

# Treasure Hunt

Grades 4th - 5th  
Disability Awareness:  
COMMUNICATION



One of the children started giving everyone high fives each time something was found. Then after each find, everyone gave everyone high fives. It was really nice to see everyone playing together and encouraging one another.

Teacher, Chicago, IL

## Character Education

- Patience
- Perseverance
- Trustworthy
- Courage

## Developmental Benefits

- Confidence and self-esteem
- Expressive and receptive language
- Visual tracking and scanning
- Auditory processing
- Gross motor development
- Sequential thought
- Physical activity
- Problem solving

## Introduction

True friendships need communication, trust, and interaction. If a child doesn't talk using words or speech, they can still communicate their thoughts and feelings using gestures, signs, pictures, or other communication systems. Give children opportunities to practice how to communicate a thought or word using a form of communication other than speech. This can help them appreciate similarities and accept differences, while helping them understand how to communicate and interact with friends that may communicate in a different way.

## Directions

The purpose of this activity is for children to play simultaneously with each other as they work to reach a common goal. Create a list of items or clues for children to find in the play environment. The facilitator shouts out the first item or clue on the list to locate. The children move around the playground in search of the item. After it is found, they report back to the facilitator to share where the item was located and then they are given the next clue. Play continues until all the items have been found. Instructions can be given verbally or visually using pictures or drawings. Pairing children in small teams can promote one-on-one interaction and opportunities to practice communicating with their friends.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Ask children to work together in teams to make a list of clues or items to find. They may choose to write the list or create their own picture symbols/drawings. The teams exchange lists and work together to find all of the items.
- Hide "treasures" along the way or at the final destination to add elements of discovery (stickers, flowers, interesting rock, etc.).
- Provide children with visual assistance in the form of photos, laminated line drawings, or written words to help keep children on task and lessen the need for memory recall.
- Adjust the area used to hunt for the treasures to keep play more confined (Ex. use only the area under the playground structure, only on the rubberized surface area, only on the playground equipment, etc.).
- Provide instruction in a number of ways for children to process input by using their sense of sight, hearing, and touch.
- Some children may need one object at a time to maintain attention to the task, while others may prefer the challenge of being given several items to locate all at once.
- Give children cameras to take pictures of the intended objects. This leaves less mess to clean up and won't disturb any natural surroundings.
- Incorporate fun questions or clues that the children can use to solve where the hidden treasure is. For example, "Something that hangs from two chains." (answer: swings) "Orangutans or chimpanzees would love this because it's similar to how they move in the treetops" (answer: monkey bars). After the team solves the clue, they move to that playground component to receive their next clue, until they solve all the clues and locate the treasure.

## Additional Equipment Needed

List of clues for items in the play environment to create a treasure hunt (Ex. Circle on the top level of the play structure, three stairs, a red maple leaf, picture of an animal, something that begins with the letter "A," nine rails in a line.)