

# Movement break ideas

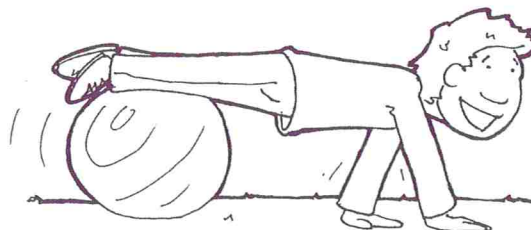
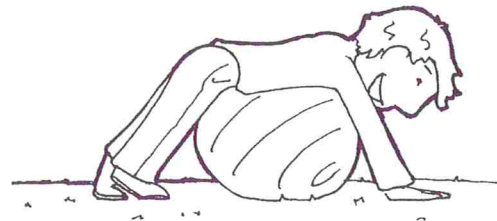
We all have different levels of alertness and they affect our ability to concentrate, listen to instructions and focus to complete our work. Following periods of seated work, students need a movement break to regulate and re-focus.

Choose an activity from the list below. Each activity should last for a minimum of **one to two minutes** to be effective.

- Run or jog around the playground or use outdoor gyms.
- Get students to carry heavy notebooks to the office or from class to class. Set up a fake reason for them to take books as far as possible around the school, then possibly swap with another teacher to bring books back.
- Jump up and down on a trampoline or do star/jack jumps.
- Bounce (seated) on a large ball. Bounce in a circle while seated, lift alternate legs, play throw etc.
- Do Theraband exercises. See if a student can pull their hands away from each other, thereby placing resistance on the band. Then slowly release the tension on the band. Try for ten pulls. Then slowly release.
- Try cross crawling. March on the spot, touching elbow to **opposite** leg as high as possible. Start with eyes open and then try with eyes closed. March on the spot and then try to turn in a circle.

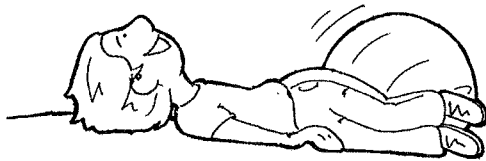
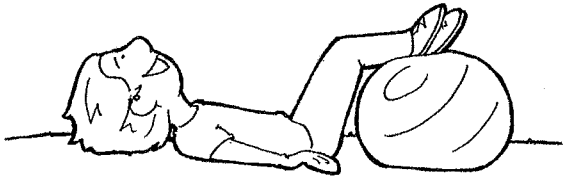


- Do weight-bearing exercises for the arms, for example the wheelbarrow walk, crab walk or bear walk. Alternatively, use a ball as shown below: move forward and backwards over the ball using the arms. Play a game in this position.

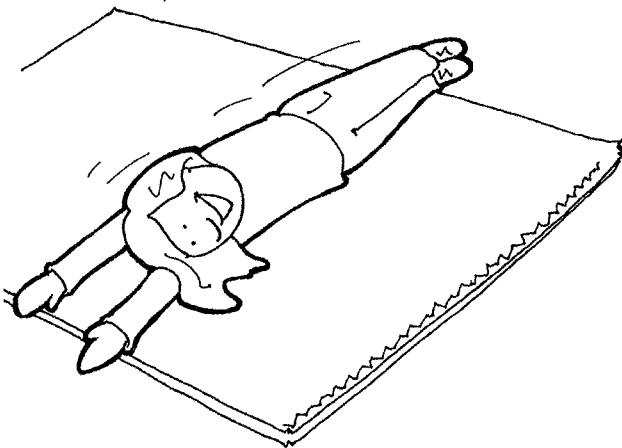


- Get students to hold therapy balls with their arms and legs while lying on their backs. Tell them to hold on to the ball as hard as they can while you try to take it away.

- Move a ball slowly from side to side, forwards and backwards (see below).



- Logroll: lying on the floor, roll across a mat while trying to keep the body in a straight line. Advance by extending arms above head, or extending the distance of the roll.



- Wall pushes: do 20 push-ups against the wall. Make sure elbows are bending and straightening rather than the whole body.



