



**Digital Magazine for Pediatric  
Occupational and Physical Therapy**  
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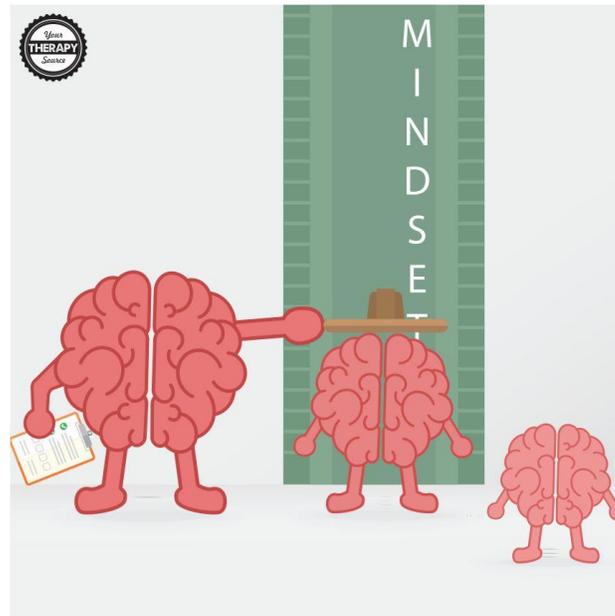
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## GROWTH MINDSET AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A [growth mindset](#) is a theory developed by psychologist Carol Dweck who explains mindset as a self-perception or “self-theory” that people hold about themselves. For example, it is believing that you are smart or not smart, good athlete or bad athlete, good at knitting or stink at knitting. Recent research looked at the relationship between a growth mindset and academic achievement.



The researchers conducted a meta-analysis of the research in order to answer the following questions:

- What is the magnitude of the relationship between mindsets and academic achievement?
- Do mindset interventions positively impact academic achievement?

### **Results of the Research on Growth Mindset and Academic Achievement**

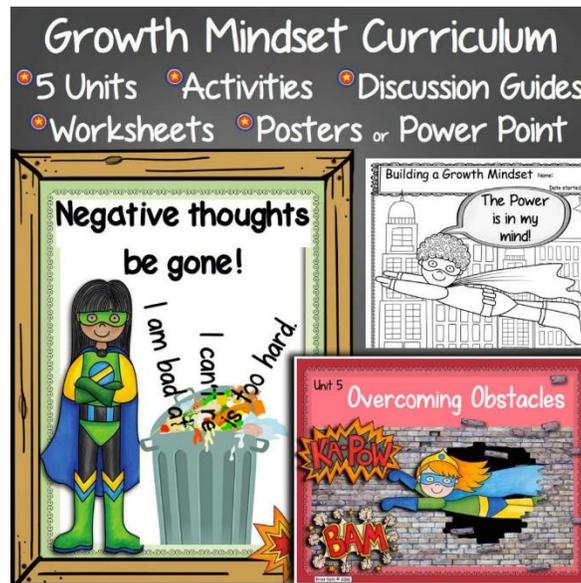
Many school districts around the world have implemented using a growth mindset. After meta-analysis of the current research on growth mindset the following results were found:

- overall effects were weak for both the magnitude of the relationship between mindsets and academic achievement and the positive impact of mindset interventions on academic achievement.
- some results supported specific aspects of the theory, namely, that students with low socioeconomic status or who are academically at risk might benefit from mindset interventions.

## Suggestions

The researchers suggest that if a mindset intervention is implemented be sure to track the student's progress to determine if the intervention is effective on academic achievement or if another intervention may need to be combined with a growth mindset.

**Reference:** Sisk, V. F., Burgoyne, A. P., Sun, J., Butler, J. L., & Macnamara, B. N. (2018). To what extent and under which circumstances are growth mind-sets important to academic achievement? Two meta-analyses. *Psychological science*, 29(4), 549-571.



[Growth Mindset Curriculum](#): This Growth Mindset curriculum, created by Thia Triggs, school based Occupational Therapist, includes 5 units that will help you to support your children in developing a Growth Mindset [FIND OUT MORE](#).

## HOW TO SELECT APPROPRIATE TOYS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Did you know that the *American Academy of Pediatrics* recently published a report on how to select appropriate toys for young children in the digital era? I am SO EXCITED about this report because it highlights the benefits of simple toys and human connection for children (plus they mention that speech therapists, OTs and PTs can provide additional guidance – woohoo!)

### Definition of Toys

The report discusses the evolving definition of a toy – play has not changed but toys have over the past 100 years. Digital toys have increased greatly. Parents may think that electronic toys and digital media are necessary for developmental progress but there is no evidence to support this.

Traditional toys can be defined in various ways:

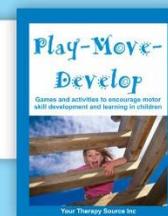
- symbolic or pretend play toys – i.e dolls, action figures, etc.
- fine motor, adaptive or manipulative toys i.e. puzzles, blocks, etc
- art i.e. play dough, coloring, paints, etc.
- language and/or concepts ie games, magnetic letters, etc)
- gross motor and/or physical toys i.e. ride on toys, wagon, etc.)

These toys do not need to be expensive. Many household items can be used for play (i.e. kitchen pots and pans, bread dough for play dough, refrigerator magnets, shoe boxes for blocks, etc).



## Play ~ Move ~ Develop

100 activities to encourage motor development



### Benefits to Traditional Toys

The benefits to high quality traditional toys are many because they:

- facilitate caregiver child interactions
- encourage peer play
- increase imagination

## Negative Consequences of Digital Toys

Many caregivers think that electronic toys (i.e. light up toys for infants, tablets for older children) are important for neurotypical children's overall development. Evidence indicates that the basic elements of some electronic toys take away from social engagement between the child and the caregiver.

For example, when children use electronic toys, they are not learning to read facial expressions of others or interpreting vocalizations.

When using a digital toy, children are usually in solitary play which again is not beneficial for child-caregiver interactions. These interactions between a child and a caregiver are CRITICAL for the healthy development of the child.



When children play with electronic toys, research indicates that there were fewer adult words, decreased conversational turns, less parental responses and less content specific words that when children played with traditional toys.

## Toys for Children with Special Needs

For children with developmental delays or disabilities, it can be difficult to choose appropriate toys because the recommendations on toy packaging is based on age not developmental skill level. Pediatric speech, occupational and physical therapists can help guide caregivers on the best toys for a particular child.

Toys can be adapted in design by modifying how a child accesses the toy. Examples of this would be using a switch to turn a toy on and off or making game pieces larger to make them easier to manipulate.

Electronic toys and technology can be very beneficial for some children with disabilities but just as with neurotypical children the digital "toys" should be used while interacting with caregivers.

## Media Exposure and Playing with Toys

Can you believe that in 2015, 96.9% of children had used a mobile device and most started using them before 1 year of age? This increase in screen time is associated with a decrease in active play and play with toys.

There are risks to high levels of screen time in young children such as:

- interferes with play activities
- disrupts parent-child interactions
- promotes aggressive behavior

- promotes obesity
- desensitizes children to violence

The clinical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics states:

“Although it has been suggested that there may be learning benefits in association with interactive media, there is presently no evidence to suggest that possible benefits of interactive media match those of active, creative, hands-on and pretend play with more traditional toys.”

