



## READi Lab Tip Sheet: Preparing for Halloween festivities October 2019



*Halloween is a fun holiday filled with costumes, decorations, and candy. However, for many children and young adults Halloween can be a stressful time of year. Many families may struggle with the change in routine, unfamiliar costumes, and scary decorations that often accompany this holiday. Below are some helpful tips to make Halloween a fun, accessible day for you and your family!*

### Make a plan!

- **Set realistic goals!** For some children, staying at home and handing candy to trick-or-treaters will be exciting enough. Others may want to visit every house in the neighborhood. Know your child's limits, and set a goal for this Halloween that you both will feel good about.
- **Research the Halloween events in your area!** Trick-or-treating at unfamiliar houses in the dark may simply be too overwhelming for some children. Alternative activities such as visiting a pumpkin patch, a fair with bounce-houses, a school-sponsored activity, or a daytime Halloween-related event may be more fun for your family, and that's okay!
- **Make a schedule for trick-or-treat night!** The night will go more smoothly if your child knows what to expect. Create a [visual schedule](#) of the evening plan that includes where you will go, how many houses you will visit, and how long you will stay out. You can even draw a map of the neighborhood and have your child be the leader in deciding the order in which you will visit houses.
- **Consider the best way for your child to communicate while trick-or-treating.** If your child has limited language, consider alternative ways that s/he can communicate, such as using gestures (e.g., extending a hand, palm up), single words (e.g., "Please;" "Thanks"), or visual supports with pictures or words. See our handy printable cards below!



### Practice, practice, practice!

- **Practice "trick or treating" in your own home!** Have a family member or friend stand behind a door with candy (or your child's favorite healthy treat), and have your child practice as many of the steps as they are able. Steps include knocking on the door, requesting treats (saying "trick or treat," gesturing, or patiently waiting), putting the candy in a bucket, and saying "thank you".

- **Choose a Halloween costume that is comfortable for your child!** For some children this may mean simply wearing a favorite shirt, and for others it may mean wearing a full-body costume. Either way, make sure that your child has time to try on the costume ahead of time, so s/he knows what it will feel like. You may even want to have your child practice wearing the costume around the house, so s/he can get used to it, or even have him/her wear it during a favorite activity so it will be linked to a positive memory.

### Stick to the plan and enjoy the night!

- **Set clear expectations.** Once your child understands the plan for the evening, try to stick to it. You can remind him or her throughout the night by using the [“First-Then” method](#). For example, “first we put on our costumes, then we get candy!” It may help to bring along a visual schedule or a map of your planned course that you can refer to together to keep track of how far you’ve gone and what’s coming up next.
- **Invite friends to join you.** It’s always more fun to go trick or treating with friends. Whether walking around the neighborhood or attending an event, try to be around children or adults with whom your child feels comfortable. Not only will it be fun for your child, but it will also give you some support throughout the activities.
- **Have fun!** This is a wonderful chance to spend time with your child, and to encourage him or her to experience something new. Enjoy this time to be silly, dress up, and eat some yummy treats!