Sensory Checklist

Adapted from the book *Raising a Sensory Smart Child: The Definitive Handbook for Helping Your Child with Sensory Processing Issues.*
© Lindsey Biel, OTR/L and Nancy Peske, 2025 and beyond.

For personal use only. For permission to use in a workshop or professional setting, please contact Lindsey@sensorysmarts.com

Touch

	AVOIDS	SEEKS	MIXED	NEUTRAL
Being touched lightly	☐	☐	☐	☐
Receiving hugs and cuddles	☐	☐	☐	☐
Certain clothing fabrics, seams, tags, waistbands, cuffs, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clothing, shoes, or accessories that are very tight or very loose	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wearing new clothing or costumes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Getting hands, face, or other body parts “messy” with paint, glue, sand, food, lotion, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grooming activities, such as face and hair washing, brushing, cutting, and nail trimming	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking a bath, shower, or swimming	☐	☐	☐	☐
Getting toweled dry	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feeling particular food textures and temperatures in the mouth, such as mushy, slippery, crumbly, hot, cold	☐	☐	☐	☐
Standing close to other children or adults	☐	☐	☐	☐
Walking barefoot	☐	☐	☐	☐

Proprioception (Body Position)

	AVOIDS	SEEKS	MIXED	NEUTRAL
Active play, such as roughhousing, jumping, banging, pushing, bouncing, climbing, hanging	☐	☐	☐	☐
High-risk play, such as jumping from extreme heights, climbing very high trees, riding bicycle over gravel	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fine motor tasks, such as writing, drawing, closing buttons and snaps, using scissors, attaching pop beads and snap-together building toys	☐	☐	☐	☐
Activities requiring physical strength and force	☐	☐	☐	☐
Having eyes closed or covered	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sitting with erect posture on the floor or in a chair	☐	☐	☐	☐

Vestibular (Movement)

	AVOIDS	SEEKS	MIXED	NEUTRAL
Being moved passively by another person (rocked or twirled by an adult, pushed in a wagon)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Riding equipment that moves through space, such as swings, seesaws, escalators and elevators	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spinning activities, such as carousels, spinning toys, spinning in circles	☐	☐	☐	☐
Activities that require changes in head position, such as bending over sink or having head upside down	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenges to balance, such as skating, bicycle riding, and balance beams	☐	☐	☐	☐
Climbing and descending stairs, slides, and ladders	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being up high, such as at the top of a slide	☐	☐	☐	☐
Riding an escalator	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being on less stable surfaces, such as deep-pile carpet, grass, sand, and snow	☐	☐	☐	☐
Riding in a vehicle such as a car, bus, boat or other form of transportation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sitting still on a chair or couch or on the floor	☐	☐	☐	☐

Auditory

	AVOIDS	SEEKS	MIXED	NEUTRAL
Hearing loud or unexpected sounds, such as car horns, sirens, loud music, baby crying	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being in noisy settings, such as a crowded restaurant, party, or busy store	☐	☐	☐	☐
Watching TV or listening to music at very high or very low volume	☐	☐	☐	☐
Speaking or being spoken to amid other sounds or voices	☐	☐	☐	☐
Background noise, such as music, dishwasher, or fan when trying to concentrate on a task	☐	☐	☐	☐
Games and dances with rapid verbal instructions, such as Simon Says or the Hokey Pokey	☐	☐	☐	☐
Back-and-forth, interactive conversations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hearing unfamiliar sounds, silly voices, or a foreign language	☐	☐	☐	☐
Singing alone or with others	☐	☐	☐	☐

Visual

	AVOIDS	SEEKS	MIXED	NEUTRAL
Learning to read or reading for more than a few minutes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Looking at shiny, spinning, or moving objects	☐	☐	☐	☐

Activities that require eye-hand coordination, such as baseball, catch, stringing beads, writing, and tracing	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tasks requiring visual analysis, such as puzzles, mazes, and hidden pictures	☐	☐	☐	☐
Activities that require discriminating among colors, shapes, and sizes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visually busy places, such as stores and crowded playgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐
Finding specific objects in a crowded visual field, such as a particular shirt in a drawer or book on a shelf	☐	☐	☐	☐
Very bright light or sunshine, or being photographed with a flash	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dim lighting, shade, or the dark	☐	☐	☐	☐
Action-packed, colorful television, movies, or computer/video games	☐	☐	☐	☐
New visual experiences, such as looking through a kaleidoscope or colored glass	☐	☐	☐	☐



