

Sensory Activity Toolkit

Prepared for **101autism.com**

A practical guide for parents, educators, and caregivers to support sensory processing needs.

SAFETY FIRST

Disclaimer: Every individual is unique. Activities that are calming for one person may be over-stimulating for another. Always supervise sensory play and observe the individual's reactions. Consult with an Occupational Therapist (OT) for a tailored sensory diet.

Introduction

Sensory processing refers to how our nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into responses. This toolkit provides activities categorized by the three "hidden" senses that often affect regulation:

1. **Proprioception** (Body Awareness / Heavy Work)
2. **Vestibular** (Movement / Balance)
3. **Tactile** (Touch)

1 Proprioceptive Activities (Heavy Work)

Goal: Calming, organizing, and grounding. Great for high energy or anxiety.

The "Burrito" Wrap

Materials: A heavy blanket or weighted blanket.

- Have the child lie down on the edge of the blanket.
- Firmly but gently roll them up like a burrito (keeping the head free).
- Apply gentle pressure or "squishes" with a pillow if tolerated.
- **Benefit:** Provides deep pressure input which is universally calming.

Animal Walks

Materials: None (open space).

- **Bear Walk:** Walk on hands and feet.
- **Crab Walk:** Walk on hands and feet with belly facing up.
- **Frog Jumps:** Squat down and jump forward.
- **Snake Slither:** Crawl on the belly using elbows.
- **Benefit:** Builds core strength and provides heavy work to joints.

Household Helpers

Materials: Laundry basket, groceries, vacuum.

- Pushing a heavy laundry basket across the floor.
- Carrying grocery bags (appropriate weight) from the car.
- Vacuuming or sweeping.
- **Benefit:** Functional heavy work that integrates into daily life.

2 Vestibular Activities (Movement)

Goal: Alerting or soothing depending on speed. Linear movement (rocking) is usually calming; rotational movement (spinning) is alerting.

Cushion Crash

Materials: Couch cushions, pillows, bean bags.

- Pile cushions on the floor.
- Allow the child to jump from a low, safe height (like a sofa step) onto the cushions.
- **Caution:** Ensure the landing zone is clear of hard objects.

Yoga Ball Rocking

Materials: Large exercise ball (Swiss ball).

- Have the child lie on their stomach over the ball.
- Gently rock them back and forth.
- Encourage them to reach out and touch the floor with their hands.

3 Tactile Activities (Touch)

Goal: Desensitization or stimulation. Helpful for "picky" textures or seeking sensation.

DIY Sensory Bin

Base Material Ideas:

- Dry rice or beans (classic feel).
- Kinetic sand (smooth, moldable).
- Water beads (wet, slippery).
- Shaving cream (messy play).

Add-ins: Funnels, scoops, small plastic toys, hidden puzzle pieces.

Texture Wall / Board

Materials: Cardboard, glue, various fabrics.

- Glue different textures onto a board: sandpaper (rough), velvet (soft), bubble wrap (bumpy), tin foil (smooth/crinkly).
- Encourage the child to run their fingers across the different surfaces.

4 Visual & Auditory Regulation

Calming Bottle Recipe

Ingredients: Empty plastic water bottle (Voss style works best), warm water, clear glue, fine glitter, food coloring.

1. Fill bottle 1/4 with clear glue.
2. Fill the rest with warm water (leave 1 inch at top).
3. Add glitter and 1-2 drops of food coloring.
4. Super glue the lid shut.

Shake and watch the glitter settle for a mesmerizing visual break.

Weekly Sensory Planner

Use this template to plan a "Sensory Diet" ensuring a mix of heavy work and calming activities throughout the week.

Time of Day	Morning	After School	Before Bed
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Weekend			

Quick Reference: Signs of Dysregulation

- **Over-Responsive (Avoider):** Covers ears, dislikes messy hands, picky eater, avoids play-ground equipment. → Try: Deep pressure, quiet corner, dim lights.
- **Under-Responsive (Seeker):** Crashes into things, touches everything, spins constantly, hums loudly. → Try: Heavy work (pushing/pulling), jumping, crunchy snacks.