- Use weights: hold a small weight in each hand (you could use filled tins, water bottles, etc). Keep arms extended above the head and/or held parallel for as long as possible.



- Steam roller: with a student lying down, roll a large ball up and down their body. Keep pressure firm.



## Scooter board activities

- Push a scooter board to, or from, a designated location (students can sit, or lie on their stomachs and propel themselves with their arms).
- Students can try pulling themselves up a ramp while seated or lying on their stomachs on a scooter board.
- Students can also try propelling a scooter board across a carpeted floor, alternating arms or using both arms together.
- Have one student use a rope or plastic hoop to pull another student who is sitting or lying (on their stomach) on a scooter board and holding onto the other end of the rope or hoop. Also see page 92.

# Daily sensory sessions

**Sensory input is a natural, calming drug for the brain. We all need sensory input to stay calm and focused – children on the autism spectrum need more of it and more often.**

Ideally, sensory sessions should run first thing each morning and after lunch breaks. **Sessions should take approximately ten to 15 minutes.** Set equipment up in sections: each child needs to complete one activity from each section in strict order.

You could try organising activities into three main sections: alerting, organising and calming. It's best to finish sensory sessions with calming activities. The ideas below are based on work by the occupational therapist **Jane Norwood**, as found in her book *Sensory circuits*.

## Alerting

### Jogging

Jog on the spot or inside a hoop. Advance by changing speed up and down, or jogging around a course of cones.

### Star jumps

Start by doing arms and legs separately if coordination is poor. Advance by turning in circles, going side to side and/or counting while jumping.

### Jack jumps

Jump from a crouched position with arms and legs out to the side, then return to the crouched position. Advance by combining with jogging.

### Ball bounce

Bounce while seated on an exercise ball. Advance by bouncing for longer without stopping, bouncing while turning around on the ball, or throwing and catching items (such as a bean bag or a smaller ball) whilst bouncing.

### Arm spinning

Stand with arms stretched out to the sides. Spin in a circle ten times one way and then reverse.

### Trampoline

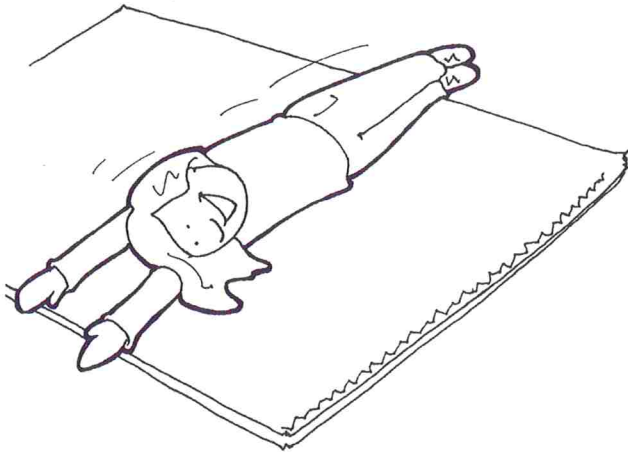
Bounce on the spot, around in circles, do star jumps.



## Organising

### Logroll

Lie on the floor and roll across a mat while trying to keep the body in a straight line. Advance by extending arms above the head, or extending the distance of the roll.



### Cross crawling

March on the spot, touching elbow to **opposite** leg as high as possible. Start with eyes open and then try with eyes closed. March on the spot and then try to turn in a circle.



### Juggling

Start with throwing and catching silk scarves as they move very slowly. Move onto beanbags and then juggling balls.

### Commando crawling

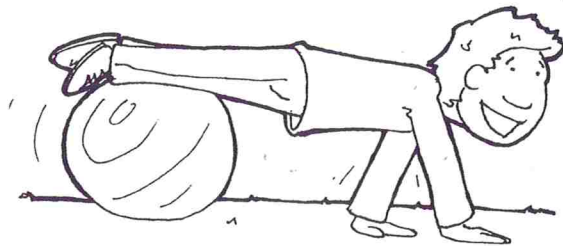
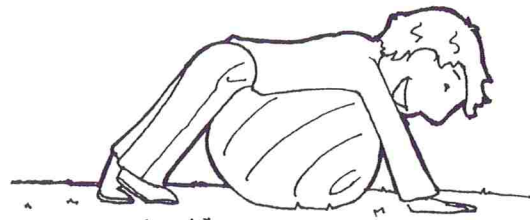
Lie on the stomach and crawl across the ground. Try having a race or crawling under blankets.

