

## Sensory Circuit Breaks

Participation in sensory circuit breaks is a great way both to energise and regulate children. Many children may benefit from accessing regular sensory breaks as they are designed to encourage body awareness; position and balance; focus concentration; aid transitions from one situation to another and promote the ability to regulate and organise reactions to sensory input.

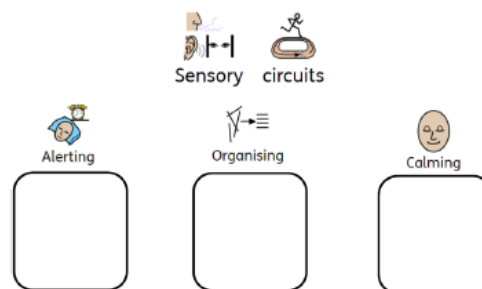
When a child presents with difficulties engaging effectively with the physical, social, emotional and curricular challenges of the school day, this could include, but are not limited to:

- May display a constant need to touch people or textures, even when it's inappropriate to do so
- May often harm other children and/or pets when playing and interacting (i.e., doesn't understand his/her own strength)
- May struggle to sit still and attend to anything for long periods due to fidgeting and flitting
- May become easily over-excited, and seeks movement-based play like spinning, jumping, climbing, running etc. and appear to never run out of energy
- May experience difficulties with change and transitions e.g., moving from one activity to another
- May struggle to understand personal space, and can appear uncoordinated with movement such as bumping into things
- May experience sensitivities to sudden loud noises (hand dryers, vacuums, noise levels in a dinner hall/P.E. lesson) and/or tactile sensitivities (e.g., getting wet/dirty during messy play, wearing certain clothing)

Such behavioural signs can indicate that a child is not fully ready for learning. This is where sensory breaks can help.

### Advice and Recommendations

The sensory break should be an active, physical and fun activity that children enjoy. Ideally it should be completed first thing in the morning, and after lunch if possible. Some children may require more circuits throughout the day. It provides a sequence of activities done repeatedly to provide the child with the right type of sensory input to calm and organise them for the day ahead, ready for daily activities. The idea is to start with something alerting, move to an organisation stage and then finally to a calming phase.



When you put together a sensory circuit choose up to 3 activities for each section.

### Alerting Section:

The aim of this section is to provide vestibular (sense of balance) and proprioceptive stimulation within a controlled setting. This prepares the brain for learning. Activities can include:

- bouncing on a mini trampoline, space hopper or gym ball
- spinning a hoop
- bunny hops / crab walks / frog jumping / squat jumps
- gym ball for rolling over and bouncing on
- skipping
- action rhymes – row row row your boat, heads and shoulders etc



### Organising Section:

This section includes activities that require motor (muscle) sensory processing, balance and timing. The child needs to organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time in a sequential order (one after the other). Activities can include:

- balancing on a beam, walking along a straight line (coloured tape/chalk on the floor)
- tyre rolling
- climbing walls
- throwing bean bags into a target or small balls/scrunched up paper into a bin
- arm push ups against a wall
- blowing bubbles or blowing pom poms to a target
- skipping and jumping over a moving rope



These are skills that may increase a child's focus, attention span and performance

### Calming Section:

The calming activities are very important as they provide input to ensure that your child leaves the circuit and engages in their activities calm, centred and ready for the day ahead. Activities can include:

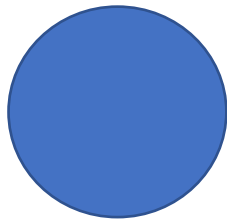
- wrapping up in weighted blanket
- having balls/massage rollers rolled onto their arms, legs and back
- aromatherapy with rollers and essential oils
- squeezing and rolling dough



Below are some ideas and visuals for sensory circuit breaks that could be completed at home and school but there are lots of other ideas you could include:

