

Helpful Handy Hints — Finding Reinforcers

This is an area that is often problematic for many of our learners. The key is to observe their behaviors when left to their own devices and then to use these as a starting point. Remember that a learner's reaction to sensory input can vary between days and even within a day, and therefore whenever sensory strategies are being used, careful observation of the learner's reactions is advised. For learners with variable or inconsistent reactions to sensory input, an assessment with an Occupational Therapist may be advisable.

Behaviors Observed	The learner gazes at lights or out of the window, fixates on rotating objects, looks at his hands or flaps his fingers in front of his eyes.		
Type of sensory preference	Visual		
Spinning discs Laser discs Spinning toys Sand Egg timers or oil droppers Snow globes TV or video Computer screensaver programs	Light toys (such as spinning fan or ball) Flashing toys (such as bouncing ball or stress toy) Spinning tops Wind-up toys Colored acetate sheets	Executive toys (such as swinging balls) Sparking toys (such as toy gun or spin toy) Kaleidoscope View Master® Coil toys	

Behaviors Observed	The learner vocalizes, hums, clicks his tongue, taps furniture or clicks fingers		
Type of sensory preference	Auditory (Sound)		
Drum Triangle Musical instruments Radio Push-pull toys that make noise	Toys that make noise Clackers Bells Whistles Tambourine Hair dryers	Talking toys (such as Furbies®) Buzz toys Toy piano or keyboard Music boxes TV or video	Stethoscopes Music Conversation with another person Talking books Walkman or CD player

Behaviors Observed	The learner touches his own or another person's body parts, pinches oneself, places fingers or objects in mouth.		
Type of sensory preference	Tactile (Touch)		
Shower scrunchies Soft toys Puppets Talc Electric fan Shaving cream	Items that touch the learners' body Koosh ball Silly putty Vibrating or buzz toys Massager	Hand painting Face painting Blankets Make up brush Hand or foot massage Hand lotion	Sand or water play Off cuts of different textured materials (such as fur, felt, cotton, nylon etc.) Scrubbing brush Pan scourers

Behaviors Observed	The Learner rocks, bounces or spins his body. He has strange postures (such as head stands or upside-down), toe walks, holds head on one side or head bangs.		
Type of sensory preference	Vestibular (Movement) or Proprioceptive (Body Sense)		
Items that recreate motion or body position Rocking horse Rocking chair Firm stroking or patting of body parts Learner allows or seeks	Therapy or Pilates ball Hammock Swing Action rhymes Vibration or buzz toys	Barrels to roll in or on Pedal cars Spinning office chair Balance ball	Slide Roundabouts Trampolines Push/Pull games against resistance (such as another person)

Behaviors Observed	The learner smells self, other people, items or equipment		
Type of sensory preference	Smell		
Items that smell Scented pens and crayons	Aromatherapy oils, Incense	Play dough Scented candles	Flowers Make a “Smell Kit”
To make a “Smell kit” use some small containers with lids (such as empty camera film containers), place some scented items in the container and top with cotton wool. Keep lid closed until needed.	Some ideas could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Herbs and Spices ➤ Peppermint ➤ Onion ➤ Citrus-oil extracts 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Soap or Washing up liquid ➤ Cake essences (such as vanilla, coffee, coconut etc.)

Behaviors Observed	The Learner licks himself or other people. He may lick objects or put them in his mouth.		
Type of sensory preference	Oral-motor or Taste		
Sweet and sour contrasts (such as lemon or lime juice) Hot and cold contrasts (such as fried ice cream!)	Items that have different tastes Strong flavored crisps or sweets	Put lots of ice into cold drinks Thick shakes through a straw	For oral stimulation try: Aquarium air tubing to chew Teething rings and toys Chewing gum or sweets Textiles to chew Tooth and tongue brushing Try an electric toothbrush