

Sensory activity breaks

We've listed 20 different activities you can try with your child. You may find they enjoy some of the activities more than others - that's OK, as all children will have different sensory needs. You can ignore activities which your child does not find fun. A sensory break can be quite short - maybe 10 minutes or so. Choose 2 or 3 activities per session and keep mixing them up to keep your child interested. Do as many sessions in a day as you find useful – it can be a good way of helping your child to move on from one part of their daily routine to the next. It's quite useful to have a quick freshen up exercise before you start which wakens your child's body ready for action and increases their body awareness.

Freshen up:

Ask your child to have a pretend shower by rubbing their face, arms and legs. Then ask them to 'dry' themselves by shaking out their arms and legs. Then change to jumping up and down on the spot 5 times.

Activities:

1. Find/draw a straight line 3 to 5 metres long. Walk along it 3 times – 1st time heel to toe, 2nd time doing crossover walking (legs crossing onto the opposite side of the line with each step), 3rd time zig zag jumping over the line.
2. Using a closed door or free wall space place both hands on the wall/door at just below shoulder height. Your feet should be a comfortable distance away from the wall/door (50cm maybe). Then push hard like you're trying to push the wall down for a count of about 10 seconds. You can repeat this 2 or 3 times – mix it up by trying to think of other parts of your body that you can use to push against the wall/door (elbows, shoulders, bum, hips, knees etc).
3. If you have a large cardboard box/blue Ikea bag or similar, put heavy objects inside and push the box/pull the bag around the room (having a little brother or sister can be really useful for being the heavy something in this activity).
4. Do some bear walking – this is like crawling on all fours but with your knees not touching the ground (so just hands and feet touching the floor).
5. Do 20 stamping steps around the room – stomp as hard as you can.
6. You clap a slow rhythm and your child repeats it by jumping slowly and heavily. This is quite tricky – start with maybe 3 or 4 claps and build up as your child's ability to remember the rhythm improves.
7. Animal walks – think of animals you can move around like e.g. snake, elephant, crab, giraffe etc.
8. Balloon volleyball – bat a balloon back and forth between you, try not to let it touch the ground.
9. Donkey kicks – go on all fours and try to kick out your legs behind you.
10. Draw on a vertical surface with chalk – or you could play hangman, noughts and crosses etc. Drawing on the ground while on your hands and knees is also a good activity.
11. Kneel facing your child, place the palms of your hands together and push against each other – see if you can move the other person.

12. Wall push ups with a clap in between. Stand a little back from a closed door/wall with the palms of your hands at a comfortable height (a little above elbow height) and your arms out straight. Bend your elbows so that your body tilts forwards until your face almost touches the door wall, then push back out again until your arms are straight. Clap your hands and repeat. Note – this activity needs to be done in a slowish, controlled way – children often want to do it at breakneck speed which doesn't give them the sensory feedback they need.
13. Chair push-ups – put your hands on the side of the chair and press down to lift your body weight of the seat. Then slowly let your body back down. Repeat 5 times. Needs to be done on a desk type chair.
14. Army crawl. Pretend you're crawling under army assault course netting.
15. If you have a gym/exercise ball there are lots of sensory activities you can do – just google 'sensory activities with gym ball uk' and you will get lots of ideas.
16. If you have a space hopper bouncing on that is a good sensory exercise.
17. Link your hands and place them on your head and press down hard – count out loud slowly up to 10 pressing all the while.
18. Place your palms together in front of your chest and press your hands together: count out loud to 10 pressing all the while.
19. If you have playdoh or salt dough – stand at a table, place your palms over a ball of dough and press it flat. Repeat several times. Roll the dough into sausages or use a rolling pin to roll it out – pressing heavily.
20. Play catch with different items – balls of different sizes/materials, soft toys, potatoes or other fruit/veg (but remember they will get dropped sometimes!), bean bags etc etc. See if you can do 10 throws/ catches without dropping the item. As your child gains confidence you can increase the distance between you.