

Heavy Work Activities List for Parents

Compiled and Edited by Elizabeth Haber, MS, OTR/L and Deanna Iris Sava, MS, OTR/L

Following are activities families can use to provide heavy work activities for the child at home. All the activities on this handout are "naturally occurring activities." This means they can be provided as part of the child's daily routine. Special thanks to all the therapists who openly shared ideas! **Note:** Some of the activities from this list were used in the Heavy Jobs section of the handbook Tools for Parents (2001) by Diana Henry and Tammy Wheeler, Henry OT Services, Inc. For more information, go to www.ateachabout.com. A modified version of this list was published in the Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun by Carol Stock Kranowitz (2003). This book can be ordered at www.devdelay.org and www.SensoryResources.com. These are both excellent resources for parents.

1. Carry heavy items (baskets with cardboard blocks, groceries for Mom, etc.).
2. Chew gum, eat chewy or crunchy foods, or sip water from a water bottle with a straw while doing homework.
3. Push or pull boxes with toys or a few books in it (more resistance is provided if boxes are pushed/pulled across a carpeted floor).
4. Fill a pillowcase with a few stuffed animals in it for weight. Child can then push or pull the pillowcase up a ramp, incline or stairs.
5. Take the cushions off sofas, vacuum under them, then put them back. Can also climb on them or jump and "crash" into them.
6. Pull other children around on a sheet or blanket.
7. Roller skate/rollerblade uphill.
8. Pull a heavy trash can.
9. Perform household chores, such as:
 - vacuuming,
 - sweeping,
 - mopping,
 - dusting,
 - carrying the laundry basket,
 - wiping off the table after dinner,
 - carrying buckets of water to clean with or to water flowers/plants/trees.
 - cleaning windows or the fronts of appliances, using a spray bottle,
 - scrubbing rough surfaces with a brush, and
 - helping change the sheets on the bed (then toss the linens down the stairs).
10. Perform yard work, such as:
 - mowing the lawn,
 - raking the grass/leaves,
 - pushing the wheelbarrow,
 - shoveling sand into a wheelbarrow, pushing the wheelbarrow to a spot, dumping out sand and using a rake to level it out (functional for filling in low spots in backyard).
 - digging dirt to help plant flowers.
11. Pull a friend or heavy items in a wagon.
12. Push a friend in a wheelbarrow.

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13. Drink thick liquids (as in milkshake, applesauce, or slurpy) through a straw. The thickness of the straw and the thickness of the liquid can be varied to change the degree of heavy work (sucking) required.
14. Carry heavy cushions.
15. Have pillow fights.
16. Play in sandbox with damp heavy sand.
17. Push chairs into the table after a meal.
18. Push a child's cart filled with cans and then put the cans away on a low shelf so that the child has to be on hands and knees (a weight bearing position) to put the cans away
19. Participate in activities such as gymnastics, horseback riding, wrestling, karate, swimming (can also have child dive after weighted sticks thrown in pool).
20. Bathe the dog.
21. Wash the car.
22. Jump or climb in inner tubes.
23. Fill up a child's suitcase with heavy items (such as books) and push/pull the suitcase across the room.
24. Pull a small suitcase on wheels.
25. Go "shopping" with a child's shopping cart filled with items, or have the child push the shopping cart when you go shopping.
26. Go "camping" by pulling a heavy blanket across a few chairs.
27. Have the child help rearrange his/her bedroom furniture.
28. Have child put large toys and equipment away.
29. Participate in climbing activities (such as playground equipment).
30. Swing from the trapeze bar.
31. Push against a wall.
32. Fill up big toy trucks with heavy blocks, push with both hands to knock things down.
33. Participate in sports activities involving running and jumping.
34. On hands and knees, color a "rainbow" with large paper on the floor or with sidewalk chalk outside.
35. Play "cars" under the kitchen table where the child pushes the car with one hand while creeping and weight bearing on the other hand.
36. Walk up a ramp or incline.
37. Make wood projects requiring sanding and hammering.
38. Play a pushing game where two people lock hands facing each other and try to see who can push and make the other person step back first. Use other body parts also, but be sure to have rules (no hitting, no biting, no scratching, if one person says stop then both stop).
39. Two children sit on the floor, back to back, with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Interlock arms, and then try to stand up at the same time.
40. Two children play "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" sitting on the floor, holding hands, pushing and pulling each other.
41. Open doors for people.
42. Do chair push-ups.
43. Play jumping games such as hopscotch and jump rope.

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44. Jump on a mini trampoline.
45. Bounce on a Hippiity Hop Ball.
46. Play catch with a heavy ball, or bounce and roll a heavy ball.
47. Do animal walks (crab walk, bear walk, army crawl).
48. Stack chairs.