Taste and Smell

	AVOIDS	SEEKS	MIXED	NEUTRAL
Smelling unfamiliar scents	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strong odors, such as perfume, coffee, gasoline, cleaning products	☐	☐	☐	☐
Smelling objects that aren't food such as flowers, plastic items, Play-Doh, and garbage	☐	☐	☐	☐
New foods	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eating familiar foods	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eating strongly flavored foods (very spicy, salty, bitter, sour, or sweet)	☐	☐	☐	☐



Interoception (Internal Physical Sense)

	ALWAYS	SOMETIMES	NEVER	NOT SURE
Aware of hunger or fullness	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aware of thirst	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aware of being hot or cold	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aware of need to pee or poop	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aware of rapid heartbeat	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aware of pain or discomfort	☐	☐	☐	☐
Able to identify source of pain or discomfort	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aware of energy level, such as being tired or fatigued	☐	☐	☐	☐
Aware of emotional experiences, such as being excited, anxious, or overwhelmed	☐	☐	☐	☐

SOMATIC EXERCISES ACCESSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

Before engaging in somatic exercises, informed consent from the person must be obtained. Guardian consent without the expressed consent of the person partcipating is not valid consent. Means of communication must be available at all times. Somatic exercises are not for everyone. Use them at your best professional descretion.

01



Self-Hug / Deep Pressure Squeeze

If the person can't cross their arms, gently cross their arms over their chest and apply a steady, consented pressure to the sides of their arms or shoulders.

02



Shake It Out

While the person is seated, shake their hands, arms, or rock their body side to side. Be silly, but gentle. Ensure the person is supported and not at risk for injury.

03



Rocking / Rhythmic Movement

Gently guide the wheelchair back and forth. Rhythmic and predictable. Short pushes and a slow pace. Imagine rocking in a rocking chair.

.

04



Rolling into a Cocoon

Wrap a blanket tightly around the torso and arms while seated. Tuck blanket in around the person. Keep means of communication available.

05



Heavy Work

Push a weighted object across a tray table, or pull against a resistance band anchored to the chair frame.

06



Tapping

Guide the person hand-over-hand, assisting them in tapping their temples, jaw, shoulders, or chest. Cross-body is more effective. If hand-over-hand isn't possible, you may perform the tapping yourself.

07



Butterfly

Cross the person's hands over their chest, so each hand rests on the opposite shoulder or upper arm. Gently tap one hand, then the other, back and forth, like the flutter of butterfly wings. Keep breathing slowly as you tap.

08



Vibration Pillow

Hold a vibration pillow to the person's chest. Allow them to hold it if they are able or you can hold it there for them. Use for 5-10 minutes.

09



Isometric Presses

Assist the person in pressing their palms together. The goal is to create an consistent firm pressure of the palms resisting each other.

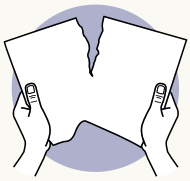
10



Hand Squeezes

Hold the person's hands in your hands. Squeeze one hand, then the other, in an alternating pattern. Use a slow steady pace. You may also use prolonged squeezes with a slow release.

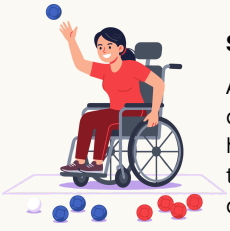
11



Shredding Paper

Use tissue paper or thin paper that is easy to rip. Provide hand-over-hand assistance in holding and ripping the paper into as many peices as possible. Forceful ripping is more effective.

12



Slamming Objects

Assist the person in holding a soft object in their hand, guide their hand to a raised position, and help them throw the item to the floor or on the table.

