

Scratch-and-Sniff Painting

Scratch-and-sniff painting appeals to kids' visual, tactile, and olfactory (smell) senses. Choose a few flavors of Jell-O based on your child's color and smell preferences. Use a different plastic cup for each color. Mix 1 tablespoon of white glue, 1 tablespoon of water and 1 teaspoon of Jell-O powder in each cup. (The glue helps the gelatin granules stick.)

Give your child a few paintbrushes and cardboard or heavy paper to paint on. Once the painting is complete, lay it flat to dry. When it's dry, kids can rub their fingertip over the page to reactivate the smell.

Play-Dough

Using play-dough is a great activity to strengthen fine motor skills. It can also reduce frustration and may appeal to kids who like to touch things. Try hiding small objects in a ball of dough for your child to find, or challenge him to roll the dough into a ball or make a "pinch pot."

Some kids with sensory issues have a strong reaction to the smell of store-bought Play-Doh. If your child does, or if he tends to chew on things, search online for a recipe for homemade (and even edible) play-dough.

At-Home Ball Pit

It's not as hard as you might think to make a home version of a ball pit. All you need are plastic ball pit balls and a small kiddie pool. An inflatable one works well because you can easily deflate it for storage. You can buy ball pit balls at most toy stores.

Your child can bury himself, throw the balls and even dig for a small toy you hide at the bottom of the pit.

Twister

This classic game is a great way for kids to practice the motor skills that can be affected by sensory issues, also referred to as the proprioceptive and vestibular senses. They have to stretch their muscles and joints to twist into the right positions. And since it's a game that requires concentration, it may be quieter than some other games. This can be helpful if your child is sensitive to sounds.

Tabletop Sensory Boxes

Many kids like to play in sand and water. And creating tabletop sandboxes is an easy way to combine the two. Plus it's a simple solution for space and storage. You can use your child's soothing "ingredient" of choice, whether it's sand, water, rice, dry beans, beads or even shaving cream.

Pour the ingredient into a shoebox-size plastic storage container with a lid. Add some plastic spoons, cups and small toys, too. Scooping, pouring, and burying are all part of the sensory experience.

Puzzles

Putting puzzles together is great for kids who tend to get overexcited. The activity has more of a calming effect than many people realize. Puzzles not only work on fine motor skills, but can also help kids with visual-spatial processing issues. Some jigsaw puzzles for younger kids even make sounds when you put the pieces in the right places.

Finger and Food Painting

Finger painting is a great activity for sensory seekers. Just give your child a smock, a roll of paper and some finger paints. Then set him loose!

If your child is sensory avoidant, though, you can use the activity to introduce him to new textures. You can also appeal to his sense of smell by using a variety of squishy foods to "paint" on a cookie sheet. For example, you may want to use chocolate pudding, yogurt or applesauce with cinnamon.

Dance Party

For kids who need more sensory input and don't like quiet or stationary games, try a simple dance party. It can appeal to your child's need for visual and auditory stimulation. Put together a kid-friendly playlist, turn up the tunes and let him dance.

If he has trouble with gross motor skills, try having him mirror your dance movements. It can help him be more in touch with his body and learn how to coordinate his moves. And if he likes to make his own music, add some instruments or pots and spoons as drums and cymbals.