



# Activities for Sensory Breaks

## by sensory category

Many categories are interrelated (vestibular and visual; proprioceptive and oral; tactile, olfactory, and gustatory). All children are unique in how they process sensory input; therefore, it is important to understand the sensory needs of the individual as some sensory activities may have adverse effects if a child's sensory processing is extremely high or extremely low. It is also important to consider that some sensory experiences can trigger a child's survival response system if it is related to a past traumatic experience. **Never make a child participate in a sensory activity if they do not want to.**

Sensory Category	Seeking	Avoiding
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glitter wand/jar or I spy bottle</li> <li>• Liquid toys</li> <li>• Light up toys</li> <li>• Lava lamp</li> <li>• Painting or drawing (use a variety of materials)</li> <li>• Guided Imagery - Directed thoughts and suggestions that guide your imagination toward a relaxed, focused state.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eye mask (basic, weighted, gel)</li> <li>• Sun Glasses</li> <li>• Brimmed Hat</li> <li>• Tent/dim lit corner or area</li> </ul>
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to music</li> <li>• Make music/ sing</li> <li>• Drumming</li> <li>• Noise machine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise canceling headphones</li> <li>• Quiet corner/area</li> <li>• Hat or soft head band that can cover the ears</li> </ul>
Tactile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sand/ kinetic sand</li> <li>• Play dough/clay</li> <li>• Texture scavenger hunt/ texture walk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hula hoop (to designate personal space)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water play</li> <li>• Hug a soft toy</li> <li>• Curl up under a soft blanket</li> <li>• Sit in a beanbag chair</li> <li>• Make and play with slime</li> <li>• Shaving cream</li> <li>• Salt or sugar scrub for feet/hands</li> <li>• Play with small fidget toy</li> <li>• Velcro (soft or hook side)</li> <li>• Sensory ball (spikey ball)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vinyl or rubber gloves (to wear during messy play)</li> <li>• Turn socks inside out</li> <li>• Remove tags from clothing</li> </ul>
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**The following suggestions are seeking only**

Olfactory (smell) and Gustatory (taste)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calming essential oil infuser (chamomile, lavender, lemon, orange, eucalyptus)</li> <li>• Make a “my favorite smells” box</li> <li>• Go on a smell scavenger hunt.</li> <li>• Cooking and tasting a variety of foods</li> <li>• Lick a lemon (invigorating)</li> <li>• Suck on a Lollipop</li> <li>• Spice Jars</li> <li>• Cooking and tasting a variety of foods</li> <li>• Lick a lemon (invigorating)</li> <li>• Suck on a Lollipop</li> <li>• Cooking and tasting a variety of foods</li> <li>• Lick a lemon (invigorating)</li> <li>• Suck on a Lollipop</li> <li>• Dried Fruit</li> <li>• Chap stick (monitor child)</li> </ul>
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Vestibular (inner ear/balance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rocking in a rocking chair</li> <li>• Spinning</li> <li>• Swinging</li> <li>• Hang upside down</li> <li>• Roll on an exercise ball (try on your stomach and on your back)</li> <li>• Dancing</li> <li>• Tai Chi or other slow movement</li> <li>• Wobble seat/wiggle cushion</li> <li>• Scooter board</li> </ul>
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Proprioceptive (gross motor- “heavy work”/ oral motor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy walk (put something <i>reasonably</i> weighted in a backpack and walk with it)</li> <li>• Push with flat palms on a wall or down onto the surface of a table.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jump (on the ground or on a trampoline; jump on bubble wrap)</li> <li>• Play hopscotch</li> <li>• Bounce on an exercise ball</li> <li>• Go for a run</li> <li>• Use an exercise band (pull or push with hands or feet)</li> <li>• Push or pull a cart with weighted items in it</li> <li>• Weighted blanket, lap blanket, doll, or vest</li> <li>• Squeeze a stress toy</li> <li>• Playdough/ clay/ theraputty</li> <li>• Ask for a hug</li> <li>• Ask to be wrapped in a blanket</li> <li>• Play catch</li> <li>• Floor stretching</li> <li>• Chew on a chewy toy or pendent</li> <li>• Eat crunchy snacks (veggies, fruit, crackers, etc.)</li> <li>• Chew on ice</li> <li>• Chew on gum (slowly)</li> <li>• Play a kazoo</li> </ul>
Other calming activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House chores (wash the dishes, fold laundry, dust, sweep, mop, or vacuum)</li> <li>• Do a puzzle</li> <li>• Put together or take apart objects (i.e. connectors, unifix cubes, Legos)</li> <li>• Read a favorite book</li> <li>• Tell silly jokes</li> <li>• Deep breathing: Take ten deep breathes; dragon breath; bunny breath; bee breath</li> <li>• Use stethoscope to listen to heart beat/breath</li> <li>• Blow Bubbles, pinwheel</li> <li>• Play “Measure Your Breath”: blow a cotton ball through a straw and measure the distance it rolled</li> </ul>

**Additional resources:**

GoNoodle: Commonly used by primary grade educators, this website, which offers free memberships to any adult, provides access to movement and mindfulness videos that are fun and engaging for a variety for ages. <https://www.gonoodle.com/>

Mindful Kids (YouTube channel): a YouTube channel with a variety of relaxing music for relaxation, meditation, sleep, and study. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwHO92Tu97JWHzl3RmadNug/featured>

Sesame Street in Communities: Professional development resources. The content is specific to children experiencing adversity. **Content should be shared with parents for them to determine if/when to share with children**). Some materials can be supportive to all children (i.e. coloring pages, stories).

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/>

Storyline Online: Website with free stories read aloud by celebrities. Storytelling can be very powerful and this particular website can be an option when a child expresses the need regulate independently.

<https://www.storylineonline.net/> (keep in mind that reading aloud to a child yourself is going to be far more powerful as it has the added benefit of strengthening your relationship.)