

## Enlightening Light Boxes<sup>1</sup>

*How to develop your child's visual attention, tracking, scanning, and tactile skills with a light box.*



If you asked a Teacher of the Visually Impaired what their favorite educational tool is, most likely it would be the light box.

A light box is a box-like object with a smooth surface that is illuminated from underneath. It is used to help children who are visually impaired develop an awareness of light, color, and objects.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from "50 Ways to Use a Light Box," by Michelle Clyne, M.S. Ed., Project Coordinator, Project Reach: Illinois Deaf-Blind Services

When objects are presented on it, a light box can help a child develop visual attention, tracking and scanning skills, and eye-hand coordination. It is both a workspace and a play space that can be accessed with vision and touch.

While you'll find light boxes in classrooms, what kind of light boxes are available for parents who want to try one at home while their child is very young? If their child is in early intervention, they can borrow one from their Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired.

Less expensive, smaller lightboxes are available on [AMAZON](#) to purchase. Some parents have built their own light boxes such as [THIS IDEA](#). If you're traveling or don't have access to a light box, you can convert your iPad to a lightbox with a simple app.

Teachers from **A Shared Vision** use light boxes with many of their families when they visit them in their homes. Here are some of their favorite light box activities for playtime, establishing routines, or building early literacy skills. You can also search for more ideas on Pinterest.



## Sensory Play

- Cover the light box with parchment paper and paint it with dark-colored pudding, finger paint, watercolors, or Smelly Markers.
- Roll clay into strings and lay them out in interesting shapes on the light box.
- Use Wikki Stix to make raised line outlines on the box.
- Make a sensory gel bag [HERE](#) and illuminate the insides with the light box; squish the gel bag and watch the shapes move.
- Turn a transparent plastic container into your child's favorite sensory bin and illuminate it from underneath with the light box. Encourage your child to pick up and touch the items in the bin. If your child likes to explore with their mouth, be sure none of the items can pose a choking hazard.
- Hang Mardi Gras beads, a slinky, brightly colored scarves, or rick rack trim from the light box to encourage visual attention and reaching.
- Attach Gel Gems to the light box in assorted colors, patterns, or shapes.



## Motor Skills

- Stack blocks on the light box and encourage your child to knock them down.
- Play table-top hockey by pushing a translucent block or shape back and forth over the light box.
- Roll a ball or push a toy car back and forth over the light box and take turns saying, "Ready, set, go!"
- Attach suction-cup spinner toys to the light box such as [THESE](#) to encourage fine motor skills and sensory play.

## Eating Skills

- Scatter M & M's, Cheerios, or Goldfish on the light box to encourage reaching and grasping skills.
- Draw attention to juice, Jello, or a Popsicle by serving it in a clear cup, bottle, or container on the light box.
- Help your child mix a colored drink mix or food coloring into a clear glass of water and watch how the color develops.
- Sort translucent plastic cups or utensils on the light box. Use narration as you describe the size, the texture, or the color of each item and what it's used for.

## Early Literacy

- Put items from a story box or bag on the light box to draw attention to them as you read the story.
- "Illustrate" your own story by putting objects from that experience on the light box.

## Tips

- If your child hesitates to touch something on the light box, use hand under hand to encourage your child to put their hand on top of yours as you experience the item.
- Observe your child for cues about what they like or don't like on the light box. Also watch for signs of fatigue or when your child is done with the activity.
- As you and your child are playing together with the light box, use narration to describe the shape, size, position, or color of what you're presenting on the light box surface to make the experience more accessible for them. It's okay to use words like "look," "see," and "find."
- Use the light box in a darkened room or at nighttime so there is no natural light to distract them.
- Don't play with a light box if your child is sensitive to bright light or if certain light conditions cause seizures.