

Heavy Work for Parents

(Proprioceptive Input Ideas)

Following are ideas of activities compiled from several occupational therapists on the AOTA Sensory Integration List Serve. Special thanks to all of the therapists who openly shared their ideas

The following are general suggestions for you to try at home. They are a starting point of ideas to try, to see if they might help your child to be cooperative, calm and productive for you. When the technique is successful, your child will most likely accept the strategy and want to incorporate its use. Try to establish a variety of these items as throughout a child's daily routine at home. Try at least to schedule something, at least every one and a half to two hours at a minimum. Keep in mind that with any new activity, it should be carefully monitored. Children may react differently to these activities. Therefore, if the child appears to become distressed or angry during any of these activities, stop the activity immediately, and contact an occupational therapist for additional help.

1. Carry heavy items (baskets with cardboard blocks, groceries for Mom, etc.)
2. Allow your child to chew gum, eat chewy or crunchy foods, or sip water from a water bottle with a straw while doing homework
3. Push or pull boxes with toys or a few books in it
4. Take the cushions off the sofas, vacuum under them, then put them back. Can also climb on them, hide under them, jump and "crash" into them, play sandwich games with them. Bean bags and pillows can also be piled up to jump onto.
5. Pull other kids around on a sheet or blanket
6. Roller skate uphill
7. Pull a heavy trash can
8. Housework including sweeping, vacuuming and mopping or scrubbing the floor, carrying buckets of water to clean with or to water flowers/plants/trees
9. Scrub rough surfaces with a brush
10. Yard work, including mowing the lawn, raking grass/leaves, pushing wheelbarrow
11. Shovel sand into a wheelbarrow, wheel the wheelbarrow to a spot, dump out sand and use a rake to level it out. (functional for filling in low spots in backyard)
12. Push a friend in a wheelbarrow
13. Pull a friend or heavy items in a wagon

14. Milkshake rewards sipped through a narrow straw
15. Suck applesauce through a straw
16. Pillow fights
17. Playing in sandbox with damp heavy sand
18. Have the child "help" by pushing in chairs to a table or push chair into table after a meal
19. Push a child's cart filled with cans and then put the cans away on a low shelf where the child needs to be in a weight bearing quadruped (on hands and knees) position
20. After a bath, you can squeeze your child and rub him/her briskly with a towel. Some children enjoy having their torso snugly wrapped with the towel to pretend they are a "hot dog in a bun."
21. Use heavy quilts at night and tight flannel pajamas
22. Swimming. Also have child dive after weighted sticks thrown in pool
23. Dancing
24. Activities such as gymnastics, horseback riding, wrestling, karate
25. Bathe the dog
26. Wash the car
27. Carry the laundry basket
28. Jump or climb in inner tubes
29. Fill up a child's suitcase with heavy items (such as books) and push/pull the suitcase across the room
30. When traveling, let child pull own small suitcase on wheels
31. Go "shopping" with a child's shopping cart filled with items
32. Child can help change the sheets on the bed, then toss the linens down the stairs

Edited by Carrie Lippincott, OTR/L
January 6, 2003