

100 CLASSROOM SENSORY STRATEGIES

The following list is full of sensory strategies that may be beneficial for use in the classroom. However, every child is different and will respond to sensory strategies in different ways. Consult with your school-based occupational therapist and the rest of the educational team when addressing sensory needs in the classroom.

General Sensory Strategies

A special signal kids can use when they need a break
Using visual picture schedules to indicate what's coming next
Mindful breathing techniques
A designated calming space for children to retreat to
Seat child away from common distractions
Allow variable seating/standing during classwork
Working outside to increase alertness and engagement
Just-a-minute meditations (http://www.just-a-minute.org/en/resource_centre/)

Oral Sensory/Olfactory Strategies

Chewy snacks like gum (often calming)
Crunchy snacks (often alerting)
Wearable chewy jewelry
Chewy pencil toppers
Using scented markers for drawing/completing work
Allowing child to drink from water bottle with a bite valve
Scented play dough as a break
Add essential oils to a felt square and place near the child
Scented rice bins or sensory tables
Create scented bottles with calming and alerting items
Drink cold water (often alerting)

Auditory Sensory Strategies

Using a quiet voice to give directions
Using a noise meter to maintain adequate noise level
White noise (e.g. rain sounds, ocean sounds, fan)

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Auditory Sensory Strategies, Cont.

- Quiet calming music
- Making up songs or rhymes to bring attention to a task
- Having the child repeat instructions or important information back after listening
- Using games, toys, and apps that teach concepts using music and sound
- Listen to audio books using headphones
- Allow child to enter or transition before/after the rest of the class
- Use a listening phone for children to amplify their voice during silent reading
- Allow text to speech software for children that need to hear the work
- Allow wait time after giving directions or verbal information
- Provide a quiet space for testing and focused work

Proprioceptive Sensory Strategies

- Sensory breaks to squish/squeeze play dough or putty
- Sensory breaks to pull against resistance bands
- Holding a heavy door open for the whole class to go through
- Carrying library books to the library
- Carrying lunch boxes to the cafeteria on a cart
- Placing resistance band around legs of desk for kids to bounce feet on
- Sensory breaks with wall push ups
- Sensory breaks with chair dips
- Sensory breaks to squeeze balloons filled with play dough, dry rice, or dry beans
- Sensory breaks to jump
- Animal walks during transitions
- Tossing and catching heavy bean bags during breaks
- Sensory breaks to tear paper
- Sensory breaks to crumple paper
- Wiping down or erasing the dry erase board
- Wiping down tables with a wet rag
- Wall sits during sensory breaks

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Tactile Sensory Strategies

- Sensory breaks with tactile bins
- Sit in a bean bag chair
- Learning activities with manipulatives
- Using a vibrating pen for handwriting activities
- Velcro on the underside of desk to use as a fidget
- Pencil topper fidget toys
- Popping bubble wrap during sensory breaks
- Pipe cleaners for fidgets
- Write words/letters in sand trays
- Sensory breaks with finger exercises
- Allow children to use a marble maze in their lap at the carpet
- Use carpet square with different textures during carpet time
- Use hot glue to create tactile letter/word cards to trace with finger
- Create sandpaper letters to trace with finger
- Practice forming sight words with playdough
- Use sensory bins to find academically related items (sight words, letters, numbers, etc)
- Create a basket of scrap paper/textured paper for cutting practice
- Use a hula hoop at circle time to help a child define his/her space if they struggle with touching others
- Sensory break to rub lotion on hands
- Sharpen pencils at break times with manual sharpener
- Use simple fine motor tasks as fidgets for the hands (e.g. stringing beads)
- Hand clapping games with a partner during break times

Vestibular Sensory Strategies

- Movement breaks using songs and videos
- Sitting on a rocking chair
- Movement breaks with yoga

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Vestibular Sensory Strategies, Cont.

- Sitting on a ball chair
- Working or reading on the floor (sitting or lying down)
- Completing work on a vertical surface in standing (tape paper to wall, work on an easel)
- Sitting on an inflatable disc cushion
- Allow child to sit on a wiggle seat or wobble stool
- Movement breaks with animal walks
- Allow children to stand during work
- Act out sight words with your body
- Sensory breaks to balance on one foot
- Use painters tape to create lines on the floor to follow/balance on during transitions
- Acting as classroom helper to pass out papers
- Delivering notes and papers to other teachers/office

Visual Sensory Strategies

- Dim or turn off the lights
- Store supplies and materials off of tables and desks to limit distractions
- Limiting decorations and other things hanging on walls
- Sensory breaks with visual bottles or calm down jars
- Using learning materials that are bold, bright, and colorful
- Working or playing on a brightly colored surface
- Completing learning activities on a light table
- Cover part of the work so only one problem can be seen
- Use a visual scale for child to gauge energy level
- Use checklists and rubrics for jobs/activities with steps
- Seat child away from bright windows or lights
- Use preferential seating for children needing to be closer to the board
- Mazes, hidden pictures, and I spy for calming visual activities
- Use a visual timer to indicate how much time is left in an activity