

Let's go to the shops!

Going to the shops is an essential part of our lives. Sometimes it can also be a stressful time for families. If you have concerns about going to the shops with your child, here are some ideas we hope will help.



Before the shopping trip

If you are concerned about **physical access and amenities**, call beforehand and talk to the store about your access needs. You may also choose a time to go when it is less busy.

You can prepare your child by:

- ❖ Reading stories or watching videos about going to the shops
- ❖ Playing and practicing what happens at the shops
- ❖ Using visual supports (photos of the shops, of the items you are planning to buy, a schedule of what will happen)
- ❖ Developing a social story for your child about going to the shops

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 to keep your child **engaged and interested** while you're at the shops. Take a drink or snack, your child's favourite toy or have a reward to keep your child motivated.

Plan for **challenging situations** by thinking about:

- ❖ 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?

Plan shorter trips while your child is still 'learning' about going to the shops and have an exit plan in place if things aren't going well. You may find it helpful to have a family member or friend come along to help.

During the shopping trip

While you are at the shops, make your child feel important by **getting them involved** in the shopping trip (ticking off the shopping list, finding particular items on your list, talking about what you are doing).

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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