The report recommends that children need to use their hands to manipulate toys and strengthen the brain connections to learn spatial and mathematical concepts.



### 10 Tips for How to Select Appropriate Toys for Young Children

The clinical report from the *American Academy of Pediatrics* recommends 10 tips for parents and caregivers when selecting appropriate toys for children:

1. When selecting a toy, keep in mind that one of the most important reasons for play time during childhood (especially during infancy) is not educational but to encourage warm, supportive interactions and relationships with humans.
2. The best educational toys are ones that encourage interactions between caregivers and children during play time without conditions.
3. Children need developmentally appropriate toys that encourage growth in all areas of development i.e. communication, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, social-emotional, etc. Look for toys that are not overstimulating and that promote imagination.
4. Simple toys are excellent to promote children to use their imagination, be creative, problem solve and interact with caregivers.
5. Read out loud to children. Use children’s book to help spark ideas for play scenarios. Take advantage of your local library.
6. Use toys to increase the child-caregiver relationship rather than to direct children’s play.
7. If you have concerns about the safety of a toy for your child, ask the advice of a pediatrician, pediatric therapist or other health care providers.
8. Take a close look at toys to determine if there is any potential to encourage any stereotypes.
9. LIMIT VIDEO GAME AND COMPUTER USE! The recommendation is that children less than 2 years old should have no screen time and children over 2 years of age should only have screen

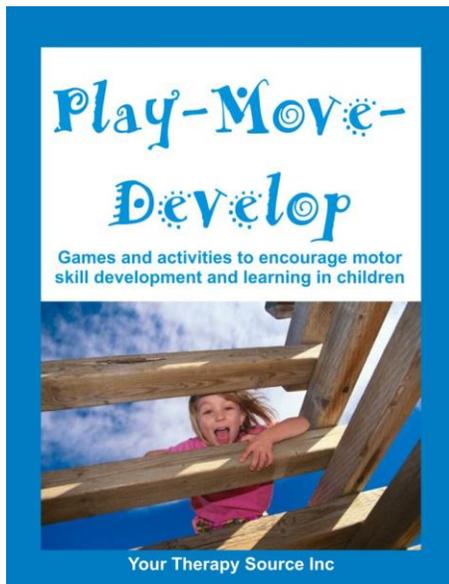
time less than one hour per day. During media use, children younger than 5 years old should be accompanied by a parent or caregiver to increase interaction.

10. Select toys that promote mental and physical activity.

You can read the complete clinical report [here](#).

Reference: Healey, A., Mendelsohn, A, Council on Early Childhood (2018). Selecting Appropriate Toys for Young Children in the Digital Era. *Pediatrics* Dec 2018, e20183348; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2018-3348.

### **Need activities to encourage motor skill development in young children?**



[Play – Move – Develop](#): 100 reproducible games and activity ideas to encourage motor skill development and learning in children. A great resource for fun, home exercise program activities.

[Therapeutic Play Activities for Children](#) digital download includes 100 play activity pages and 12 tip sheets. The play activities encourage the development of fine motor skills, bimanual skills, rolling, crawling, tall kneeling, standing balance and cruising with a strong focus on children with cerebral palsy. [FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION.](#)



**Therapeutic PLAY Activities for Children**  
Available for immediate download at [YourTherapySource.com](http://YourTherapySource.com)

[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

## HOW TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION AMONG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND ATTENTION DISORDERS



This is a super helpful article on how to improve emotional self-regulation among children with autism and attention disorders. It is a guest post from OnlinePsychology@Pepperdine, the [online Masters in Applied Behavioral Analysis program](#) from Pepperdine University.

Do the children that you work with get distracted easily and need to be repeatedly reminded to complete a simple task? Does their room or desk look like it's been hit by a tornado and they are constantly misplacing personal items? Do they have emotional outbursts when plans suddenly change?

For parents, many of these behaviors may seem familiar. But many typically developing children are able to improve their self-management skills, or executive functions, as they grow older and take on more responsibility. Some, including children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, traumatic brain injury and other learning disabilities, have a harder time and may face executive function deficits.

### **What Is an Executive Function?**

**Traditional definition:** The chief operating system located in the prefrontal region of the brain used to engage in cognitive processes required for goal-directed behavior.

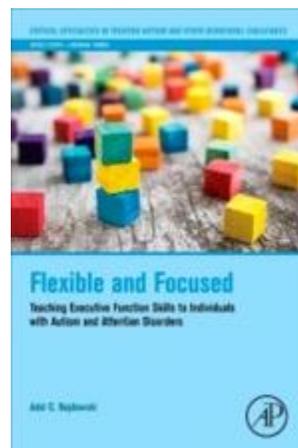
**What this actually means:** Everything that you do every day to manage your own behavior.

### **Common executive function processes for goal-directed behavior include:**

- Working memory
- Task initiation
- Sustained attention
- Inhibition

- Flexibility
- Planning
- Organization
- Problem solving

Although executive functions are often thought of as brain functions, Dr. Adel Najdowski, director of the Master of Science in Behavioral Psychology program at Pepperdine University, says all executive functions involve behavior. Therefore, individuals with deficits may be able to learn specific behaviors to improve their executive function performance. In her recently published manual, "Flexible and Focused: Teaching Executive Function Skills to Individuals with Autism and Attention Disorders," Dr. Najdowski, who also teaches with the [OnlinePsychology@Pepperdine](#) program, outlines principles, procedures and activities that practitioners, educators and parents can use to improve the executive function skills of learners with deficits. This lesson is an adaptation of one section in her book on emotional self-regulation. For more detailed explanations on each lesson, read "[Flexible and Focused: Teaching Executive Function Skills to Individuals with Autism and Attention Disorders.](#)" [External link](#)



### **What Is Emotional Self-regulation and Why Is it Important?**

Emotional [self-regulation](#) is the ability to adapt behavior when engaged in situations that might provoke emotions such as stress, anxiety, annoyance and frustration. A person with strong emotional regulation skills can:

- Notice when they become emotionally charged.
- Consider the consequences of their response.
- Engage in activities that move them toward their goal, even if they are feeling negative emotions.

**Alternatively, a person who lacks emotional self-regulation may:**

- Overreact to situations when compared to same-age peers.

- Experience negative emotions for a longer amount of time than same-age peers.
- Have a short temper and engage in emotional outbursts.
- Have mood swings.

**Lesson: Teaching Emotional Self-Regulation**

Before beginning the lesson, it's important to note that the child should already be capable of identifying and labeling emotions. The activities should be initiated when a child is in a good mood. This lesson is also meant to be taken in stages with the child moving to the next step after they have successfully developed a mastery of the preceding step.

**1. Create an emotional levels chart.**

Emotional Level	I feel this way when...
 feeling good	
 a little upset	
 upset	
 very upset	

Create a visual aid that depicts the different levels of emotions that a child may feel, allowing the child to create their own labels for each level. For example, levels can be labeled "feeling good," "a little upset," "upset" and "very upset." The chart should have two columns with the emotional levels in one column. Title the other column, "I feel this way when..." and leave the rows blank for the child to fill in.

2. Teach the child to assign emotional levels to certain situations to help improve emotional self-regulation.

Emotional Level	I feel this way when...
 feeling good	
 a little upset	
 upset	I can't figure out an answer on my homework.
 very upset	I can't wear my favorite shirt.

