

Let's go to the park!

The Northern Rivers has a great climate to spend time outdoors. Going to the park can be an affordable outing for your family. If you have any concerns about going to the park, here are some ideas we hope will help.



Before the park visit

Considerations may include:

- ❖ Is the park accessible and does it have suitable amenities?
- ❖ Is the park fenced?
- ❖ Can my child use and enjoy the equipment?
- ❖ Are there any other safety concerns, eg is it near water, or near a busy road?

If you are planning on going to a public park, you can contact your local council to learn more about access and amenities.

You can prepare your child by:

- ❖ Reading stories or watching videos about going to playgroup
- ❖ Using visual supports to prepare your child for what will happen (eg photos of the park, of the play equipment)
- ❖ Developing a social story for your child about going to the park

By understanding **what will happen** and **what is expected of them**, your child will feel less anxious or confused.

Be prepared with supports for your child's **sensory needs** – you may wish to work with your early intervention specialist to develop a sensory profile for your child.

Plan for **challenging situations**:

- ❖ What are the signs your child is becoming upset?
- ❖ What can help prevent the situation from escalating?
- ❖ Is there somewhere quiet you can go to take a break?

Can you start with shorter visits to the park until your child is more comfortable?

It is better to have small successes first. You may find it helpful to take along a friend or family member, particularly if you are concerned about safety issues.

During the park visit

Use **visuals** to help your child understand what will be happening next. **Praise** your child, **encourage** positive behaviours and have a reward to motivate your child.

If your child does become distressed, **stay calm** yourself so you can help your child. If you can, leave before the situation becomes too overwhelming. It is best if you have small successes first.

**While being prepared will give you the best chance to succeed, things don't always go to plan.
Reflect on what worked and what didn't to help you plan for your next outing.
When possible, keep the outing short and build on your successes.**

If you would like more information about community inclusion, we have developed a series of factsheets and checklists for families and communities.

These can be found at:

<http://www.directory.byronearlyintervention.org.au/>



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