Example Layout of a Sensory Circuit

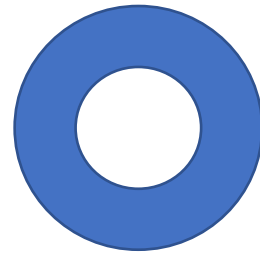
**Alerting  
Section**



Trampette or Space Hopper

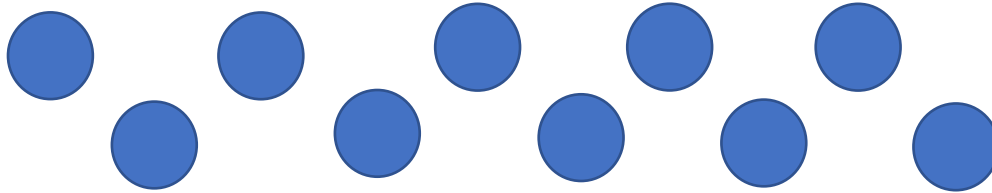


Step-Up



Hula Hoop/Spinning a Hoop

**Organising  
Section**



Stepping Stones

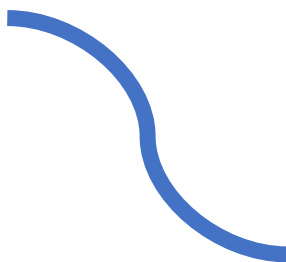


Tunnel

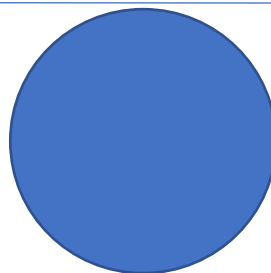


Log Rolls

**Calming  
Section**



Rope Pull



Gym Ball Squash



Blanket Wrap

Sensory circuits should last 10-20 minutes.

Utilise each activity for a maximum of 2 minutes.

Once a section has been completed it should not be returned to.

For example, children should not return to alerting activities after organising.

Use visuals to support children with the order of activities.

Challenge children by added further resources to each stage. E.g, balancing a beanbag on their head as they cross the steppingstones.

Consider the aim of using the sensory circuit for each child. Create a target.

Keep circuit consistent for a full half term.

Leave one week in between to assess impact before continuing with a new circuit and new target.

## Recommended Ideas

**Alerting** – *Activities in this section should make the head change direction rapidly.*

- Jumping/ Bunny Hops
- Step-Ups
- Jogging
- Skipping
- Hopping
- Bouncing – Trampoline/ Space Hopper/ Gym Ball
- Spinning a hoop
- Rolling over a gym ball
- Action Rhymes

**Organising** – *Activities in this section should provide motor challenge to the child.*
















- Commando Crawl
- Animal Walks
- Log Walks
- Balancing/Wobble Board
- Aiming at a target
- Egg and Spoon
- Climbing Walls
- Following path – marked with masking tape
- Climbing walls

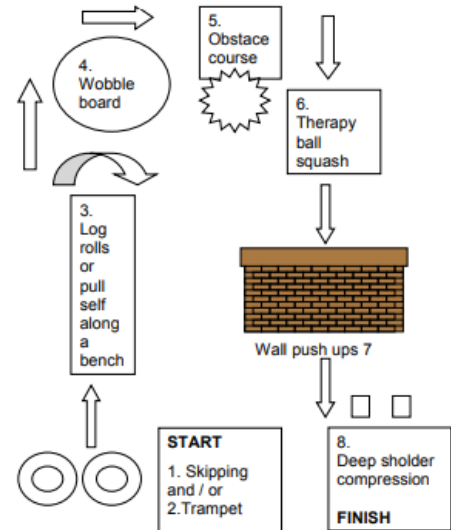
**Calming** - *Activities in this section should be those that calm the child and should involve deep pressure, proprioceptive input, and heavy work*

- Yoga/Pilates moves
- Gym Ball Squash
- Wall Push-ups
- Shoulder Compression
- Isometrics
- Blanket Wrap
- Squeezing and Rolling Dough

## Sensory Circuit

Choose an activity from each section to make a mini Sensory obstacle course. You can use items from home and change the activities a few times to create a brand new course each time.

 alert	 organise	 calm
<p>Choose 1 alert activity</p> <p>bounce    jump 10 times </p> <p>dance    run </p>	<p>Choose 1 organise activity</p> <p>balance    ball throw </p> <p>tunnel crawl    Simon says </p>	<p>Choose 1 calming activity</p> <p>wall push up    pillow squeeze </p> <p>song massage    blanket roll </p>

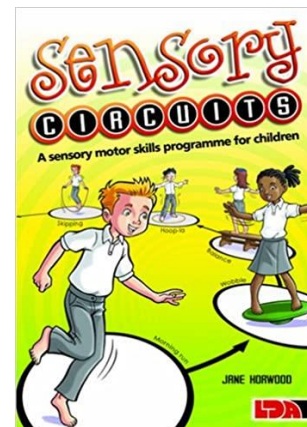


Useful Links:

### [Sensory Processing Resource Pack](#)

- Sensory Circuits: A Sensory Motor Skills Programme for Children – Jane Horwood (2009)
- [Cosmic Kids Yoga – YouTube](#)
- [Just Dance Kids – YouTube](#)
- [Jump Start Jonny](#)
- [You are a Lion!](#)

[Learning Through Movement - Introduction to Sensory Circuits:](#)



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