The person working with the child can prompt them in a number of ways. Ask the child to write down different situations that make them feel specific emotional levels. Another option is to present a scenario and ask the child to identify how that situation would make them feel. For example, ask the child how she would feel if she wasn't allowed to wear her favorite shirt and instruct her to fill in the blank space next to the corresponding emotion.

3. Talk to the child about what appropriate reactions should be to different scenarios.

Emotional Level	I feel this way when...
 feeling good	
 a little upset	Should be here: I can't wear my favorite shirt.
 upset	I can't figure out an answer on my homework.
 very upset	I can't wear my favorite shirt.



Use the scenarios in the emotional levels chart to identify what should be treated as a big deal and what should be brushed off. For example, talk to the child about how not being able to wear your favorite shirt should make you a little upset, rather than very upset.

[Download a blank emotional levels chart.](#)  
(PDF, 130 KB)

[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

#### **4. Teach the child coping strategies to improve emotional self-regulation**

Identify strategies that children can use when they are feeling upset or very upset and practice the strategies. Give the child hypothetical situations and role-play how to use those strategies.

##### **Coping Strategies**

- Taking [deep breaths](#)
- Counting to 20
- Asking for help
- Talking to a friend
- Thinking of a compromise
- Walking away
- Letting it go
- Thinking of something that makes the learner happy

#### **5. Create a controlled opportunity to practice coping strategies to help improve emotional self-regulation.**

Start by explaining to the child that to avoid getting “very upset,” they should use coping strategies when they notice they are getting “a little upset.” Then identify the coping strategy the child believes is most useful. Explain that a stressful event will happen and to think about how they will use their chosen coping strategy to avoid getting very upset. Finally, create the scenario in a practice setting and help the child use their chosen strategy.

#### **6. Practice coping strategies in a natural environment.**

After the child has learned how to cope with a situation with advanced notice, ask them what they will do if the situation arises in real life. Remind them that they should always be prepared for the possibility that a situation will arise.

#### **7. Plan in advance.**

Work with the child to identify recurring situations that make them emotionally charged, and write a plan identifying which coping strategies they will use at each emotional level.

#### **8. Measure the effectiveness of the intervention.**

Use a graph to plot how often the child provides the correct response over time. The criteria for success may be different at each stage. For example, in the first stage, you may measure how often the child correctly identifies situations that make a child feel a specific emotional level. Once the child is able to score at least 80 percent across multiple sessions, you may begin the next stage. Measure for the following criteria:

##### **Criteria to measure for:**

- Correctly identifies situations that make the child feel an emotional level — across two to three sessions.

- Correctly identifies situations that are a big deal versus not a big deal — across two to three sessions.
- Correctly role-plays coping mechanisms — across two to three sessions.
- Successfully implements coping mechanism when warned about a difficult situation — across three to five sessions.
- Successfully implements coping mechanism when not warned about a difficult situation — across three to five sessions.

**Remember:**

This lesson is not meant to replace meaningful consequences for a child's behavior. Children who react negatively to situations should not get what they want. Children who are able to use the discussed coping mechanisms should gain access to reinforcers. Reinforcers vary from child to child and can include praise or more tangible assets like candy or stickers. Children should not have regular access to reinforcers throughout the day, and you should make certain the child wants to earn the reinforcer and has not become bored with it. If the child is not responding to the reinforcer, you may also consider whether you need more continued reinforcement or whether you should be reinforcing more quickly after a positive response.

Today's post on how to improve emotional self-regulation among children with autism and attention disorders is a guest post from OnlinePsychology@Pepperdine, the [online Masters in Applied Behavioral Analysis program](#) from Pepperdine University.

**Read more on how to improve emotional self-regulation:**

[Self Regulation Skills Curriculum – Move Work Breathe](#)

[The Ultimate Guide to Self Regulation in Children](#)

[10 Fun Games to Practice Self-Regulation](#)

[Self Assessment Checklist for Self Regulation](#)

[Emotions Freebie – Calming Down and I Feel Happy](#)

[Too Slow, Just Right or Too Fast – Visual Supports for Self-Regulation](#)

## USE PLAY DOUGH TO INCREASE HAND STRENGTH



Play dough is an amazing, simple tool to help children increase muscle strength in the fingers and hands, expand creativity and encourage imagination. Below are 10 ways to use play dough to increase hand strength.

### **Why Use Play Dough to Increase Hand Strength?**

When children squish, squeeze and pinch play dough, they are working on strengthening all the small muscles in the fingers and hands. It is a hard, resistive exercise and children are willing to play with it for long periods of time. This combination can increase muscle strength.

If you want to increase hand strength even more, make your own play dough with the children. Search Pinterest or anywhere to get a simple flour and salt recipe.

All the stirring, mixing and kneading the dough works the muscle in the fingers and hands. Once you have made the play dough or you purchased it, encourage children to try using it in different ways to work on different muscles.

### **10 Ways to Use Play Dough to Increase Hand Strength**

1. Squeeze it.
2. Pinch it.
3. Flatten it.
4. Roll it into a ball between the hands.
5. Roll it into a small ball with just the finger tips.
6. Slice it with a plastic knife.
7. Cut it with scissors.
8. Roll it into a log.
9. Squish it.
10. Poke it.

## Get all 10 Play Dough Ideas and More

The activities in the [Creative Clay](#) digital download encourage tactile and proprioceptive input, fine motor skills, muscle strengthening of the hand and fingers, visual motor skills, visual perceptual skills, math skills and letter formation.

This is a [great book](#) for any pediatric occupational therapist – add some new, fun games to your use of clay, make copies to give to teachers or send home activities with your clients. Most of the pages are in black and white for economical printing and children can color the pages if they wish. You will need modeling clay, resistive clay or playdoh to do activities. This does not include any clay only the download of activities. Laminate the play clay mats for durability.

[Creative Clay](#) digital download includes the materials to create the following:

- 16 ways to use play dough cards – each photo card is 1/2 page or you can print smaller cards 8 to a page. Perfect to laminate and place in a play dough station to encourage various ways to manipulate play dough. The cards are in color but easily print grayscale.
- 8 play clay mats – black and white mats to encourage finger strengthening, counting and more.
- 26 alphabet mats – black and white mats for all the letters A to Z. Make the letter, find and cover the letters and cover the animal. [Download a FREE SAMPLE LETTER A.](#)
- Ten frame mats – black and white 1-10 number mats: count and name shapes, make the number and complete the ten frame.

