

# Holiday Gift Buying Guide

Coming into the holiday season, many families experience pressure to find a gift for their child that is personal and represents how much their child means to them. The struggle is real! This may be because many autistic children experience challenges with communicating their likes and dislikes. They may also have different play and social skills than their peers or classmates. It doesn't help that advertisements and commercials tend to cater to neurotypical children and don't include those who are neurodiverse.

**We're here to help! Here are some questions and suggestions that may be helpful for finding the right gift.**



---

## What does your child spend time doing?

It may not appear enjoyable to you, but the time spent with an activity or item often signals that they are motivated by that action or item. If your child spends time with specific items or loves a particular topic, and you can identify the specific characteristics they appear to like, try finding another item or activity with these same components.

For example, if your child likes to spin things, look for other toys or activities that incorporate spinning. If your child likes certain smells, look for scented items or science kits that involve identifying smells. If you want to be sure of giving a present that will be appreciated, your best bet is to stick with their special interests.



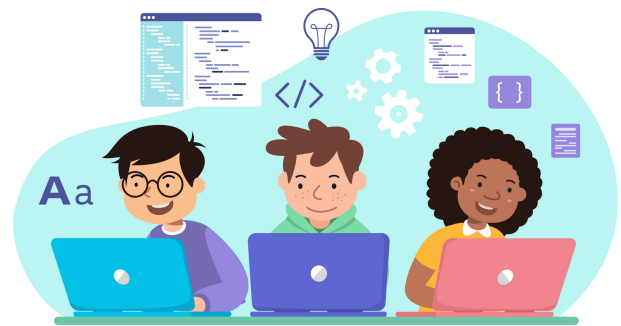
## Is there an experience you and your child like to do together?



If there is a specific experience or routine you and your child do together or a place that you like to go, then you might want to consider ways to increase those experiences. For example, you could obtain a membership for a specific place your child enjoys, like a trampoline or rock-climbing centre, or a museum. Often, these places will have times set aside for individuals with specific needs or times that are less busy so you can enjoy yourselves fully. Don't forget to apply for an [Access 2 Card](#) which allows a support person to gain free entry into hundreds of participating entertainment, culture, and recreational activities and places across Canada.

## Does your child show strengths in a specific area, such as using technology or building models? Is there something that can expand this to include peers or other family members? Are there different art materials or kits that may be related to another activity that they like?

If your child shows specific strengths with a particular activity or technology, you may be able to find similar types of games, software, toys, or kits to extend your child's experiences. If your child likes Minecraft, then perhaps there is a Minecraft club your child can join virtually. Other structured activities may also appeal to your child, such as Lego Club, where they can interact with things they like to do along with similar peers.



## Is your child working on any specific goals at school or with a therapist? Can you identify the specific skill areas, such as social skills, fine motor skills, motor coordination skills, language skills, etc. that are being worked on?



If your child is working on specific skills, then you might be able to find items or activities that can provide further practice with the goals but in a fun way. For example, two-person activities are great for social skill goals, and dress-up costumes can be helpful for practicing dressing skills. Don't worry about the age level advertised on the box or game—if it matches your child's level or interests, it will be valuable for your child.

You may also want to consider how to involve your child in the gift-giving activity overall. They may choose to receive their gift quietly and separately from everyone else, or they may prefer to be a part of the attention, excitement, and festivities.