

Who is it for?



Social Partner

Non verbal
Communication



Language Partner

Emerging
language

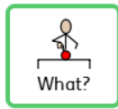


Conversational Partner

Conversational
Language








SENSORY PROCESSING DIFFERENCES

A brief overview of some differences in sensory processing, and the reasonable adjustments that can be made to support this.



What is it?

We all process sensory information at all times. We have 7 main senses that impact our everyday interactions with the world:

-  **Visual:** We use our eyes to sense visual information.
-  **Olfactory:** We use our nose to provide us with information about smells.
-  **Auditory:** We use our ears to sense audio information
-  **Gustatory:** The receptors in our tongue provide information on taste.
-  **Tactile:** The receptors in our skin provide tactile feedback.
-  **Proprioceptive and Vestibular:** We use information from our skin, muscles and joints to provide us with information about where our body is in space (proprioception). This is closely linked with our sense of balance (vestibular).
-  **Interoception:** This is how we read and interpret all our internal body signals, for example, feeling pain, hunger, thirst, and needing the toilet etc.

All our senses can be hypersensitive, where a little bit of sensory feedback feels like a lot of information, or hyposensitive, where lots of feedback is needed to register the same response. The sensitivity of each sense is never static, and can fluctuate over time. Understanding, and making reasonable adjustments for, differences in sensory processing can be crucial in enabling an autistic person to succeed.





Visual:



This support is to provide information.

This support should not be used as a means to exert control over the child.

RELATED ADVICE SHEETS

Sensory differences:	Reasonable Adjustments:
<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty tracking objects, people or the interactive whiteboard ▪ Struggles with changes to lighting conditions ▪ Difficulty finding things in cluttered spaces ▪ Focuses on small details 	<p>Hyper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear labelling ▪ Natural light ▪ Low distraction work area, or consider seating plan ▪ Presentation of worksheets ▪ Sunglasses/peaked hat ▪ Calm space at break.
<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Looks intently at people or objects ▪ Fascinated by reflections and brightly coloured objects ▪ Perimeter hugging e.g., following the line on the perimeter of a playground ▪ Moves fingers in front of face 	<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of spinning/repeating lights ▪ Lava lamps/bubble timers ▪ Glitter tubes ▪ Kaleidoscopes ▪ 'showering' activities, i.e. watching sand drop.



Olfactory (Smell)

Sensory differences:	Reasonable Adjustments:
<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has extreme dislikes of environmental smells ▪ Gags or becomes particularly upset at particular smells ▪ Will move away from people because of their smell e.g., perfume, body odour 	<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid smells where possible. If eating/drinking in the classroom, ventilate well. ▪ Consider routes around school. Avoid toilets/canteen if possible/problematic.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May notice smells others do not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Favourite smell on hanky/sweat band to neutralise 'bad' smells.
Hypo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smells people and objects ▪ May smears faeces 	Hypo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add smells into day, for example, scented dough, ▪ perfume, scented hand cream. ▪ Add scented items to tool kit.



Gustatory (Taste)

Sensory differences:	Reasonable Adjustments:
Hyper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited diet- preference for bland foods ▪ May use very tip of tongue to taste food before eating it ▪ Gags or vomits easily ▪ Craves particular food 	Hypo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure packed lunch is allowed where there are strong preferences/aversions ▪ Respect preferences. If attempting to broaden diet, do so in gentle way. Place foods near a pupil without pressure to eat them. ▪ Where possible, allow food play to explore items away from the dinner table, with no expectation to eat them. ▪ Use plates with sections.
Hypo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eats non-edible items. ▪ Mouths and licks objects ▪ May eat mixed flavours, i.e., sweet and sour. 	Hypo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow flavours on food, for example, chilli sauce.