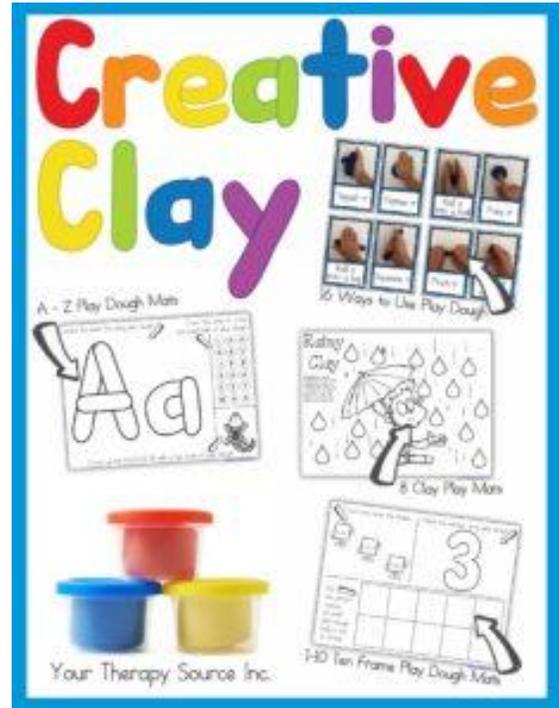
Need more finger and hand strengthening activities? Check out

[Visual Perceptual Clothes Pin Games](#)

[The Hand Strengthening Handbook](#)

[Plus-Plus® One Simple Shape, Endless Possibility](#)

[Watch a video of 10 Ways to Use Play Dough to Increase Hand Strength](#)



## IMPROVE FINE MOTOR SKILLS USING PHYSICAL EXERCISE



Recent research was conducted with neurotypical five-year-old children to determine how to improve fine motor skills using physical exercise.

As pediatric therapists, we all know the importance of fine motor skill development and school.

Whether it is using manipulatives, school supplies, writing or zipping up a backpack, efficient fine motor skills are necessary.

This study examined the benefits of full-body exercises and coordination activities to improve fine motor skills in children.

### **Methodology of the Study on Improving Fine Motor Skills Using Physical Exercise**

This study included 52 neurotypical, 5 year old children. Baseline testing was completed on all the participants. The testing included hand grip strength, placing pegs, turning buttons, lacing beads, curved track test, transferring beans and a speed tapping test.

After baseline testing, the children were randomly divided into an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group participated in 30 minute exercise session, 3x/week for 24 weeks. The control group continued with their normal physical activity routines.

The exercise sessions consisted of the following:

- warm up period
- 10 meter running
- crawling exercises
- finger exercises
- squeezing rubber rings
- throwing bean bags
- balance beam activities
- pushing a tire
- cool down period

### **Results of the Study on Improving Fine Motor Skills Using Physical Exercise**

After statistical analysis the researchers reported the following:

- no difference in baseline measurements between the two groups
- hand dexterity improved significantly in the exercise session group
- the exercise group showed significantly faster tapping speed when compared to the control group
- significant improvements in hand grip strength in the exercise group

### Did Physical Exercise Improve Fine Motor Skills?

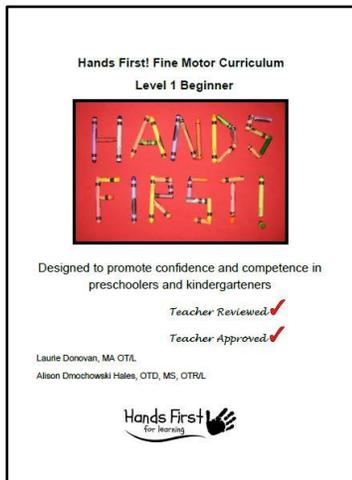
The researchers concluded that the physical exercise sessions improved fine motor skills in neurotypical five year old children. The exercise program had simple physical activities that could be easily implemented in a kindergarten program.

Reference: Qi, Y., Tan, S., Sui, M., & Wang, J. (2018). Supervised physical training improves fine motor skills of 5-year-old children. *Revista Brasileira de Medicina do Esporte*, 24(1), 9-12.

### Resources to help improve fine motor skills in children



[Fantastic Fingers® Fine Motor Program](#) is a comprehensive fine motor program that includes ebook, music, and instructional videos. It's user-friendly, research-based, and improves children's fine motor skills, pencil grip, posture and more. It also integrates many early literacy and numeracy skills.



[Hands First! Full Fine Motor Curriculum](#) is unique among fine motor programs as it empowers therapists, caregivers and teachers to help preschool, kindergarten and first grade children develop fine motor abilities. Through fun and engaging lesson plans, *Hands First Fine Motor Curriculum* addresses a child's foundational skills through fine motor and gross motor activities. Designed by Laurie Donovan, MA, OT/L and Alison Hales, OTD, MS, OTR/L, *Hands First Fine Motor Curriculum* is written in an easy to use format.

[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

## AYRES SENSORY INTEGRATION FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM



*Autism Research* published a review to evaluate the effectiveness of Ayres Sensory Integration for children with autism. Using the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Standards for Evidence-based Practices in Special Education, a systemic review was conducted from 2006 to 2017 on Ayres Sensory Integration for children with autism.

### **Methodology of the Review on Ayres Sensory Integration for Children with Autism**

The research review was completed in three different stages:

1. Nineteen studies were found after an extensive database search using search terms related to sensory integration and autism, interventions suggesting a sensory integration approach, and high-quality study designs.
2. Six studies met the inclusion criteria using intervention consistent with ASI intervention and were evaluated. Three studies of the six were excluded after further evaluation because the interventions were not consistent with the core principals of ASI or major methodological flaws.
3. The three studies were then evaluated using the CEC standards to determine evidence-based practices.

### **Results of the Review on Ayres Sensory Integration for Children with Autism**

Upon further evaluation of the three studies, the following was determined:

- Two randomized controlled trials respectively met 100% and 85% of the CEC criteria items.
- One additional study met more than 50% of the criteria.

Therefore, according to the criteria by the Council for Exceptional Children, Ayres Sensory Integration for children with autism ages 4-12 years old, is an evidence-based practice.

**Reference:** Schoen, S. A., Lane, S. J., Mailloux, Z., May-Benson, T., Parham, L. D., Smith Roley, S., & Schaaf, R. C. (2018). A Systematic Review of Ayres Sensory Integration Intervention for Children with Autism. *Autism Research*.

### Read more on Sensory Integration Therapy

[FREE POSTER – STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SENSORY INTEGRATION SESSIONS](#)

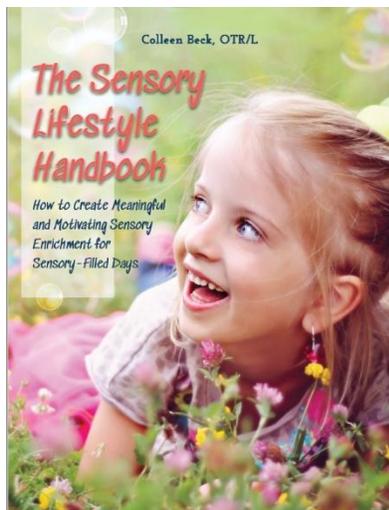
[RESEARCH: ANALYSIS OF SENSORY INTEGRATION THERAPY](#)

[SENSORY OVER-RESPONSIVITY, AUTISM AND SLEEP](#)

[SENSORY INTEGRATION THERAPY AND OCCUPATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM](#)

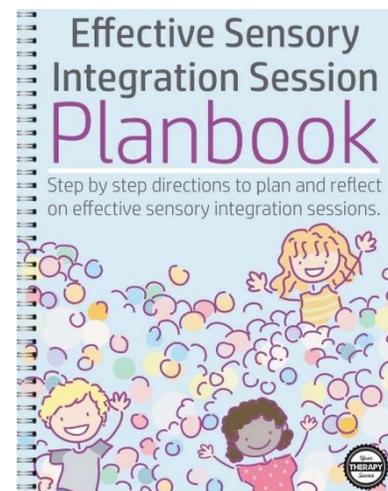
[SENSORY PROCESSING AT HOME VERSUS SCHOOL IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM](#)

### Resources for Sensory Processing



[The Sensory Lifestyle Handbook](#) (digital download) is your strategy guide for turning sensory diets and sensory activities into a sensory lifestyle. Written by Occupational Therapist, Colleen Beck, The Sensory Lifestyle Handbook includes a 133 page PDF document filled with information on the sensory system and the whole child, sensory diets and how to create a lifestyle for sensory success. This book is suitable for therapists, parents, teachers or anyone who wants to help children with their sensory needs.

