



## **Fifty Ideas for Young Disabled People to Do**

### **For disabled\* people:**

Disability support workers often struggle to find interesting activities for disabled people. That means a lot of us have been stuck in congregate settings (groups of disabled people who we didn't choose to be with) or activities where we feel like tourists in our communities (museums, parks, galleries).

This list is to start people thinking outside bowling, disability discos and day programs. We are not tourists: we belong in our communities and we need to start taking up our rightful places in the world.

You can and should add to this list, based on your own interests (support workers can support their clients to do this). This list is a WA based resource, but can be used anywhere.

Have fun!

\* The term 'disabled people' is used throughout this resource to reflect the social model of disability

## **For the people who support them:**

Here's a list to get your client or young family member started (and please remember that you do not 'set' activities for young folks, you support their communication and decision making, allow them to do what they want to do and when they want to do it, THEY are the ones who are doing these things and you are supporting them to do it and they need to be aligned to and directed by their interests):

## **Here's the list!**

1. Organise and hold a barbeque and beer night with friends to start brainstorming a microbusiness or future employment (bring post it notes!)
2. Host a Tupperware party or other type of party plan party (and yes, I'm including Pure Romance and 'adult' parties)
3. Go to a church, mosque, synagogue or temple if you're interested in spirituality - just because your parents might not be, that doesn't mean you shouldn't be. If you've never thought about spirituality, you can talk to others who have.
4. Jump out of a plane or go paintballing with friends or future friends - if you're a provider, it doesn't mean you should automatically be risk averse, it means that should check your insurance first.
5. Volunteer for something aligned to your interests. If you like animals, ask at your local pet sanctuary. If you are in love with horses, ask if you can help out at a local stable. If you just want to help animals, you can collect old towels to cut up and give to the sanctuary or vet or wildlife rescuer. If you like uniforms, you might like to help out volunteering with a local ambo or bushfire brigade.

6. If you like talking, ask if you can do a local radio spot, be interviewed, or record your own podcast.
7. Join a community organisation. That doesn't just mean disability arts (DADAA in WA are great) but also mainstream community arts settings, or a Mens' Shed, or a group that has a particular interest like collecting rocks, catching Pokémon, tabletop or online gaming. And if there isn't a group aligned to your interests, start your own!
8. If you are good at something, use it for good. I have a friend who is great at designing and building electronic equipment - does your local community group need a PA system? Could you make it? Could you install a smoke detector or burglar alarm or doorbell?
9. Visit an old people's home. You can do this with a few people...and there are also still plenty of old style disability institutions to visit people in. Many people haven't gotten out for decades. Old people often like visitors if they haven't a family - our Scouts did this once a year and made small gifts to bring in. Seniors have awesome stories. Check with staff first about who might like a visit.
10. Volunteer with your local Meals on Wheels service or at a hospital - they sometimes need people to refresh flowers or change the water in vases. You might need to do some research if your client needs you to.
11. If you're between 18 and 26, ask to attend a Rover Scout meeting and talk to the Rovers about joining up. You might need to talk to them first if they haven't had a lot of contact with disabled people, but you can try a few meetings to see if they're a good fit for you. Ditto any youth org or disability youth org.
12. If you're interested in social justice, you can join a rights based group like YDAN, Youth Disability Advocacy Network in WA or advocacy bodies that are for Aboriginal people, queer people,

etc. Or if human rights aren't your thing - what about animal rights or environmental rights? A lot of people don't know \*what\* they are passionate about and they need help to find out.

13. Check your local newspaper. No, not the big one, the tiny ones, community newspapers. You'll be surprised what's happening in your area. When they say 'in the community' they also mean your local, geographic community.
14. If you have higher support needs, there are eleven billion recreational activities. In WA there is Riding for the Disabled, Disabled Surfers Assn, a sailing organisation - ask other disabled folks.
15. If you are not a team or group person, ask about hiring a metal detector or go geocaching. Geocaching is awesome. There's an online community and half the fun is finding tiny things to plant and map. Indoor (or outdoor) climbing is another solitary pursuit that is popular.
16. TEACH someone something. All those people who have been bowling for years with other people in white buses - surely you know how to bowl now. Teach other disabled people, or kids. Or if you belong to a karate group, ask if you can be a volunteer instructor.
17. Learn something. First aid. Cooking. Auslan. There are heaps of community classes and short courses if you do not want to enrol in a longer course. If you don't think you'll fit in well because of your literacy level, skill level, mobility - ask someone to volunteer to teach a couple of people or pay someone. Organise it.
18. Go camping, or hiking. Not just as a walk during a day, with family or friends. Put it in your NDIS plan, including time that you will spend planning it.

19. If you are from a non-English speaking background or if you're Aboriginal, get in touch with your culture. That includes your ancestors - how many disabled people visit family graves?
20. Explore your sexuality or gender identity. In WA, there's the Freedom Centre, which runs events for young people. Lots of parents talk anxiously about 'arranging a sex worker' for disabled people and they never ever bother to ask or find out who they are interested in. Many young people find that out through dating and many disabled young people don't have the chance to find out.
21. Do not for the love of everything holy listen to the music your parents listen to, unless you really actually do like it and have had the opportunity to listen to \*other\* music. Often people will buy others the music of \*their\* generation - that's why you often hear that a whole population of intellectually disabled people like ABBA or KISS. If you're not exposed to peers who listen to contemporary music, you will not learn to like it.
22. If you are in the country, bother to find out what other young people do by asking what they did on the weekend for the last month. It often leads to other things - if they went out with a chainsaw to get firewood (in an approved area) you could also think about doing a chainsaw course. Be creative in your thinking. If you are not, ask a creative person.
23. Do age appropriate things. This means that Thomas the Tank is probably no more. Neither are Wiggles concerts or videos. You can just as easily become interested or obsessed with actual trains, actual movements like Star Wars, Doctor Who - and it isn't weird for a 25 year old to want to dress up as a Wookiee or Dalek. You'll fit right in at Comicon and there are heaps of other things to do, like join a group who are preparing and making costumes.

