# Sensory Strategies

| Tactile<br>(touch)<br><br>Hyposensitive |
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| Use a variety of touch activities to stimulate the senses, such as vibrating and fidget toys.<br>Contrast tactile substances within learning activities.<br>Introduce activities that involve deep pressure input such as massage, vibration and brushing of the skin. |
| **Tactile<br>(touch)<br><br>Hypersensitive** |
| Do not approach from behind.<br>Use firm pressure not light touch.<br>Child should control touch.<br>Avoid child sitting/standing in the middle of large groups or lines.<br>Incorporate familiar toys into messy play. For example, use a car in the paint tray.<br>Gradually build up exposure to different textures (following the messy play texture hierarchy).<br>When changing nappies ensure mat is cool and place a towel underneath child.<br>Distract child by singing songs, allowing him/her to hold favourite toy, etc. |
| **Auditory (hearing)<br><br>Hyposensitive** |

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| Give strong auditory cues (e.g. clap).<br>Gain eye contact before giving instructions.<br>Child should be close to sound source.<br>Use other sensory systems such as vision to support hearing. For example, use visual prompts such as a picture of tidying up at 'tidy up' time. Don't just say the words.<br>Give short and clear instructions. |

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| Incorporate noise making activities into planning, e.g. playing musical instruments, clapping hands during circle time. |
| **Auditory**<br>**(hearing)**<br><br>**Hypersensitive** |
| Reduce auditory stimuli (acoustics, echoes, background noise).<br>Do not talk over background noise.<br>Make noise/speak in eye line of child.<br>Give visual instructions if child is finding noise over-powering.<br>Provide a quiet corner or retreat that child can use when needs time out.<br>Provide the child with headphones if necessary.<br>Avoid going to noisy environments, and if doing so forewarn and prepare.<br>Forewarn the child of any sudden noises – e.g. 'I am going to put music on now.' |

| **Olfactory (smell) and Gustatory (taste)**<br><br>**Hyposensitive** |
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| Provide strong flavoured food and crunchy snacks.<br>Support child to carry out mouth/tongue exercises by looking in a mirror and making faces (sticking out tongue, blowing kisses, opening mouth wide, etc.).<br>Use chewy tubes as appropriate.<br>Incorporate sucking, blowing, smelling activities into child's routine.<br>Use scratch and sniff books during activities. |
| **Olfactory (smell) and Gustatory (taste)**<br><br>**Hypersensitive** |
| Forewarn of any new tastes and smells.<br>Provide bland tasting foods.<br>Offer gentle taste tests, where child can be offered very small pieces of certain foods in between their favourites. Child does not need to eat the food but can be encouraged to look at it, smell it, lick it, etc.<br>Support experimental play with various food materials, e.g. wet spaghetti play, dry crunched up crisps. |

| **Visual (sight)**<br><br>**Hyposensitive** |
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High-light areas you would like child to pay attention to. For example, use bright colours, clear borders.
Remove visual clutter.
Incorporate visual activities into planning, for example making and waving bright coloured streamers.
Child may be stimulated by technology, e.g. bright computer games.
Sensory rooms are useful and often relaxing for children that stare at lights.
Allow periods of sensory play using fibre-optic lights/torches etc. and mirror play (with a time limit so child doesn't become too stimulated by them).

## Visual (sight)

## Hypersensitive

Avoid fluorescent or bright lights.
Provide child with a peaked cap.
Reduce visual distractions.
Allow child to retreat from bright environments (such as time in a pop-up tent).
Avoid flickering and flashing lights.
Forewarn about bright environments.
Support child to carry out activities in a visually calm area.

## Vestibular (balance and movement) and Proprioception (body awareness)

## Hyposensitive

Structure movement activities into routine before seated work.
Allow child to lean against objects when required to sit down or balance.
Provide supportive seating.
Structure regular movement breaks into sessions and incorporate activities involving movement into planning (jumping, rolling, climbing, spinning, etc.).
May be calmed/stimulated by deep, fast pressure (massage, stroking). Use different textures.
Provide vibrating toys.

Carry out heavy work activities such as wheel barrow walks.
Try co-ordination activities like obstacle courses, walking on straight lines, throwing bean bags at targets.
Encourage fun fine motor activities like peeling stickers from a card/finger panting/threading.
Consider using sensory garments, such as weighted vests.

**Vestibular (balance and movement) and Proprioception (body awareness)**

**Hypersensitive**

Allow child to be in control and do not force into movement situations.
Use equipment that is close to the ground/allows feet to touch the ground.
Use slow, rhythmical/predictable movement before moving on to any faster movement.
Avoid fast movements before a settled activity.
Support child to play with low-key activities alongside a busier group for short periods.
Support child to be a spectator on more active play with no pressure to join in but an open invitation.
Provide the child with a safe area to go to if setting is becoming too much to cope with (such as a pop-up tent) but encourage short periods of time within small groups to begin to desensitise the child to activities/groups.