The [Effective Sensory Integration Session Planbook](#) digital document provides step by step guidance to plan and reflect on effective sensory integration sessions. Whether you are a seasoned pediatric therapist or a beginner, it is important to always be prepared and to reflect on your sensory integration treatment sessions.



## VISUAL SUPPORTS IN THE CLASSROOM – 30 WAYS TO HELP STUDENTS

Do you use visual supports in the classroom? They can be an excellent learning tool to help students to understand auditory input through visual images. In special education classrooms, visual supports are often used but ALL STUDENTS can benefit from visual supports and strategies. Visual supports can be picture images, words, tangible objects or other items to represent directions, routines, verbal requests and more.

### **10 Ways to Help ALL Students Using Visual Supports in the Classroom**

When visual supports are used for all students it can help with:

1. Language development
2. Independence with completing tasks and assignments
3. Literacy skills
4. Increasing vocabulary development
5. Assisting with [working memory](#)
6. Social interaction
7. Positive behavior
8. Organizing materials
9. [Time management](#)
10. [Teaching routines](#)



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MORNING ROUTINE

AFTERNOON ROUTINE

Includes 70+ picture icons to create your own routines or use the pre-made templates!

## **10 Ways to Help INDIVIDUAL Students Using Visual Supports in the Classroom**

When visual supports are used for individual students it can help with:

1. Communication skills
2. Following specific step by step directions to learn new skills
3. Sustaining attention and shifting attention
4. Social skills – helpful to inform children of what they can expect and what is expected of them.
5. Understanding long directions
6. Memory skills
7. Transitions
8. Expressing and understanding emotions
9. Self-checking of work
10. Making choices

## **5 Ways to Use Visual Supports in the Classroom to Help With Behavior Management**

Here are 5 ways to reach a student's behavior goals in the classroom using visual supports:

1. If a student's goals are related to transitions try using visual supports to create an activity schedule across different tasks.
2. For goals related to finishing a task, create a step by step activity schedule for the one task from start to finish.
3. Goals that are related to make a simple choice, use cue cards such as YES or NO or STOP and GO.
4. Use visual supports in social stories, for goals related to social situations and behavioral expectations.
5. For goals related to requesting access to an item or activity, use visual supports for choices.

## **5 Ways to Use Visual Supports in the Classroom During a Therapy Session**

Here are 5 ways to incorporate visual supports during an [occupational therapy](#) or physical therapy session.

1. When explaining directions to certain children, you may need to provide a [visual strategy or symbol](#) instead of just verbally expressing directions. Many times picture symbols are used for the child to select a choice or to respond but are you providing picture symbols for "receptive" language as well?



## Response Board for Therapy Sessions

2. Provide [responses](#) appropriate for therapy sessions beyond choice selection. Remember children are frequently performing motor tasks and physical activities during a therapy session. You may need to create picture communication boards that allow the child to express statements such as:

Yes

No

This is fun.

I need a break.

I am in pain.

I need a drink.

I am ready to go.

I want to slow down.

I want to stop.

Get more information on the [Response Board for Therapy Sessions](#).

3. Create [picture symbols that relate to a therapy session](#). You can use a [commercially produced product](#) or take photos of objects that you use during a therapy session. Once you create picture symbol cards of these items, you can use them to allow the children to make choices regarding activities.

4. Create a schedule for during the therapy session. Set up a schedule board with parts of therapy session on it such as [First This and Then This steps](#) to complete so the child can know what to expect.

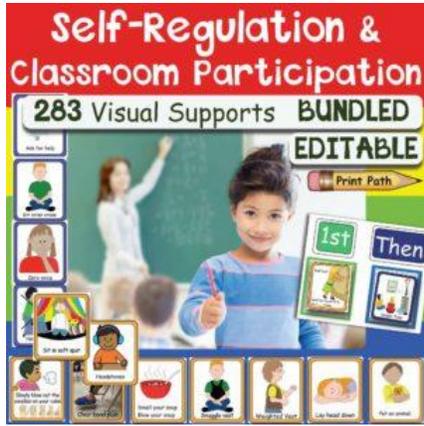
5. If you need a child to complete many tasks, try creating visual supports for all the steps in the task. Break the whole project down into simple steps with visuals.

### Conclusion on using visual supports in the classroom

There are many ways to use visual supports in the classroom to help all students with attention span, memory, communication, literacy, and behavioral expectations.

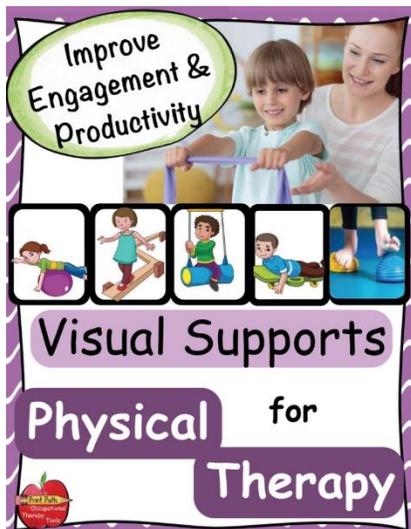
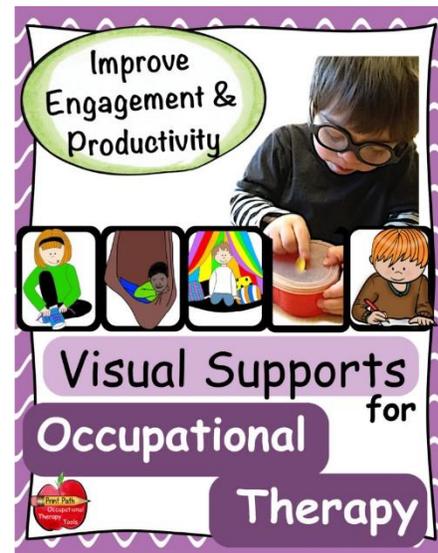
Reference: Kidder, J. E., & McDonnell, A. P. (2017). Visual aids for positive behavior support of young children with autism spectrum disorders. *Young exceptional children*, 20(3), 103-116.

### Resources for Visual Supports to Use in the Classroom



[Visual Supports: Schedules, Self-Regulation, & Classroom Inclusion](#) includes 283 visuals! The pictures are color coded, engaging, and easy for children to understand. Visual supports for self-regulation can be pivotal in implementing an IEP in the least restrictive environment. [Find out more about this digital document.](#)

[Visual Supports for Occupational Therapy](#) can be an extremely helpful tool that almost magically improves engagement and ensures that your treatment sessions are effective. [Visual supports for Occupational Therapy](#) include task cards to be used for a variety of settings including clinic, itinerant, and classroom situations.



