

## How to Build a Toy Bar

*Encourage active learning with this frame you can make yourself and hang your child's favorite toys.*



Very young children who are blind or visually impaired learn best by being active participants in their environment. A toy bar is one way to encourage participation because they will use purposeful movement to reach for or grasp an object hanging from the bar.

If they have some vision they can fixate on the toys and practice eye-hand coordination by looking and reaching for their favorite one.

They can practice touching the object many times to learn about cause and effect. Does the toy make a sound when they touch it? Does the object have an interesting texture? When your child pulls on and releases the toy, does the toy bounce up and down or wiggle side to side?

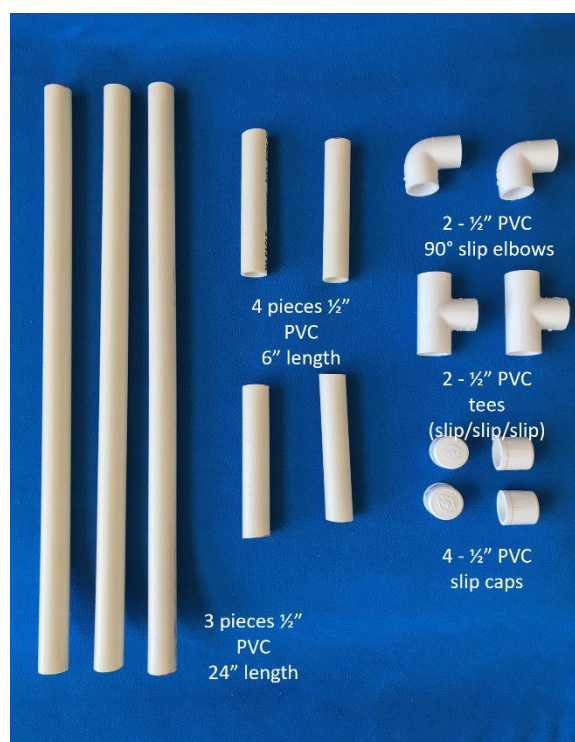
Best of all, you can make the toy bar yourself with half-inch PVC pipe from the hardware store and attach toys that you know will engage your child's interests. If the toys or objects don't hold their interest, you can replace them with something different.

Toy bars can be used when your child is laying down or in an upright position. You can even modify a toy bar so it stands up above your child's high chair or adaptive seat.

Be sure to supervise your child when they are playing with the toy bar. Observe your child for cues about what they like or don't like on the toy bar. Is your child making sounds while playing with the bar or turning away from the toys? Also watch for signs of fatigue or when they're all done.

### Supplies

- 3x 24-inch-long pieces ½-inch PVC pipe
- 4x 6-inch-long pieces ½-inch PVC pipe
- 2x 90-degree ½-inch PVC slip elbow connectors
- 2x ½-inch PVC tee connectors
- 4x ½-inch PVC slip caps
- Rubber mallet
- Plastic baby rings or shower curtain rings
- ½-inch wide sewing elastic, cord, or ribbon



## **Directions**

- Insert the 6-inch pieces of PVC pipe into each side of the tees.
- Insert two of the 24-inch pieces of PVC into the base of each tee.
- Add a cap to each of the six-inch pieces to form the base of the toy bar.
- Attach elbow pieces to the ends of the remaining 24-inch piece. This is the top of the toy bar. If the rings don't open easily, slide the rings for the toys on the bar before attaching it to the legs.
- Attach the top bar to the legs of the toy bar.
- Use the rubber mallet to tap all pieces securely into each joint.
- Attach toys securely to top bar with plastic baby rings or shower curtain rings and pieces of elastic or ribbon.
- The length of the elastic or ribbon should be long enough for your child to see, reach, and touch the toys.
- "Sleeves" made from various fabrics can be slid on the PVC pipes to add fun textures for little hands and feet to explore. You can also use brightly colored Duct tape or contact paper to add color to the bars.

## Attachments

What can you attach to a toy bar? Choose toys or objects with interesting colors, sounds, or textures. What interests your child? Here are some ideas.

- Bath pouf
- Koosh ball
- Slinky
- Chimes
- A lattice ball with bells inside
- Rattle
- Pom pom
- Car wash mitt
- Pinwheel
- Mardi Gras beads
- Paint brush
- Mylar paper or crinkle ball
- Kitchen utensils such as silicone whisk, basting brush, measuring spoons
- Ribbons
- Maracas
- Comb or brush
- You can also make themed toy bars – all the objects are in your child's favorite color, from their favorite book, or from a holiday or birthday.



**Modified Toy Bar Materials Needed:**

- 5 - 24" pieces ½" PVC pipe\* OR 1 - 24" piece & 2 - 48" pieces ½" PVC
- 4 - 12" pieces ½" PVC pipe
- 2 - 90° ½" PVC slip elbows
- 2 - ½" PVC Tees (slip x slip x slip)
- 4 - ½" PVC slip caps
- 2 - ½" slip coupling - \*only if using 24" pieces for the sides or 2 additional PVC Tees so it can be used at 24" or 48" height
- Rubber mallet

