

Activity Sheets for Kids of All Abilities: Tactile System

ACTIVITIES TO ENRICH THE TACTILE SYSTEM

The tactile system provides feedback about how something feels. It has both a protective mechanism, which is for safety (hot, sharp) and a discriminative mechanism, which allows us to gather information about things such as shapes and textures of objects. The dense sensory nerve endings in our fingertips serve as the “eyes of the hands” and send our brains information about what we are touching. Efficient registration of tactile information is linked to fine motor skills and the ability to successfully manipulate objects. Following are activity suggestions which provide tactile stimulation, thereby enriching this system, to support overall sensory processing. Good sensory processing is necessary for children to adapt to their environmental demands at home, in school, and in the community.

- Playing with play dough or clay.
- Finger painting or using bath foam or shaving cream on the bathtub wall to “paint” and draw.
- Fill bins with dried rice, beans, or macaroni and have your child search for hidden objects. This can be done with eyes closed, which really works on tactile discrimination.
- Sandbox play. You can also do wet sand play or make mud pies with used pie tins.
- Walking barefoot in the grass or sand.
- Rolling down a grassy hill. You can do this without a blanket or use a textured blanket to roll in.
- After bath time, have your child use a terry cloth or other textured towel to firmly rub dry.
- Consider using a child’s electric toothbrush when brushing teeth each day.
- Playing with Gak™ or Slime. These are commercially available but homemade Gak™ recipes are available on the Internet.
- Playing with textures toys such as Velcro® blocks and bristle blocks. Always opt for textured versions of toys if given a choice.
- Back scratches, back rubs, and arm and leg scratches are not only relaxing for your child but provide good tactile input.
- After applying lotion on the arms or back, draw simple pictures or letters/numbers and have your child identify what you drew.
- Snuggling under large pillow, bedding, or even couch cushions.
- Playing with stuffed animals that are furry or petting a real animal with fur.
- Water play in a pool, a bathtub, or a water table. When the water table is dry, you can add birdseed or dried rice and hide objects to find with hands.