Do you work with preschool or elementary age children who are non-compliant, non-verbal, or have difficulty with attention? It can be difficult to create the structure and flexibility one needs to make sure every treatment session is joyful and productive. [Visual supports for Physical Therapy](#) can be an extremely helpful tool that almost magically improves engagement and helps to ensure that treatment sessions are effective.

## GROSS MOTOR SKILL ACTIVITIES TO HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP PLAY SKILLS



Fred Rogers once said, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning, but for children, play is serious learning." Children need to play to learn. In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, children are struggling to develop the foundational skills for play. In order for children to be successful with play, they need to develop certain gross and fine motor skills. Here are 10 gross motor skill activities to help children develop play skills starting as babies.

### **Gross Motor Skill Activities – Musical Play**

Musical play can encourage babies to move in infancy. Provide different musical experiences for babies even right after birth to facilitate motor responses. Try music with different tempos – slow music, fast music, calming music, etc.

Singing with your own voice seems to have the greatest impact on infant behavior (Eckerdal, 2009).

### **Gross Motor Skill Activities – Toy Selection**

[Choosing the correct toy](#) is crucial to help children develop play skills. Children need to move to learn therefore static toys where children only have to press one button for a high level of sensory stimulation do not encourage children to explore their environments.

Simple toys are excellent to promote children to use their imagination, be creative, problem solve and interact with caregivers. For example, blocks and balls are excellent choices to encourage motor skill development and play.

Even infants show a preference for certain kinds of toys and will display higher levels of play when using preferred toys. If necessary, change the selection of toys in the home or classroom to increase the interest of the baby or child (Schneider, 2009).

### **Gross Motor Skill Activities – Space to Move**

Children need space to move and explore their environments to learn how to play. This means making sure that young babies do not spend too much time in confining equipment such as baby swings, car seats, and exercise saucers. Create a safe space for little ones to have the freedom to move.

Babies not yet crawling should spend play time on their stomachs on the floor with preferred toys and people/peers near them. Babies who are walking should be provided with ramps, mats, pillows, and other surfaces and objects to walk over or around.



### **Gross Motor Skill Activities – Just Right Equipment**

Provide open-ended equipment that has many uses and can be used by children of different levels of play ability. Play equipment that is too challenging, not challenging enough, or not related to children's play interests will not help children develop a sense of mastery in their motor play (Martin, 2000).

### **Gross Motor Skill Activities – Vestibular Input**

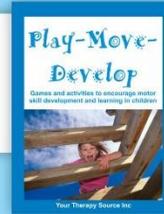
The vestibular system tells the brain about where the head is in space and how the body is moving through space. In simple terms, it is responsible to provide information regarding movement and balance. It is located in the inner ear where it receives input from the other senses such as visual, tactile, and auditory information. It receives and sends signals regarding rotational (circular) and linear (straight) movements.

Children use vestibular input to maintain upright posture, balance and move through space. It also provides information as to whether things around you are moving. These are all important skills for playtime.

Offer vestibular input activities such as swings, scooter boards, ride on toys, bicycles, etc. to help children learn to process movement sensations. [Children need to learn how to move in different directions and speeds](#) while controlling their bodies. These skills are necessary for playtime with large movement group games.

# Play ~ Move ~ Develop

100 activities to encourage motor development



## Gross Motor Skill Activities – Proprioceptive Input

Proprioception is the ability of your muscles and joints to determine where they are in space. The proprioceptive nerve endings in the body provide us with information of where our hands, arms, and legs are in space without having to look at them. The specialized proprioception receptors in the body tell the brain about movement and position of the body. For example, being able to touch your nose with your finger when your eyes are closed uses proprioception.

Encourage children to try proprioceptive activities such as pushing/pulling wagons, lifting heavy objects, [jumping games](#) like hopscotch, trampolines, stop/start, etc. to help children with grading motor skills during play.

## Gross Motor Skill Activities – Body Awareness

Body awareness is the ability to recognize where your body is in space. Your muscles and joints send your brain information about your body and how it moves. Body awareness helps us to understand how to relate to objects and people at home, at school and outdoors. For example, proper body awareness tells us how far to reach for objects or how close to stand next to a person.

Children need to practice body awareness skills during child development. Exploring the environment helps children to understand how to move over, under and around objects during play time. Games such as [Simon Says](#) or [Move Like Me](#) help children learn body awareness. To make the challenges more difficult, playing in the dark (ie under a blanket or a glow in the dark hunt) help children to develop body awareness without visual input.

## Gross Motor Skill Activities – Motor Planning

Motor planning is the ability to create an idea, plan an action and execute that action. It is a complex process that requires cognitive thought, sensory input, and motor action. AND LOTS AND LOTS OF PRACTICE!

To help children with motor planning skills, let them formulate play ideas, select objects and create play activities rather than providing a structured play environment. Encourage children to play with open-ended toys such as balls and hula hoops.

## Gross Motor Skill Activities – Adapt Equipment

Parents, therapists, and teachers need to closely observe children during playtime. If a child is struggling with their gross motor skills with a certain toy or game, could something be adapted to make them more successful? It could be as simple as toy placement i.e. putting the toy on a lower shelf or on

the right side of the child instead of the left side. If necessary, provide adaptive equipment for children with physical disabilities to engage in active play and facilitate free movement.

### Gross Motor Skill Activities – TIME

The most important gross motor skill activity is not an activity suggestion. Children need TIME to develop the gross motor skills necessary for play. Adults need to MAKE time and provide at least 60 minutes per day for unstructured, active play!

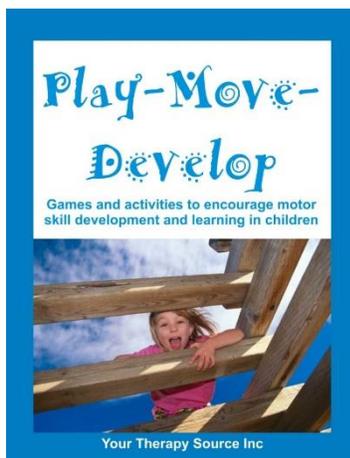
### References

Eckerdal, P., & Merker, B. (2009). Music and the “action song” in infant development: An interpretation. In S. Malloch & C. Trevarthen (Eds.), *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship* (pp. 241-262). New York: Oxford University Press.

Martin, E. (2000). Developmentally appropriate equipment: What does that mean? *Teaching Elementary Physical Education*, 11(6), 5-8.

Schneider, E. (2009). Longitudinal observations of infants’ object play behavior in the home context. *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*, 29, 79-87.

### Need activities to encourage motor skill development in young children?



[Play – Move – Develop](#): 100 reproducible games and activity ideas to encourage motor skill development and learning in children. A great resource for fun, home exercise program activities.



[Therapeutic Play Activities for Children](#) digital download includes 100 play activity pages and 12 tip sheets. The play activities encourage the development of fine motor skills, bimanual skills, rolling, crawling, tall kneeling, standing balance and cruising with a strong focus on children with cerebral palsy. [FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION.](#)

Therapeutic PLAY Activities for Children  
Available for immediate download at [YourTherapySource.com](http://YourTherapySource.com)

[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

## TOP READ BLOGPOSTS OF 2018



Each year we like to do a recap on the top read blogposts of 2018 that were published in 2018. How many have you checked out?

