

Sensory Circuits

Our senses play an important role in how we interact with the world and manage strong emotions. Many children with Neurodevelopmental Conditions need regular support to process all the sensory input from their environment. One effective way to help children who experience sensory integration difficulties is by setting up sensory circuits in school or at home. This fact sheet will guide you through the stages of a sensory circuit and suggest fun activities you can try with your child.

Stage 1:

The first stage of a sensory circuit is usually **alerting** or energising. This stage uses activities that increase the child's alertness and gets their body ready to focus, such as jumping, running, climbing, or bouncing on a trampoline. The goal is to provide strong sensory input that wakes up the body and prepares the brain for learning and engagement.

Activities could include:

- Jumping on a mini-trampoline or on the spot
- Running or fast-paced movement around a safe space
- Hopping on one or both feet
- Climbing on soft play equipment or climbing frames
- Skipping with a rope
- Animal walks (bear crawl, crab walk, frog jumps)
- Bouncing on a therapy ball
- Fast-paced dancing to lively music
- Wheelbarrow walks (holding the child's legs while they walk on their hands)



Stage 2:

The **organising** stage of a sensory circuit helps the brain and body work together more smoothly after the alerting activities. It usually includes actions that require balance, coordination, and concentration, such as balancing on a beam or throwing and catching a ball. This stage helps children improve their focus, body control, and readiness for learning.

Activities could include:

- Balancing on a line or beam
- Throwing and catching a ball
- Crossing the midline exercises - touch opposite hand to knee, or draw large figure eights in the air with both hands.
- Animal walks – such as bear walks, crab walks, or frog jumps’
- Marching or stepping patterns – follow a rhythm, or copy a simple sequence of steps and arm movements.



Stage 3:

The **relax** stage of a sensory circuit helps the body and mind calm down after the more active parts of the circuit. It often includes slow, soothing activities like deep breathing, gentle stretching, or lying under a weighted blanket. This stage supports self-regulation, helping children feel settled, focused, and ready to return to learning or daily activities.

Activities could include:

- Deep breathing - try “smell the flower, blow out the candle” breathing
- Gentle stretches or yoga poses
- Weighted blanket or lap pad
- Listening to calming music or nature sounds
- Quiet time in a sensory tent or cosy corner
- Blowing bubbles

