfect platform to highlight some basic life skills such as [road safety](#) and “stranger danger”. Making these lessons an integral part of the gaming experience is one of the best ways to learn. Help your child decide [who to speak to](#), and what is appropriate when dealing with strangers.

## **4) Have some fun bonding with your child doing something you can both enjoy**

Let’s face it, this app is fun! Sometimes it can be hard to find mutual points of interest with our children. We might not be able to get consistently excited over patterns of floor tiles, the many names and levels of Jedi Knights, or dinosaur types, but this app provides a game you can both enjoy. The Pokemon animals are cute and the game is designed to provide lots of entertainment for all ages.

Summer is the perfect time to explore an outdoor activity that offers a great learning platform wrapped in a fun game.

For more articles written by Maureen Bennie, go to [www.autismawarenesscentre.com](http://www.autismawarenesscentre.com).



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