



## Sensory and Motor Ideas for Home

There are many things that you can do at home with your child to help them mature and develop their nervous system or at least help them normalize the quality of their responses to certain things in the environment, such as touch, movement, or food (taste, smell, and texture). Here are some general activities you can try doing at home to enhance and promote success at school. Most of the activities can be done at home or in the park.

### For Improvement of Tolerating Touch:

- Give your child **massages and back rubs** using various lotions (or oils) and textures such as towels and soft blankets.
- **Tactile bins** are big plastic containers filled with various textures such as sand, rice, water, macaroni, beans, etc. Hide small toys in them and have your child look for them, or let them run their hands through the textures. This can get a little messy if not outside! Use a sandbox that you cover when not in use. If playing inside, place a beach towel or blanket on the floor under the bin. For older kids, use a large bin to store Lego building blocks. That way they can search for the pieces they need and get similar input.
- Clear off the kitchen table and let your child **finger “paint”** with various textures such as shaving cream, pudding, foam soap, jelly, etc. Try doing this on a wall mirror (shaving cream is easiest to clean) to incorporate arm/wrist strength and body awareness. Use only nontoxic substances, and supervise in case they try to eat non-edibles. Take the activity outside and “toe paint.” On the patio, sidewalk, or driveway, run out a large roll of paper, paint the bottom of your child’s feet with tempera paint, and have them walk on the paper to make patterns. You can use different textures to apply paint such as sponges, different widths and softness/firmness of brushes, rollers, kitchen sponges, etc. (Let the paper dry and use it for homemade wrapping paper.) Then move to the tub to clean up and continue the sensory fun.





- **Bath time** is a great time to do tactile stuff. Use soap crayons to paint on their body. Use different textures to scrub them up. Get them used to feeling the water run over their bodies. Interesting tub toys can help distract discomfort of water, as does singing. Use bubble bath or even blow bubbles while in the tub. Pay attention to the water and room temperature to maintain their comfort.



Make sure to use a bath mat or other non-skid material on the tub bottom to prevent slips or falls. Always supervise young children in the bathtub.

- Other **kitchen activities**: After washing their hands well, a child could use their hands to mix dry ingredients for homemade cookies or help “hand” mix meatloaf or meatball ingredients. Try a small bowl first to test their comfort level. Remember: Nothing tastes better than something you help make!
- Use face paints, stickers, tattoos, or even masking tape to stick to parts of their body; have your child peel it off.
- Make “**texture walking boards**”: Cut the sides from large cardboard boxes and lay flat on the floor. Find different textures such as yarn, buttons, packing bubbles, old puzzle pieces, carpet samples, old towels, etc., and glue them onto each board (18” x 24” recommended size). After they dry, make “paths” to walk on barefoot. Making the boards is also a sensorimotor experience, and kids love to use what they make.

### For Organizing and Calming the Nervous System:



- Crawl through tunnels made of cloth, boxes, or couch cushions while on all fours (hands and knees).



- Play tug-of-war with ropes, scarves, or stretchy bands.
- Carry heavy items such as groceries, boxes of stuff, or books. Your child can also push or pull weighted wagons, wheelbarrows (full of garden supplies), laundry baskets (have them “deliver” folded laundry), or toy shopping carts.
- Do any kind of weight bearing, weight lifting, or resistive exercise such as wheelbarrow walks, push-ups, sit-ups, jumping rope, jumping jacks, etc. Parents can join in for their daily dose of exercise, too!
- Squish the child between pillows, mats, and bean bag chairs, or roll large exercise balls/rolls over their bodies. Be firm, but be careful not to use too much pressure—ask your child how it feels and stop if they are uncomfortable. Let your child take a turn squishing you.
- Bite, chew, and crunch foods. Use sucking candy or lollipops for calming.

### **To Improve Eating Skills:**

- Blow bubbles, whistles, horns, etc. Blow feathers, styrofoam, or light objects across the table.
- Brush the sides of the tongue and the insides of the cheeks when you brush your child’s teeth. An electric toothbrush provides another kind of sensation.
- Let your child use a small vibrator to vibrate their cheeks, chin, lips, and inside the mouth. There are also vibrating teethingers available.
- Sweet tastes are generally soothing/calming. Sour, spicy, and bitter tastes are more alerting. Warm foods are calming. Cold foods such as popsicles and ice cream are alerting.
- If your child is orally hypersensitive and does not eat a wide variety of foods, try desensitizing their lips, gums, teeth, and tongue with a washcloth or an infant brush, made by Infa-Dent™, that fits on your finger. You can advance to a NUK® toothbrush and then to an electric toothbrush. Keep advancing to more textures, temperatures, and types of food as your child becomes accustomed to them.





### For Alerting or Waking Up the Body:

- All linear types of movements are good. Let your child bounce on an old mattress, inner tube, or mini-trampoline. Hold their hands if you need to and always supervise. They can also bounce on large balls and Hippity Hops while sitting.
- Swing in the backyard or at the playground. Slides and teeter totters are good, too.
- Climb on playground equipment with close supervision.
- Ride on toys such as trikes, bikes, scooters, skates with a helmet (elbow/knee pads) and supervision.
- Roughhouse and wrestle with a mature adult/caregiver.
- Play games such as hopscotch, tag, ball toss, and catch.

