

More Ideas for using your Powerlink – Jane Wendelken



Do you have a Powerlink already? Maybe there is one in a cupboard at school or maybe you have one but are just running out of ideas for its use. The AbleNet Powerlink has been a fantastic piece of equipment for people with a range of complex needs for many years now. Sometimes, we can get stuck in a rut and use something like the Powerlink for the same activity over and over again. Have a look at this list and see if there is something new you can try out!

1. Operate a fan

This isn't a new idea at all! But maybe you can get creative with how you use the fan.

Use a small desk fan to blow wet paint across a page to make some beautiful artwork.

Cover pin-pong balls with paint and blow these across paper to get a different effect.



Make toy sail boats and have races blowing them across a tub of water.

Tie streamers or scented fabric ribbons to a fan to add to the sensory experience.

How about playing a game of bowling? Use the fan to blow the ball into the skittles – how many can you knock down?

2. Turn on the lights!

Don't put the fairy lights away after Christmas. Use the Powerlink and a switch to turn the lights on and off in a darkened room. Create a lovely atmosphere!

Make up a spooky story and ask your student to turn a lamp on when it gets too scary! You can go back to the story when they turn the lamp off again. Nothing like a good spooky story with a good reaction from you as the lights come on! Phew!



3. Make something yummy!

OK, so this is the activity that people tend to do really well (and quite often) with the Powerlink. Smoothie or milkshake makers can be really easy to use and motivating. Get students to choose ingredients and make their own flavours and then tell someone if they like it or not.



Use a cake mixer to whip up some cookie batter or scramble some eggs. This is the perfect opportunity to also practice those describing words!

4. Enjoy some tunes

Technology for playing music has come a long way since the tape recorder and radio. Unfortunately, disc players, mp3 players and other digital devices will not work with the Powerlink and a switch. Dig out your old transistor radio, tune into the coolest station you can find and take turns to turn the music on and off. This could be a good opportunity for your child or student to ask for “more”.

5. Clean up the house!

A mum I worked with a few years ago shared this little gem with me. She hooked up her vacuum cleaner to the Powerlink and switch and gave the switch to her son as she cleaned. She gave him an over the top reaction when he turned the vacuum off – “Oh no! How am I meant to clean this house up?!” Result was loads of giggles and he promptly turned it back on.



This brings me to a final point. The best effect in a ‘cause and effect’ activity is YOU! If you react to something your child or student has done, you have instantly turned the activity into real communication. And that’s what it’s all about isn’t it?

Have fun!

If you have any questions about the use of this equipment in conjunction with one or two switches, please contact us at <http://www.talklink.org.nz/index.php/contact-us/>

Direct? Latch? Timed?

The Powerlink has three settings which make the switch work in different ways. I tend to use the latch setting most often. The student has to press the switch to make something go and press it again to make it stop. There are naturally more opportunities for communication (stop, go, more, finished, again etc) and more control or intent needed. All of the above activities could use the latch or timed setting.