

[Surviving the Christmas Pageant](#)

Surviving the Christmas Pageant: Top 10 tricks for with children with autism, sensory processing disorder or language difficulties

The Christmas Pageant is full of fun, joy and... sensory overload for even the most typical of children. For children with autism, sensory processing disorder or language difficulties it can be a nightmare. The great news is that with a little careful planning, you make the event a positive experience for all.

Preparation

- **Sensory Diet:** Ensure kids are well fed, toileted, dressed appropriately and have had LOTS of their **sensory diet** input before leaving home.
- **Watch last year's pageant** on the iPad so your child knows what to expect if they haven't been before, or even just as a reminder.
- **Choose your location well** (e.g. ideally position yourself near to a patch of grass where the child can play and run around if needed, and close to public toilets).
- Take a **photo of your child** in the clothes they are wearing as you leave for the pageant and write your mobile phone number on their arm in permanent marker.

In the moment

- Use **'waiting' activities** (e.g. blowing bubbles, chalk drawing, iPad, activity books (eg sticker books, mazes, dot-to-dots) to kill time while waiting for the action to begin.
- Use a **visual timer** (physical timer or an iPad/iPhone App) to indicate how long until the pageant begins and/or how long until it's over. Maybe even use a social story to outline what to expect expected in more detail.
- Take **sensory aids** such as noise reduction headphones or iPod with favourite or familiar music as 'white noise' to mask the noise around them, deep pressure clothing (e.g. Jet skins or weighted vests), oral chew toys, fidget toys or 'sensory snack' foods. Ideally allow the child to carry these on their own body in a bum bag or personal bag.
- Provide **regular small snacks and drinks** (ideally small chewy foods or hard sucking foods) for regulation help throughout the day, not just as 'food' when hungry. Make sure you take a BIG drink bottle for hydration and regulation.
- Teach the **action plan** to the child if they get lost (e.g. *stand still* and yell for mum, do not move, count to 20 then look for a 'safe' person (police, first aider, traffic marshal) and show them your parents mobile number).

After the event

- **Don't try to beat the crowds when leaving**- stay put after the event has finished and the crowd will disappear around you very quickly giving kids more space and less sensory overload.
- **Don't plan any further events that day.** Instead give the child time to 'chill out' and ensure you give them lots of extra sensory diet input to help counteract the overload experienced during the pageant.

Plan well and make the day a positive memory for all.

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child
on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)