### Oral motor

Blow whistles, blow feathers off your hand, play football by blowing a cotton ball or ping pong ball across a table (you score if you blow it off the other end).

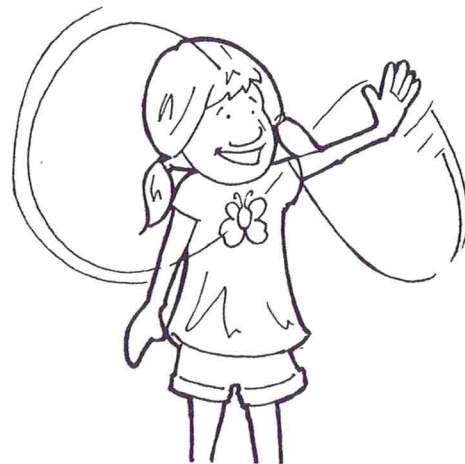
### Rolling over a ball

Lie on the stomach over a peanut ball and walk hands back and forth.



### Lazy eight

Use ribbons or scarves, or use chalk on a large vertical surface to draw out figures of eight. Make sure that students cross their mid-line by keeping their hips still and facing frontwards.



### Balance obstacle course

Walk along a balance beam, bench, stepping stones or a line taped on the floor. Advance by walking backwards, stepping over objects along the way, bending down to pick up beanbags and throw at targets.

# Daily sensory sessions

## Calming

### Steam roller

Students lie on their tummies while an adult rolls a large exercise ball slowly up and down them.



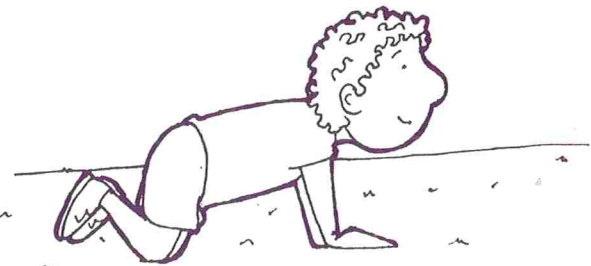
### Calming yoga

See page 89.

### Massage

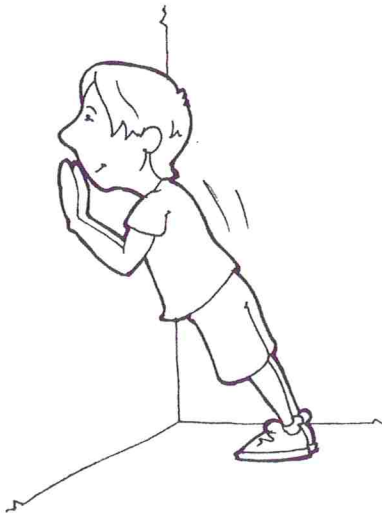
There are many forms of massage that can be calming and help students to re-focus. The Massage in Schools programme allows students to massage each other, which promotes self-esteem. See [www.misa.org.uk](http://www.misa.org.uk) for more details.

### Press-ups



### Wall pushes

Do 20 push-ups against a wall. Make sure that students' elbows are bending and straightening rather than their whole body. You can also try this with two students pushing against each other's hands or feet.



### Using weights

Hold a small weight in each hand (you could use filled tins or water bottles, for example). Hold arms extended above the head or parallel for as long as possible.



### Pushing or pulling weighted items

Try using a full wheelbarrow, filled bags, etc. Make this into a game by asking students to fetch certain items to fill the bag or barrow.

### Pilates plank

Students lie on their stomachs on the floor, come up onto their forearms and onto their toes (stomach, thighs and chest off floor).