

A3 - body awareness

The **proprioceptive** sensory system is the **sense of body position or** body awareness received from information received through receptors in muscles, tendons and joint capsules and skin that lets us know about our body position and force of movement in relation to our environment, gravity and space.

Children with poor body awareness may need to rely on visual information to be able to move to enhance their awareness of their position in space. They may appear clumsy and always bump into things.

They may use too much force to manipulate items or press too hard and break things as they are unable to gauge how much pressure to use. They may drop items as they have inconsistent feedback from hand sensations or grasps. This will impact on their ability to complete motor skills with poor sensation feedback in the use of tools.

Additional adult support will be required to help with increasing the tolerance and acceptance of unfamiliar or new activities for sensory skill development, to facilitate **'heavy work'** activities (pulling or pushing to open doors, pushing a trolley, carrying books in a backpack, etc) to develop proprioceptive (firm compression) sensations, working against gravity and/or resistance work (theraputty or pull and stretch items).

Activities

Introduce the activities at a graded level within the child's individual level of tolerance and achievement.

- **Obstacle courses** (indoors or out)
Build an obstacle course that requires a child to change body position and form of locomotion. Include tunnels, ramps, balance beams, boards, stepping stones, stairs, ladders and monkey bars to facilitate the concepts of in, on, under, over, through and around.
- **The feet-beat game**
Recite a nursery rhyme, clap or beat a drum in a steady rhythmic pattern. Ask the child to jump or hop to the rhythm. For a greater motor planning challenge, alternate your tempo between slow and fast and encourage them to keep the beat
- **Trampoline**
A kid-sized trampoline is a good investment as jumping is hard work and so much fun
- **Walking on unstable surface**
Create a sandy beach, a clatter bridge, a grassy meadow for 'shaky ground' that requires children to adjust their bodies as they move. For different sensory challenges, have the child try the course barefoot or in socks.
- **Animal walks**
Rabbit hops (deep knee bends), crab walk (back and forwards with face up), bear walk (with bottom high), caterpillar walk (take small steps with feet then hands), etc.
- **Peanut shaped therapy or gym ball**
Get the child to sit or bounce for short bursts, to develop pelvic or trunk stability.
Raise arms to hold a wand for shoulder or arm strengthening.



Lay prone or balance over for floor play and weight bear through upper limbs as in 'wheelbarrow walks'. Take turns in small group use.

The ball diameter should equal the length on the child's arm, to ensure correct dimensions for weight bearing (right angle at knees for sitting or bounce with feet flat on the floor).

- **Carrying, pushing and pulling**

Pushing or pulling a trolley, wagon, bike or trike, 'Row-the boat' with a partner work to add social interaction and oppositional working for heightened motivation.

- **Pillow crashing**

Pile large cushions, beanbags chairs, or downy comforters in a corner. Invite the child to dive in, jump, roll, stretch, and burrow in the cushions.

- **Bear hugs**

It is said that everyone needs twelve hugs a day.

- **Tug-of-war**

Use a thick rope and tie a knot or loops in it to make it easier to grip. Try this game as you sit, stand, or kneel.

- **Roughhousing**

Pushing, pulling, rolling or tumbling with a friend can feel good all over, but this activity must be carefully supervised so no one gets hurt or overloaded with sensory stimulation. Two important reminders: never pull each other's clothes or tickle.

- **Outdoor play**

Monkey bars, bouncing on a hopper, running, climbing, trike use, etc.

- **Copying body positions (static and dynamic)**

Make use of statue games, 'Simon says' or activity action songs, 'The Grand Old Duke of York', with marching activity.

Try using mirror imaging with a partner or use full length dress mirrors to enhance the visual learning concepts.

Simple tools to help define the environment

- Use carpet squares to sit on and define clear boundaries.
- Use different coloured tape on the floor to create pathways or define clear areas of the classroom.
- Use additional visual support (photos or symbols or demonstration) to clarify their understanding of what is expected of them in a task.
- Give the child specific (appropriate weighted) objects to carry when moving from room to room, or across transitions of activity breaks.
- Use a weighted blanket or lap snake, when sitting at a table or at carpet time, to provide calming reassurance of where their placed and help extend attention skills.

Frequency of activity use

Complete 10-15 minutes sessions every day or at least three times a week.

Monitor the child's level of response (interest and motivation) in the task and adjust accordingly (to simplify or increase) to obtain the 'just right fit' and grade challenges (less challenging to very challenging).