

Example Sensory Activities

Sensory input can be used to help promote a variety of responses. The two main categories of sensory input are *regulating*, or calming activities, and *alerting* activities. Giving your child the correct type of input at the right times can help manage unwanted behaviors and regulate their nervous system.

This chart includes examples of activities adapted from the *Sensory Profile, Second Edition: User's Manual* by Dunn, 2014, as well as other specific activities or qualities of activities commonly used in OT.

NOTE: NOT ALL CHILDREN ARE AFFECTED THE SAME WAY BY SENSORY INPUT. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR CHILD'S INDIVIDUAL NEEDS & RESPONSES.

| Type of Activity | Examples |
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| Regulating: Activities that may help to calm your child's nervous system | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Firm arm squeezes or hugs● Placing a weighted blanket or stuffed animal in lap● Linear swinging or rocking● Animal walks● Yoga● Playing with soft, squishy toys and textures● Playing with resistive putty● Chewing (chewy foods or chew toys)● Blowing bubbles● Heavy work activities● Pushing and pulling heavy objects● Dim lighting● Low contrast● Limited use of lights and colors● Soft and predictable visual cues● Slow, low-volume music● Low humming● Steady background noise (eg, white noise)● Neutral temperatures or slightly warm |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preferred, familiar smells |
| <p>Alerting: Activities that may help stimulate or engage your child's nervous system</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tickling ● Quick tapping ● Random, unexpected touch ● Quick jumping ● Skipping or rolling/ somersaults ● Spikey or rough textures ● Many textures at the same time ● Water or messy play ● Loud, fast music ● Unexpected sounds ● Hot or cold items ● Spinning ● Bright lighting ● Many colors ● High contrast patterns ● Strong or unexpected smells ● Quick transitions or movements |

Other Tips

1. Always talk to your child's OT or primary care physician when necessary before trying new sensory activities or as any concerns arise.
2. Sensory activities should never be forced, as this can be detrimental to sensory processing.
3. Start small. As your child tolerates it, you may slowly increase the intensity or duration of sensory stimulation as appropriate.

References

Dunn, W. (2014). *Sensory Profile, Second Edition: User's Manual*. Bloomington, MN: Pearson Clinical Assessment.