24. Find out stuff from other people. You may need to create that opportunity but often non-disabled people have the chance to find out what they like and disabled people do not. Meet a fireman or a farmer or a sexologist or a shearer or an author or a photographer or a migrant or a Buddhist or a horse trainer or an activist or someone with a disability other than the one you have.
25. Be ambitious. Don't just go to your once a week disability art class. Get some sponsorship (or buy, if you have the bucks) cheap frames from IKEA and hold an art exhibition. If you do not have any art skills, take a bunch of selfies, every day, for a month. Ask if you can exhibit somewhere public, even if it is a shop window. Or hold it in your own home (you can borrow easels from a TAFE or community art centre) and flog your work to your friends or family or both. Hold an opening with wine and cheese.
26. Go to places you have not been - no, that is not just a park or museum or art gallery. Go there with \*intent\*. If you're going to an art gallery, take the free tour. If you are going to the park, organise some others to catch Pokémon or BBQ. Unless you have a specific interest in dinosaurs, there's no point someone being dragged around to look at things.
27. Write or take photos for your community newspaper. Or make your own, or make zines. Go to the races and drink too much.
28. Don't just go to the gym if you need to lose weight - join a community like Weight Watchers.  
<https://www.weightwatchers.com/au/find-a-meeting/>
29. Join a peer support group - not necessarily a 'self-help' group, an actual peer support group of cross disability folks or people with the same diagnosis as you. There are dozens in every

state of Australia - check out [peerconnect.org.au](http://peerconnect.org.au) or Connect Groups.

30. Join a board or committee - your local footy club might welcome your help, even if you are not able to actually play because of your disability. There are homeowners' organisations, human rights organisations, and a bunch of other organisations who need your voice. And disability service providers, who often do not hear our voices.
31. Find out what culture looks like. You don't know if you like the ballet, opera or a musical unless you've tried it.
32. Go to community consultations and make your voice heard. If you have a disability that makes it hard for you to communicate, make sure your communication is supported - through PODD or by support from someone who knows that you have barriers in daily life, like access or inclusion.
33. Do not treat every single day as a party. It's not. People do not 'access the community' it is not a tourist destination, it's the place you live in and belong. In one youth organisation the meetings are equally divided into a focus on socialising, physical activities, intellectual activities (learning), emotional activities (connecting about things that mean something to you) and spiritual activities. Work out what kinds of things you need to do and add things like sexuality. If you have a microboard or a circle of supporters, ask them to help you.
34. Develop your own routine. If you are a bedroom dweller with a passion for online communities, make a commitment (your support worker can help you with this) to do something every day. Try it out for a few weeks. It might be walking the dog or doing the dishes or just something that is \*not in your room\*.

35. Join a community garden and learn to grow your own food at home. Find out about self-sufficiency - learn to make your own clothes.
36. Learn to vote. You would be surprised how many disabled young people are not enrolled - many don't know who the Prime Minister is. Learn who your local MP is and visit their office. Find out who your local Senator is - in WA, we have a Senator named Jordon Steele-John who represents disabled people AND young people. Write to him or send him photos about your issues. Get some information off the Electoral Commission website about voting - if you need more accessible language or if your support worker needs direction, get a schools resource here.  
<https://education.aec.gov.au/democracy-rules/>
37. Learn to play something, like chess, bridge or Dungeons and Dragons. Find a group who you can join up with.
38. Get a pet to care for. If you are not sure if you can care for it, start with a plant, work up to a fish, and go from there. You can get support to do this and it is a good way to build a routine.
39. Get a recording device (you can use a phone and download the voice recording to Audacity or another free sound editing program) and do a tour of your town or suburb, recording a description of each landmark or place of interest. Research it first.
40. Join Toastmasters or practice public speaking. You can connect with another disabled person who is a public speaker - this will help you learn how to tell your story or a story about something that matters to you, in public. It doesn't have to be about your life and you do not need to use a literal voice - you can use photographs and a PowerPoint.
41. Go to a silent disco.



42. Do some of the things on this list and learn about easy English. Make an instructional handout and give it to intellectually disabled people or the people who support them. Here's some information about easy English. <https://www.scopeaust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Clear-Written-Communications.-The-Easy-English-Style-Guide..pdf>
43. Find out what it would take to hold a stall at your local markets. You could make soap or candles or gifts, or you could buy something really popular on eBay. If that is not your thing, research what others sell at pop-up retail outlets – what about a stall at Comicon, Swancon or Pax?
44. Plant trees with an environmental group, or build bat boxes.
45. Start a home brewery and go to a microbrewery to learn how to make boutique beers.
46. Start growing Christmas trees. It will take a while. If you still live at home, you might want to ask your parent before you grow a forest in their front yard.
47. Learn how to do a basic access audit – there are checklists online. Practice on a few organisations – you could make a directory – and give them your findings and a checklist.
48. Collect recycling if you have a local recycling centre in your State. A lot of metal recycling agents need specific types of metal and you can collect them off roadside collections if you have a trailer. Or pick up old clothes and donate them to an op shop.
49. Start a micro-business and put it in the microbusiness directory. <https://micro-enterprise.valuedlives.org.au/>
50. Have fun – but don't just have fun. People's lives are supposed to be filled with meaning, not just things to do.

**Make it happen.**