

Heavy Work Activities List for Parents

The 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 their ideas.

1. Carry heavy items (baskets with cardboard blocks, groceries for Mom etc.)
2. Allow child to 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 and ramp, incline or the stairs.
5. Take the cushions off sofas, vacuum under them, and 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 heavy trash can.
9. Perform household chores such as:
 - a. Vacuum
 - b. Sweep
 - c. Mop
 - d. Dust
 - e. Carry the laundry basket
 - f. Wipe off the table after dinner.
 - g. Carry buckets of water to clean with or to water flowers/plants/trees.
 - h. Clean windows or the front of appliances using a spray bottle.
 - i. Scrub rough surfaces with a brush.
 - j. Help change the sheet on the bed (then toss the linens down the stairs).
10. Perform yard work such as:
 - a. Mow the lawn.
 - b. Rake the grass/leaves.
 - c. Push the wheelbarrow.
 - d. Shovel sand into a wheelbarrow, push the wheelbarrow to a spot, dump out sand and use a rake to level it out (functionally for filling in low spots in the backyard).
 - e. Dig dirt to help plant flowers.
11. Pull a friend or heavy items in a wagon
12. Push a friend in a wheelbarrow.
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. Have the child “help” by pushing chairs into 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 drive 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 item (such as books) and push /pull the suitcase across the room.
24. When traveling, let child pull own small suitcase on wheels.
25. Go “shopping” with a child’s shopping cart filled with items, or have child push shopping cart when you go shopping.
26. Go “camping” with heavy blanket pulled across a few chairs. Child can help set up and take down the blanket.
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 play ground 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. Have child color a “rainbow” with large paper on the floor or with sidewalk chalk outside while child is on hands and knees.
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 wrestling: 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, one person says stop then both stop).
39. Have two children sit on the floor, back to back, with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. They interlock their arms, and then try to stand up at the same time.
40. Play “row, row, row your boat” both sitting on the floor, 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.
44. Jump on a mini trampoline.
45. Bounce on a Hippity Hop ball.
46. Play catch with a heavy ball, or bounce and roll heavy ball.
47. Do animal walks (crab walk, bear walk, army crawl)
48. Stack chairs.

Reference: Tools for Parenting (2001) by Dianna Henry and Tammy Wheeler, Henry OT services, Inc. For more information, go to www.ateachabout.com