

Home is Where the Heart Is: Add a Little Seasoning

Autumn is my favorite time of year. The temperatures and activities really appeal to me, not to mention that "fresh start" feeling that the beginning of the school year adds. At home, you have lots of opportunities to reinforce classroom concepts and encourage communication.

1. **Events:** School field trips are typically scheduled after a unit has been completed, but in an ideal world field trips would be scheduled before *and* after the theme is presented. Many children need that real world experience to best absorb the concepts and vocabulary that will later be addressed. Consider providing the experience as a family as a precursor to the school unit. Teachers should be happy to provide you with upcoming themes several weeks in advance. Fun autumn activities might include: apple picking, hay rides, pumpkin patch visits or a corn maze. And if your child likes it, multiple experiences are all the better. You could use a stop at a pumpkin patch after a successful round of errands as a reward and start a collection of the mini \$1 pumpkins or gourds.

2. **Sporting events:** These might not be for every child, the stimulation can certainly be overwhelming. But if your child can handle it, go...a lot! No need to invest in season tickets to the Giants, your local high school football team or YMCA soccer team is fine. The nice thing about sporting events is they give less verbal children multiple opportunities to vocalize. Anything from "go Bengals!" to "whoa" is an appropriate cheer. The drama and excitement of the crowd is often encouragement in itself to get involved. (Make your OT happy too by including some movement as well. Take a pom-pom, pump a fist)

3. **Holidays:** Was there ever a holiday better suited to kids, especially those in speech therapy, than Halloween? You speak and *they give you candy!* What a motivator! And for the shy child, the opportunity to do it from the safety of a different character is a huge bonus. Practice in advance. Is it possible to have your child ring your own doorbell, and attempt "trick or treat" every single night in October? You don't have to reward with candy if you don't want to, a sticker or small token works fine too.

4. **Accessorize:** Support the themes in the classroom with holiday paraphernalia at home and clothing accessories. No, I'm not suggesting you start wearing holiday sweaters if you don't want to, I am encouraging having your child wear a seasonal necklace, pin, sticker or socks. Party stores have paper goods (or reusable and more Eco-friendly options) for every holiday and then some. Keep your eyes peeled! Once you get started with a theme, it's easy to go overboard! In the meantime, your child is continually being bombarded with repetitions of vocabulary and concepts, not to mention the opportunity to generalize since you will be giving multiple examples of, let's say, a turkey.

Give it a try—a little seasoning can make all the difference!

This post originally appeared on www.ActivityTailor.com