SOMATIC STRATEGIES IN BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS

BREAKING DOWN SENSORY FUNCTIONS INTO APPLICABLE STRATEGIES

SENSORY CHANNEL	SOMATIC STRATEGIES
TACTILE	• Lip Tracing, one fingertip, a few gentle passes • Chewy tubes or chewelry, for oral-tactile input • Ice or ice packs, for a grounding temperature shift • Shredding paper, forceful tearing into as many pieces as possible • Fidget tools • Sensory bins: kinetic sand, shaving cream, Play-Doh, etc. • Soft-bristled brush strokes on arms or hands
AUDITORY	• Drumming on a table, lap, or actual drum, matching a slow steady beat • Musical instruments • Nature sound recordings • Humming/Singing • Vocal toning: “AHH” or “OOO” in different volumes and tones • Crinkling paper, popping bubble wrap, tapping spoon on different items
VISUAL	• Light-up toys, bubble tubes, kaleidoscopes, spinning top, moving galaxy lights • Grounding (5-4-3-2-1) • Watching a fish tank, fiber-optic light strand, and lava lamps • Sensory bottles • YouTube videos of fireworks, color bursts, etc. • Flipping through images • Finger tracing shapes, mazes, or spirals with visual tracking • Shadow play or puppets
VESTIBULAR	• Shake It Out: start small at the wrist, let it build through the arm and into the whole body • Rocking or rhythmic swaying (self-directed or wheelchair-guided) • Fast spinning or rocking, for higher intensity input • Big body movement: arm circles, stomping in place, jumping • Slow head tilts side to side, • Vibration pillow
PROPRIOCEPTIVE	• Cocoon, self-hug, compression garments, weighted blanket • Functional Heavy Work: Stacking and carrying weighted books or bins from one spot to another, pushing heavy objects • Bear Crawl, Crab Walk • Firmly squishing therapy putty or stress balls • Tug-of-war with a resistance band • Isometric Presses: palms pressed firmly together • Heart Hold, Butterfly Tap

khonakerlcsw

SOMATIC TECHNIQUES

- Butterfly tap
- Lip tracing
- Shake it out
- Big body movement (arm circles, marching, jumping jacks)
- Grounding (5-4-3-2-1)
- Heart hold
- Humming or singing
- Straw breathing
- Heavy work (pushing, carrying, pulling)
- Big forceful movement (stomping, pillow hits, throwing soft items)
- Compression garments or resistance bands
- Vibrating pillow
- Chewy tubes or chewelry
- Ice or ice packs
- Fast spinning or rocking
- Destruction play (tearing cardboard, popping bubble wrap)
- Sour candy
- Crunchy snacks
- Blanket cocoon
- Self-hug or deep pressure squeeze
- Isometric presses
- Hand squeezes
- Rocking or rhythmic movement
- Shredding paper
- Slamming soft objects
- Porch swing or glider motion
- Airplane arms
- Therapy ball roll under feet
- Hammock or platform swing
- Slow head tilts with breath
- Animal walks (bear crawl, crab walk)
- Therapy putty or stress dough
- Tug-of-war with resistance band
- Wall push-ups
- Weighted blanket time
- Finger painting in shaving cream or pudding
- Warm rice or bean sensory bin
- Soft-bristle brush strokes
- Ocean drum or rain stick
- Guided low humming
- Metronome or rhythmic clicking
- Slow tempo music
- Nature soundscapes
- Echo or call-and-response
- Reading aloud slowly
- Humming into a cardboard tube
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Pressing comb teeth into palm
- Heated/weighted stuffy (Warmies)
- Smelling strong scents (candles, essential oils, even stinky smells)
- Eating Pop Rocks candy
- Sipping cold or warm drinks
- Letting chocolate melt on the tongue
- Applying lotion
- Blowing across a bottle top
- Underwater/submerged listening
- Seashell to the ear
- Tapping objects to compare tones
- Handheld fan whir near ear
- Vocal toning (drawn-out vowel sound)
- Foot-tapping to a set beat
- Slinky stretch and release
- Recorded heartbeat or womb sounds
- Talking or humming into a fan
- Glitter or sand bottle
- Color-changing LED lights
- Pinwheel spin with breath
- Prism or sun catcher
- Laser pointer slow tracking
- Shadow play
- Oil and water jar
- Maze or spiral tracing
- Lava lamp or wave projector
- Familiar photo book
- Ceiling fan or blind light patterns
- Single color-family coloring
- Candle flame or flameless LED
- String or ribbon art
- Feather tracing on arms
- Sitting in a small, tight space
- Earthing - put feet in sand, grass, dirt, etc.
- Finger nail squeezes