



Halloween 2026 - The BKS Way

It's for Every BOO-dy!

Every child. Every ability. Every way to participate.

Halloween is supposed to be fun! But for some children and families, trick-or-treating can bring unexpected challenges. Costumes may feel uncomfortable, crowds and decorations may be overwhelming, and saying “trick or treat” may not be possible - or may simply look different.

At Building Kid Steps, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to participate in Halloween in a way that works for them. A little preparation and a few simple adjustments can make a big difference. Many of these ideas use things you already have at home!

1. Practice Before Halloween Night

Start about a week before Halloween. Grab a candy bucket and practice the routine at home.

- Have your child walk or roll up to a bedroom door or your front door.
- Practice knocking, ringing the doorbell, or waiting for someone to answer.
- Have a family member open the door and offer a treat.
- Practice accepting the treat and moving on to the next pretend house.
- If a sibling will be trick-or-treating alongside your child, include them in practice.

Repeat the routine throughout the week with the same bucket, communication support, or costume your child plans to use.

The BKS Way: We practice so the routine becomes familiar - not because our child has to perform it perfectly.

2. There Is More Than One Way to Say “Trick or Treat!”

Your child does not have to speak to participate. Choose what works best:

- Spoken words: “Trick or treat,” “candy,” “treat,” or even “hi.”
- Picture exchange: Hand someone a card that says “Trick or Treat!”
- Speech-generating device (SGD): Program a Halloween message and practice activating it.
- Phone text-to-speech: Type a message into an app and tap to play it.
- Prerecorded message: Have a sibling, cousin, or friend record “Trick or treat!” on a phone.

- Bucket sticker: Attach a readable message to the outside of the bucket. When your child raises it, the person handing out candy can read it.
- Gestures: Raising a bucket, waving, pointing, or approaching the door can communicate participation.

A parent or sibling can assist with these options. Families may also choose a simple “Trick or Treat!” card without explaining their child’s communication needs.

The BKS Way: Communication is about sharing a message - not requiring a particular word, device, gesture, or response.

3. Make the Candy Bucket Work for Your Child

Sometimes a simple adjustment makes trick-or-treating easier:

- Thread an adjustable belt through the bucket handle and buckle it to create a carrying strap.
- Use a removable purse strap with secure clips.
- Attach a lightweight bucket to a wheelchair or mobility device when appropriate.
- Have a parent carry a larger bag and empty the child’s bucket between stops to keep it light.

Make sure straps fit comfortably and do not create tripping or entanglement hazards. Keep buckets and decorations away from wheelchair wheels, controls, and safety equipment.

The BKS Way: Change the equipment to fit the child - not the child to fit the equipment.

4. Plan Ahead for Candy Excitement

For some children, a bucket overflowing with candy can make it difficult to focus on anything else. Parents can manage how much candy is visible and available at one time.

- Leave just a few pieces of candy in your child’s bucket.
- Quietly move extra candy into a separate bag you are carrying.
- If driving between houses, transfer extra candy when you return to the car.
- At trunk-or-treat, periodically move a few pieces out of the bucket between stops.
- If your child wants to eat candy right away, plan when to offer an appropriate piece rather than leaving the entire collection available at once.

Keep expectations predictable. Do not make candy a reward for speaking or completing a communication task.

Safety reminder: Consider food allergies, dietary restrictions, chewing and swallowing abilities, and choking hazards. Children should be seated and supervised when eating candy, not chewing while walking or riding in a vehicle.

The BKS Way: Sometimes the easiest accommodation is simply changing what the adult does.

5. Make Room for Sensory Differences

Halloween may include loud noises, flashing lights, crowded sidewalks, unfamiliar decorations, and uncomfortable clothing.

- Visit familiar homes before trying a crowded neighborhood.
- Go earlier in the evening when things may be quieter.
- Bring hearing protection or a favorite comfort item.

- Let your child explore costume pieces before Halloween.
- Choose soft, comfortable clothing if traditional costumes are uncomfortable.
- Plan breaks and have an easy way to leave.

Some children enjoy one house; others enjoy an entire neighborhood. Some prefer to stay home and help hand out candy. All are meaningful ways to participate.

6. Make Costumes Comfortable and Accessible

Costumes should work for your child. For children using wheelchairs or mobility equipment, consider incorporating the equipment into the costume - perhaps a spaceship, race car, or carriage. Keep decorations lightweight and clear of wheels, controls, and restraints.

A child does not need an elaborate costume to participate.

A little help from BKS: For our Comfy Costumes for Every Kid option, families can bring a comfortable T-shirt and \$5 to Building Kid Steps by Tuesday, October 20, 2026. Choose a Halloween design and we will apply it, with shirts ready later that week.

7. Know When Your Child Is Ready to Be Done

A successful Halloween does not depend on the number of houses visited. Help your child communicate “all done,” “break,” “home,” or “help” using speech, signs, gestures, pictures, or a device. Watch for fatigue, discomfort, or sensory overload. It is okay to finish early or change plans.

The BKS Way: Success is participation, comfort, and connection - not perfection.

Free Halloween Communication Printables

Our small, cut-out communication cards and bucket stickers give families four choices:

- Trick or Treat!
- Trick or Treat! I communicate without speaking.
- Trick or Treat! I have communication difficulties. Thank you for your patience!
- Trick or Treat! A wave or raised bucket is how I say hello!

Print the sheet on cardstock or sticker paper, cut out the option that works best, and practice using it before Halloween. Download the free cards from the Halloween article on www.buildingkidsteps.com. Prefer a ready-made bucket sticker? Building Kid Steps can print one for \$1 each.

A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way

To everyone handing out candy: Not every child will say “trick or treat.” Some communicate through gestures, pictures, devices, or recorded messages. Some may not make eye contact, tolerate a costume, or approach your front door. Please do not require a child to speak, make eye contact, or perform an action before offering a treat. A smile, patience, and a welcoming attitude make a difference.

Halloween 2026 - The BKS Way: It’s for Every BOO-dy!

This guide provides general educational suggestions. Families should adapt activities to their child’s individual mobility, communication, sensory, feeding, swallowing, and safety needs.