



Iowa COMPASS is Iowa's leading source of
information on disability services and assistive technology.

Cabin Fever Sinking In? Try an Adapted Indoor Activity!

Family games played in the home have the irresistible allure of time well spent. Board games and card games immediately come to mind. However, there are many imaginative and sensory activities that can make for happy memories as well. The important thing to remember is to account for the abilities of all players. Think through an activity ahead of time and then break it down into parts. What are the barriers for the different players? Can these barriers be overcome by A) using another part of the body, B) using an accommodation or simple assistive technology or C) team play?

Some companies level the playing field for all players. [Maxi Aids](#) has an extensive line of mainstream popular games designed to engage players with visual or hearing differences. [AbleNet](#) markets the All Turn It Spinner, which is a random rotatory switch that enables people with motor control disabilities to play games of chance. All Turn It Spinner also has options for Bingo and overlays for making custom games!



Be creative! The Internet is full of low cost ideas for adaptive activities using materials around the home or easily available at a local store. All categories of play are covered in, "Easy Toy and Game Adaptations," by Diana Mines Nielander on the [Answers4Families.org](#) website. Start now to gather up those odds and ends around the house for surefire fun later on. Also look at "How to Make Playing Cards One Handed Easy: Adaptive Equipment," by Anne Vize at [BrightHub.com](#) for a surprisingly easy alternative to the often difficult task of holding a hand of cards. Next, take a look at "Lets Play! Projects: Adapting Toys," on the [letsplay.buffalo.edu](#) website. Learn about materials that stabilize, build up, highlight, attach to, confine or otherwise simplify everyday playthings.

Beyond table games are the games of movement, adventure and curiosity. See some great ideas for activities at "Games for All Young People," on the Illinois Early Learning Project website: <http://www.illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/games.htm>.

When adapting games, make safety the first priority and keep an eye on the players as the fun progresses. By observing and learning, playing games can lead to pleasant memories for all members of the family!

For a list of manufacturer gaming selections accommodating disabilities of all types, search the two major American assistive technology clearinghouses:

[CATEA Assistive Technology Board Games](#)

[AbleData Board Games & Accessories](#)

Seize the Opportunity! Order Alternative Format Textbooks Now for the 2012-2013 School Year!

It is already time to order alternative format textbooks for the 2012-2013 school year! Alternative formats include Braille, large print, audio and digital text.

Schools should order standard grade level books now and any others as soon as they are identified as needed. Elementary schools can order the textbooks for students' grade-related subjects, such as social studies or science.

Middle or high school students might not have their schedules yet, but their schools will know many of the required classes for each grade level. Some schools may be able to confirm electives in advance so alternative format textbooks can be provided in a "timely manner" to students who need them. The Iowa Department of Education has defined "in a timely manner" as the same time as other students.

Parents can ask their child's teacher or Individual Education Program (IEP) team to order the textbooks now for next year so there is a smooth transition to the next grade and classes. Alternative format textbooks can also be included in a 504 plan. Follow-up as needed for other textbooks that may be identified later.

If you have any questions about assistive technology resources to help with your child's IEP or 504 plan, contact Iowa COMPASS at 1-800-779-2001 or iowa-compass@uiowa.edu!

THANK YOU!

In our last issue, we asked for your input to help us create a better newsletter for you!

Over 120 of our readers responded with ideas for future issues and how to continue to improve the information provided by Iowa COMPASS.



We welcome continued feedback! We will have a one-minute survey for each issue to provide a sounding board for immediate comments and suggestions.

[Iowa COMPASS News Feedback Survey](#)

Survey not working? Send us an [e-mail](#)!

AT Web Tips

Iowa Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) is sending out weekly 'tips' to webmasters about how to make websites more accessible, 508 compliant and more usable for persons with disabilities.

If you would like to receive these tips for your agency website, please send an e-mail and agency affiliation to:

marlene-phipps@uiowa.edu.

Think Warm Thoughts!

**Summer vacation will be here before we know it!
Start thinking about Summer Camp options early.**

Stay tuned for our March issue for details!

Be Prepared Early for Tax Season

Iowa COMPASS has [prepared a fact sheet](#) about tax rules and regulations that can affect people with disabilities. *The Iowa COMPASS fact sheet is not all-inclusive nor is it intended as tax advice.* As the government releases updated documents for preparing documents for the 2011 tax year, we will be updating our fact sheet, so check back before starting your taxes! For the most recent updates, be sure to visit the Internal Revenue Service website.

There are many ways for people who use assistive technology to save money on their taxes. Some of these tax breaks are only available to people who use assistive technology. Others are available to people with disabilities whether they use assistive technology or not. Finally, a few are available to all low-income people, even if they are not disabled.

Review the fact sheet to learn the basics about laws specific to income, deductions, tax credits, sales tax exemptions and information for employers. Your employer may be eligible for tax breaks if they have made changes to their business to be more accessible for you. Help preparing your taxes is available at many local public libraries. Check the telephone book for the number of the public library nearest you.

For additional information, you can check out the following **resources**:

- [State of Iowa](#) Tax Information and [Federal](#) Tax Information
- Iowa Legal Aid recently published an [article](#) featuring information about tax rights for people with disabilities.
- CPAS: Center for Personal Assistance Services recently broadcasted a [webinar](#) about Federal Tax Provisions.



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The COMPASS newsletter is online at www.iowacompass.org.

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