

**Sensory Integration
& Fine Motor Skills:**

**Strategies for
Success**

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Environmental Modifications for Sensory Processing Problems

For movement seekers

1. seating that allows for movement while being in the same spot
2. routine with movement/proprioception breaks
3. frequent position changes
4. dyces to stabilize objects
5. outline paper placement on desk with tape
6. large area with unbreakable items for safe "roughhousing"
7. outdoor swing set or trampoline

For movement avoiders

1. firm supportive seating that fits well
2. limit proximity to others and space to increase sense of security
3. limit activities involving movement
4. stairs with railings
5. safe environment – consistent arrangement, limit items on floor and extraneous materials
6. bed mattress on floor

For tactile defensive problems

1. position child to minimize tactile input
2. approach the child from the front
3. use firm versus light touch
4. minimize other possible overwhelming environmental stimuli
5. teach child and others about sensory issues and sensory diet
6. glue stick instead of paste or glue
7. paintbrush versus finger paint
8. experiment with different textures of food, clothing, bathing equipment, sheets, etc. to find preferences

For tactile discrimination problems

1. provide additional time for fine motor tasks
2. breaks for sensory diet activities, especially prior to fine motor tasks
3. offer alternatives to writing (oral tests, word processor, tape recorder, peer for note taking, etc.)

For dyspraxia

1. consult with PE teacher
2. simplified physical activities/instructions
3. provide visual, auditory, and physical cues when learning motor tasks
4. provide assistance to help with self organization
5. have child verbalize steps to complete tasks
6. simple clothing, no fastenings or larger fasteners
7. simplify ADL's via routine, organization, work simplification
8. use grids and graph paper to help with math and writing

For the visual system

1. work in a carroll
2. declutter the environment
3. provide extra visual cues
4. simplify visual input
5. adjust lighting according to arousal level needed

For the auditory system

1. limit noise
2. provide background noise
3. provide the type of sound that adjusts arousal appropriately

For all types of sensory integrative dysfunction

1. educate the person affected about their own sensory issues
2. educate those around them about sensory integration
3. provide the person affected with sensory diet strategies
4. provide families and teachers of the affected individual with strategies

Strategies for success with fine motor tasks

1. Break down tasks into basic parts
2. Make handles larger and easier to hold
3. Allow extra time for fine motor tasks
4. Simplify clothing by using Velcro in place of buttons
5. Address sensory discrimination issues
6. Address decreased hand strength
7. Be sure that there is adequate postural support

Activities to improve fine motor skills

1. dot to dot pictures or mazes
2. lacing cards or sewing
3. pipe cleaner sculpture
4. lite-brite
5. string beads
6. parquetry block designs
7. play jacks or tiddley winks
8. art activities: paint, cut, paste, glue using a variety of media

Activities for improving writing skills and writing grip

1. Handwriting Without Tears (www.hwtears.com)
2. Work on a vertical surface to help with grip and proximal muscles
3. Use pencil gripper that provides cues for correct grasp
4. Tracing with Erasapens or Color Transformers
5. Vibrating pen or other unusual writing utensils can make writing more fun
6. Trace letters in clay that has been flattened into a plastic coffee can top
7. Outline shapes using glue (good for strengthening too) when it is dry it provides visual and tactile feedback to assist with coloring within lines
8. Try coloring or writing over a variety of surfaces: sand paper, magazines...
9. Raised line paper

Activities for build hand strength

1. Clay, play doh, putty
2. Find items hidden in clay or in a deep container of dried rice or beans
3. Wooden pinch-type clothes pins
4. Play games with tongs
5. Make cookies or biscuits using hands to mix
6. Make designs using rubber bands stretched on a board with rows of nails
7. Macrame or other knotting crafts
8. Finger weaving

Sensory Input Options for Adjusting Arousal Level

Oral Motor Options:

1. aquarium tubing necklace
2. theratubing (attach to pencil end or shirt) – soak to get chemical taste out
3. proprioceptive input for the mouth: gum, hard candy, water bottle with spout for sucking, chewy candy, suck thick liquids through a straw
4. intense taste input for the mouth: sour candy
5. mouth toys or games: opportunities for blowing and sucking
6. vibrating toothbrush
7. deep pressure to roof of mouth or gums
8. ice pops
9. tactile input (firm for desensitizing, light for stimulating) in/around mouth
10. appropriate whole body input prior to working with the mouth

Vestibular/proprioceptive options (for over active kids):

Seating:

1. sit on a ball, sit-fit, T-stool, instead of a chair
2. rocking chair
3. stand versus sitting to work
4. work in prone on elbows

Proprioceptive input:

1. wall or chair push ups
2. isometrics or other active resistance (theraband, putty, hand gripper, weights, chin ups)
3. hug time
4. press down on shoulders
5. squish or sandwich games
6. karate or regular calisthenics
7. weighted vest or backpack, sand bag for lap
8. weighted blanket or heavy quilt to sleep under
9. heavy work tasks – push, pull, carry heavy items, yardwork

Linear vestibular input with proprioception

1. jump on a trampoline
2. propel self on a swing
3. jump on a trampoline
4. scooter board games
5. hippity-hop
6. jump rope
7. tug of war
8. wheel barrow walk, donkey kick, rope climbing

Rotary vestibular input with proprioception

1. gymnastics
2. rolling
3. karate
4. dance

Hand fidgets

Breaks for movement

Relaxation techniques

Womb space

Vestibular/proprioceptive options for movement averse kids:

1. lots of "pure" proprioceptive input, add linear vestibular with this if they can tolerate it
2. "grounding" through active resistance and joint compression
3. firm supportive seating with good fit

Tactile options for defensive kids:

1. Willbarger's brushing program
2. proprioceptive input – see above
3. proprioceptive and linear vestibular input – see above
4. warn child of touch, touch where they can see it, use firm touch
5. position child to minimize touch – end of the line or row
6. clothing - prewash, cut tags out, turn socks inside out
7. bathing – "dry off" firmly with a coarse towel before and after, make baths enticing/distracting with bubble bath, bath paints or crayons
8. let child provide own tactile input
9. let child put away/clean up aversive tactile material
10. make interesting foods using hands – cookies, clean a pumpkin
11. tactile play – dried rice or beans, paint with shaving cream, pudding
12. swimming, slip and slide
13. resistive hand tasks – erasing, cutting play doh, hand fidgets
14. resistive activity for the mouth

Tactile options for kids with decreased discrimination abilities:

1. writing tool alternatives – grippers, pencils of differing hardness, felt-tip pens, vibratory pens, ball-point pens
2. discriminatory play tasks – find objects hidden in rice, feely box
3. tactile and proprioceptive opportunities for the hands
4. writing surface alternatives – blotters, layers of paper, raised line paper, textured paper
5. allow additional time for fine motor tasks