



# Examples of Sensory Differences and Strategies

## Examples of sensory differences

System	Examples of oversensitive behaviour	Examples of undersensitive behaviour
 <p><b>Touch</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touch can be painful and uncomfortable and some pupils may withdraw from aspects of touch. This can have a profound effect on relationships.</li> <li>• Only tolerates certain materials for clothing.</li> <li>• Dislike of having anything on hands or feet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds others tightly.</li> <li>• Has high pain threshold (pain/temperature).</li> <li>• Self harming.</li> <li>• Enjoys heavy objects on top of them.</li> <li>• Prefers tight clothing.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sight</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distorted vision occurs, objects and bright lights can jump around.</li> <li>• Fragmentation of images, as a consequence of too many sources of visual stimuli.</li> <li>• Focussing on particular details (sand grains) can be more pleasurable than looking at something as a whole.</li> <li>• Distracted by certain lighting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May see things darker, lose features and lines.</li> <li>• May concentrate on peripheral vision as central vision is blurred.</li> <li>• Conversely, some say that a main object is magnified and things on the periphery are blurred.</li> <li>• Poor depth perceptions – problems with catching or throwing.</li> <li>• Flapping near eyes.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sound</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volume of noise can be magnified and surrounding sounds distorted and muddled.</li> <li>• Inability to cut out particular sounds – difficulties concentrating.</li> <li>• May have a lower hearing threshold which makes an individual particularly sensitive to auditory stimuli – hearing conversations in the distance.</li> <li>• Fingers in ears.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not acknowledge particular sounds.</li> <li>• Enjoys crowded noisy places.</li> <li>• Bangs doors and objects.</li> <li>• Makes own noise – for example, humming.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Taste</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some flavours and foods are too strong and overpowering.</li> <li>• Certain textures also cause discomfort, some pupils will only eat smooth foods such as mashed potatoes or ice cream.</li> <li>• Only eats bland foods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preference for strong flavours – like very spicy foods.</li> <li>• Eats non-food items – for example, grass, soil, materials. This is known as pica.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Smell</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aversion to particular smells.</li> <li>• Smells can be intensified and overpowering.</li> <li>• Toileting problems.</li> <li>• Dislike of individuals with distinctive perfumes or shampoos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smells objects.</li> <li>• May have no sense of smell and fail to notice extreme odours.</li> <li>• May lick objects.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sense of body in space</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dislikes close proximity of others.</li> <li>• Has difficulty with fine motor skills and manipulating small objects.</li> <li>• Moves whole body to look at objects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity – stands too close to others not knowing about personal space etiquette.</li> <li>• Little awareness of hunger/pain/cold/needing the toilet.</li> <li>• Difficulties with navigating rooms and avoiding objects (bumps into things).</li> <li>• Bumps into people.</li> <li>• Poor muscle tone.</li> <li>• A preference for deep pressure for example tight shoelaces or pushing their chin into people.</li> </ul>


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 <p><b>Balance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dislikes playground equipment (swing/slide etc).</li><li>• Difficulties in activities which include movement (sport).</li><li>• Difficulties in stopping quickly or during an activity.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need for rocking, spinning, swinging.</li><li>• Seeks opportunities for movement/constantly moving/fidgeting.</li></ul>
 <p><b>Interoception</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is overwhelmed by feelings that are part of the body's day-to-day functioning.</li><li>• Becomes distracted by typical bodily functions – for example, the beating of their heart.</li><li>• Struggles to regulate their emotions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Struggles to identify when they are hungry/thirsty (goes long periods without eating/drinking).</li><li>• Have toileting accidents.</li><li>• Struggles to identify their emotions or work out how they are feeling.</li><li>• Be unable to recognise when they are ill – for example, sense they have a fever.</li></ul>





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## Strategies for sensory differences

System	Oversensitivity	Undersensitivity
 <p><b>Touch</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Warn the pupil if you are about to touch them.</li> <li>Remember hugs may be painful rather than comforting!</li> <li>Gradually introduce different textures.</li> <li>Allow individuals to complete activities themselves (for example, hair brushing and hand washing) to allow them to regulate their sensitivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider tight clothing – for example, leotards underneath clothing.</li> <li>Weighted blankets.</li> <li>Sleeping bags.</li> <li>Work with sand bag on lap.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sight</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce fluorescent lighting.</li> <li>Sunglasses.</li> <li>Create a workstation.</li> <li>Use blackout blinds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use resources which stimulate the visual system – for example, light sticks.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sound</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shut windows and doors to reduce external sound.</li> <li>Prepare the pupil for noisy places.</li> <li>Ear plugs/ear defenders.</li> <li>iPad or audio device.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Music therapy.</li> <li>iPad or audio device.</li> <li>Use visual cues to back up verbal information.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Taste</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow opportunities to taste lots of different things to aid sense development.</li> <li>Encourage children to “clean out” mouth with water between mouthfuls.</li> <li>Puree foods.</li> <li>Use ice pops to desensitise mouth.</li> <li>Introduce very small bites of portions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow opportunities to taste lots of different things to aid sense development.</li> <li>Provide oral stimulation throughout the day, crunchy foods.</li> <li>Use vibration toys to stimulate the senses.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Smell</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use unscented detergents or shampoos.</li> <li>Refrain from wearing perfume.</li> <li>Make environment as fragrance free as possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use strong smelling objects as rewards.</li> <li>Use strong smelling objects to distract from inappropriate strong smells (faeces) – for example, scented playdough.</li> <li>Create a book of scents – for example, match pictures to scented cotton wool, lemon, coffee, etc.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sense of body in space</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threading activities.</li> <li>Lace boards.</li> <li>Allow the pupil to stand at end of line when lining up.</li> <li>Allow the pupil to sit on a stool instead of carpet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position furniture around the edge of the room to make navigation easier.</li> <li>Put coloured tape on floor to indicate boundaries.</li> <li>Use the arm’s length rule (you must be at least an arm’s length away from someone when speaking to them).</li> </ul>

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 <p><b>Balance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Break down activities into small steps.</li><li>• Use visual clues for finish lines or stops in movement activities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage activities which develop the vestibular system – for example, swing, roundabout, rocking horse, see-saw, dancing, etc.</li></ul>
 <p><b>Interoception</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grounding activities that draw attention to specific body parts.</li><li>• Use music/ear phones/calmers to block out internal noises.</li><li>• Teach emotions and incorporate emotional check ins.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Timetable regular opportunities to eat/drink.</li><li>• Timetable toilet breaks.</li><li>• Provide a toilet pass to avoid having to ask at last minute.</li><li>• Teach emotions and incorporate emotional check ins.</li></ul>