- #10 – [Sensory Versus Behavior Checklist](#)
- #9 – [Free Fine Motor And Executive Functioning Skills Activities for Fall](#)
- #8 – [Dysgraphia – Types, Symptoms and How to Help](#)
- #7 – [Color, Cut, Glue Scissor Practice for Winter](#)
- #6 – [Star Wars Brain Break Workout](#)
- #5 – [6 Free Executive Functioning Activities Worksheets](#)
- #4 – [10 Free Winter Games Brain Break Ideas](#)
- #3 – [Handwriting, Working Memory and ADHD](#)
- #2 – [I Spy Exercise Movement and Visual Perceptual Activity Freebie](#)
- #1 – [The Four Components of Letter Recognition](#)

Read about the [best sellers of 2018 here](#). Wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year in 2019! Stay tuned for more exciting and informative reads from Your Therapy Source!

## [BEST SELLERS OF 2018](#)



Another year is coming to a close. Each year at YourTherapySource, we like to recap the best sellers and the [top blog posts](#). First of all, let me state that we are very grateful for our amazing customers. We are always receiving positive feedback about our products which makes our job here so fulfilling. Since our inception, our sales have continued to grow and that is all thanks to you, our loyal customers, so thank you!

Here is the list of the 10 best sellers of 2018 on YourTherapySource. Have you purchased anything from the list?

- #10 – [Fine Motor Bundle](#)
- #9 – [25+ Bilateral Coordination Exercises](#)
- #8 – [Functional Evaluation of Fine Motor Skills for Occupational Therapy](#)
- #7 – [Calming Strategies for the Classroom](#)
- #6 – [Pencil Grasp Interventions](#)
- #5 – [Visual Supports: Schedules, Self-Regulation, & Classroom Inclusion](#)
- #4 – [Therapy Planner 2018-2019](#)
- #3 – [Color, Cut, and Glue Complete Packet – Fine Motor and Visual Perceptual Skills](#)
- #2 – [Occupational Therapy Fine Motor Baselines – Revised 2018](#)
- #1 – [School Based Occupational Therapy Screening Form Checklist](#)

Looking forward to an exciting 2019 with MORE new products!

[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

## [FREE SAMPLE PAGES FROM SIMPLE SHAPE DRAWINGS – CAT AND AIRPLANE](#)



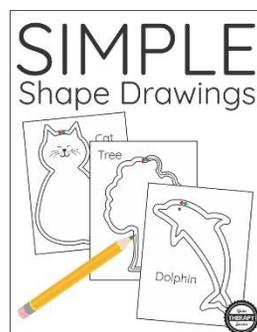
Are you looking for something a little different for students to practice simple visual motor skills? These two free sample pages from [Simple Shape Drawings](#) might be just the activity you are looking for.

### **Benefits of the Free Simple Shape Drawings**

These freebies include two simple pictures to draw around the outline of the cat and the airplane. There are green start dots with arrow to reinforce starting at the top. The students will practice:

- visual motor skills
- graded muscle control to stay in the lines
- prewriting skills

**Get more details about the Complete Simple Shape Drawings packet**



The [Simple Shape Drawings](#) digital download includes 20+ simple animals and objects to draw around the outline. Students get tired of practicing visual motor skills following a basic path, use these activities to draw something instead. The animals and objects include cat, airplane, rabbit, unicorn, guitar, dog, football, snake, dolphin, tree, flower, dinosaur, bear, apple, owl, moon/stars, lizard, boy, girl, wolf, turtle, and seahorse.

**Download the Free Simple Shape Drawings Here**

[Download the Cat and Airplane drawing here](#)

**Looking for more visual motor activities?**

[I Can Draw Shapes](#)

[Lines, Lines, and More Lines](#)

[Fading Lines and Shapes](#)

[Geometric Shapes](#)

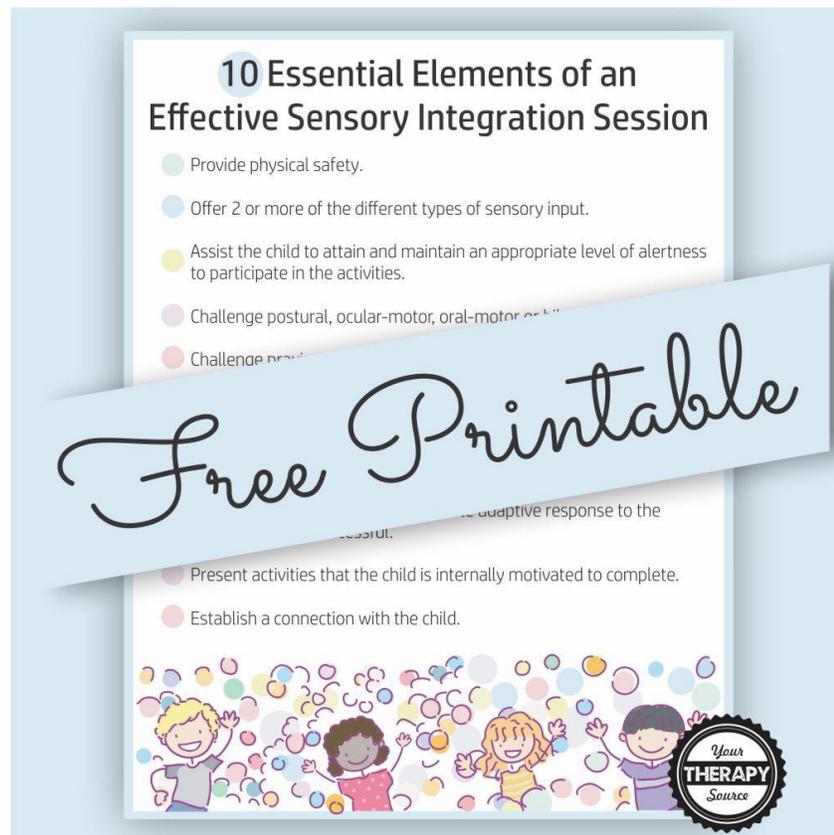
[Penguin Pencil Challenges](#)

Ready for the next challenge? Check out the [Big Book of Eazy Maze](#)



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## FREE POSTER – STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SENSORY INTEGRATION SESSIONS



Whether you are a seasoned therapist or a beginner, this Free Poster – Strategies for Effective Sensory Integration Sessions provides a visual reminder to help children achieve functional goals during a sensory integration session. You can download it at the bottom of the post.

### **Why this FREE Visual about Sensory Sessions?**

It came to our attention that a previous blog post about 10 essential elements of an effective sensory integration session was very popular. If you are an experienced pediatric OT or PT, you know that effective treatment sessions are sometimes difficult to master. Especially for a child with sensory needs, where it can feel and look like a child is all over the place.

Having a plan in place is crucial. The 10 steps to an effective sensory integration session are listed below.

This list of 10 process elements reflect key strategies from the Ayres Sensory Integration and was developed as part of the Ayres Sensory Integration Fidelity Measure. Read the complete study on the Development of a fidelity measure for research on the effectiveness of the Ayres Sensory Integration® intervention.