Auditory (Hearing)

Sensory differences:	Reasonable Adjustments:
<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty tolerating everyday sounds and can cover their ears. ▪ Difficulty regulating volume or tone of voice. ▪ Becomes distracted in noisy environments. ▪ Difficulty following verbal instructions. ▪ Difficulties recalling what has been said. 	<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of ear defenders/ in ear buds/ noise cancelling headphones. Pre warning of noises. ▪ Use of quiet spaces ▪ Off peak transitions ▪ Alternative break arrangements ▪ Curriculum modifications – especially music/assembly. ▪ Be mindful of tone of voice.
<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bangs objects and doors. ▪ Attracted by sound. ▪ Likes noise such as traffic or a busy classroom. ▪ Makes rhythmic noises. 	<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned time to listen to noises that are 'nice'. ▪ Use of background music. ▪ Use of music for cues.



Tactile (touch)

Sensory differences:	Reasonable Adjustments:
<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dislikes touch from others – may try to avoid standing in line or near others that will bump them. ▪ Tendency to dislike affectionate touch such as hugs and kisses. 	<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoids touch, especially light touch. Be careful if approaching the pupil from behind. ▪ Accept uniform modifications. ▪ When curriculum involves touching objects (i.e., art), offer the use of gloves.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has difficulty tolerating school uniform or other items of clothing e.g., seams in socks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider off peak transitions, or place in the line to reduce contact with peers.
<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has difficulty grading force when handling objects or touching people- overly physical. ▪ Doesn't notice when clothes are twisted/not on correctly. ▪ Seeks out messy play. ▪ Pressure seeking. ▪ Explores objects with their mouth. 	<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include tactile activities in an age/stage relevant way, such as sand/slime/blu tac. ▪ Accept use of fidgets/concentration aids.



Proprioception and Vestibular (balance and co-ordination)

<p>Sensory differences:</p> <p>Hyper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can be afraid of everyday movements, i.e., swings, slides, bike riding. ▪ May seem to move with caution. ▪ Difficulties with heights ▪ Likes to have feet on the ground. ▪ Dislikes head being upside down, which can lead to awkward positions for task such as tying laces. ▪ May turn whole body to look at things 	<p>Reasonable Adjustments:</p> <p>Hyper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include purposeful, comfortable movement that is age and stage relevant.
<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequently seeks movement e.g., rocking, on their chairs, 	<p>Hypo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include purposeful movements that include resistance.



<p>appears in the classroom not to be still .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has poor posture – appears to bump, crash into objects or people or lean on people excessively and finds managing personal space difficult. • Has poor motor coordination- difficulty with balance e.g. hopping or standing on one leg • Plays roughly with peers- is overly physical. • Applies too much or too little pressure when writing. Enjoys bear hugs/deep pressure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add materials that provide feedback to a toolkit, i.e., Lycra body sock. ▪ Jumping activities can be regulating.
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Interoception:

Sensory differences:	Reasonable Adjustments:
<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intense reactions to pain. Small injuries can cause significant reaction. ▪ Eats or drinks frequently to avoid hunger/thirst sensations. ▪ Uses the toilet frequently to avoid the feeling of a full bladder. ▪ Significant reactions to small changes in temperature. ▪ Can find effects of exercise unpleasant (such as increased heart/breathing rate) and so avoid physical exertion. 	<p>Hyper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intense reactions to pain – by sympathetic to seemingly small injuries, accepting that they may really hurt. ▪ Accept more frequent need to use the toilet. Provision of a ‘no questions’ toilet pass. ▪ May need regular snacks.
<p>Hypo</p>	<p>Hypo</p>



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Does not notice when hurt or ill.▪ Difficulty recognising hunger and thirst.▪ Difficulty becoming continent or recognising signals in time.▪ May enjoy feeling of full bladder/bowel, and so withholds.▪ Does not feel cold/hot.▪ May crave physical activity for the associated physiological response, i.e., being out of breath, pounding heart. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ If pupil has had a fall, they may need a thorough check as they may not identify where the pain is.▪ May need to use the toilet at the last minute – provide a pass.▪ May need prompts to eat/drink.▪ May need guidance to add or reduce layers of clothing. |
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