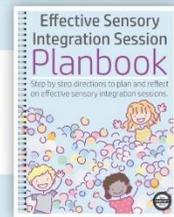
[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

## Strategies for Effective Sensory Integration Sessions

1. Provide physical safety – make sure that the environment is safe for the child including any equipment being used.
2. Offer 2 or more of the 3 types of sensory input ie proprioceptive, tactile, vestibular, etc.
3. Assist the child to attain and maintain an appropriate level of alertness to participate in the activities.
4. Challenge postural, ocular-motor, oral-motor or bilateral coordination.
5. Challenge praxis, motor planning, and organizational skills.
6. Provide activity choices for the child.
7. Offer just-right challenges by modifying the task based on the success of the child.
8. Make sure the child has an appropriate adaptive response to the challenge and is successful.
9. Present activities that the child is internally motivated to complete.
10. Establish a connection with the child.

### Need more details on effective sensory integration sessions?

## Sensory Integration Session Planbook



The [Effective Sensory Integration Session Planbook](#) digital document provides step by step guidance to plan and reflect on effective sensory integration sessions. Whether you are a seasoned pediatric therapist or a beginner, it is important to always be prepared and to reflect on your sensory integration treatment sessions.

### [Download your Free Poster – Strategies for Effective Sensory Integration Sessions](#)

Reference: Parham, L. D., Roley, S. S., May-Benson, T. A., Koomar, J., Brett-Green, B., Burke, J. P., ... & Schaaf, R. C. (2011). Development of a fidelity measure for research on the effectiveness of the Ayres Sensory Integration® intervention. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 65(2), 133-142.

## ENTRY AND EXIT SLIPS FOR PEDIATRIC THERAPY – FREE FOR OT, PT, SPEECH, AND COUNSELING



These entry and exit slips for pediatric therapy are FREE for OT, PT, Speech, and Counseling. It doesn't get any easier than this to review and reinforce what your students are learning.

### **Why Use Entry and Exit Slips for Pediatric Therapy?**

Perhaps you are wondering why even use entry and exit slips for pediatric therapy?

Did you know that checking on what a student learned can help to keep them on track and to head toward reaching their goals?

Entry or admit slips are used at the start of the session to review skills from previous sessions or to check if the student has any concerns. Exit slips are used at the end of the session to determine if the student understood the materials or mastered the skills. These questions can be oral, written or demonstration.

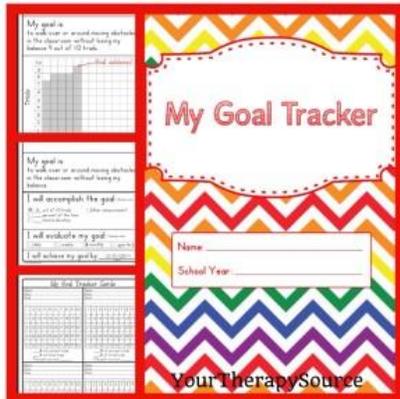
[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

## Examples of Questions for Entry and Exit Slips for Pediatric Therapy

The great thing about these slips is that they are quite general so they can be used for any type of related service. The statements or questions are listed below or you can create your own.

Explain one thing that you learned in therapy today.	How can you use what you learned in therapy today in the real world?
Demonstrate a new skill that you learned in therapy today.	What would you like to learn more about during therapy sessions?
Demonstrate a skill that you learned during the last therapy session.	Do you have any questions about what you learned during the last therapy session?
Did you have any problems in the classroom since our last session?	How did it go carrying out the suggested modifications for the classroom?

Encourage students to track their own progress with [My Goal Tracker](#).



**Title:** [My Goal Tracker](#): This is an electronic book of data collection forms for students to track their own progress. The student can track his/her goals over time, by monitoring the skills over the course of a day, week, month or quarter. This allows the student to get a visual picture of improvement, decline or maintenance of different skills.

By having the students track their own goals they will take ownership of their progress. It doesn't get any easier than this to track progress. [Find out more.](#)

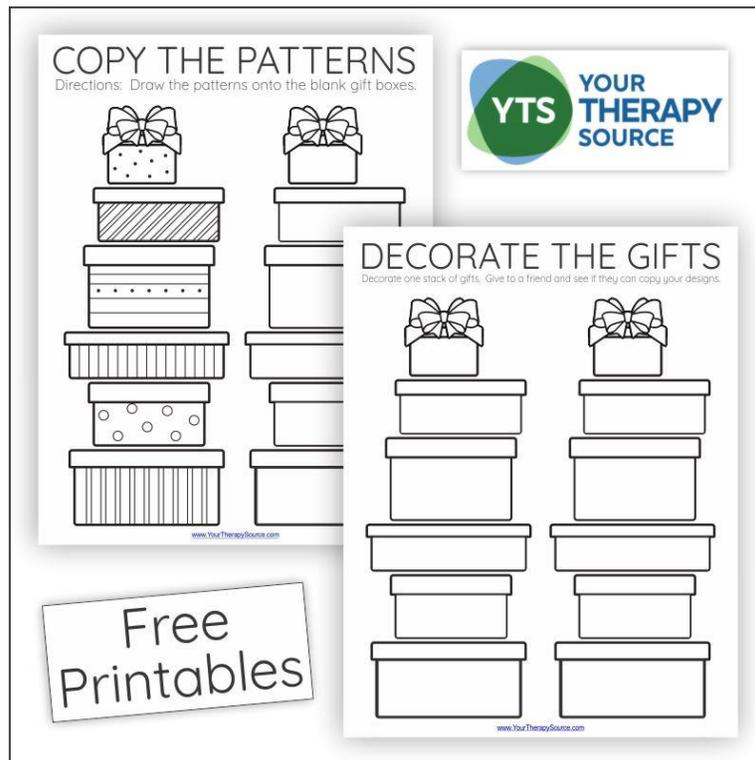
## Download your FREE Entry and Exit Slips for Pediatric Therapy

Download some sample entry and exits slips in editable Word format or PDF format.

Click here for [WORD format so you can edit the slips.](#)

Click here for [PDF format to print and use right away.](#)

## VISUAL MOTOR FREEBIE DECORATE THE GIFTS



If you are in search of a generic visual motor activity for any holiday or birthday celebration, check out this visual motor freebie Decorate the Gifts. You can download it for free at the bottom of the post.

The great thing about this printable is that you can use it for any holiday or even birthdays. In the first worksheet, students can practice pre-writing skills and visual motor skills to copy the patterns on the tower of gifts.

In the second worksheet, the students can either decorate both gift towers or decorate the first one and pass it to a friend and see if he or she can copy the pattern on the second tower of gifts.

Both activities are in black and white.

### **Benefits of this Visual Motor Freebie Decorate the Gifts**

This activity encourages students to practice the following skills:

- pre-writing strokes
- near point copying
- visual motor skills
- eye hand coordination
- creativity

**Need more activities to encourage visual motor skills?**

Check out this [visual motor collection of 18 titles](#) at a discounted price!



**Read more on visual motor skills in children:**

[Visual Motor Skills, Executive Function, and Achievement in Children](#)

[Eye Tracking and Visual Motor Skills in Young Children](#)

[How to Help Children Improve Executive Functioning](#)

[Copy the Caterpillar Visual Motor Freebie](#)

[Fine Motor Skills, Visual Function, and Reading in Children](#)

[Find and Color Marine Life Visual Motor Freebie](#)

[Download the Visual Motor Freebie Decorate the Gifts](#)



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