

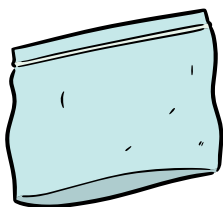
EASY MAKE-AT-HOME SENSORY TOOLS AND TOYS

Children of all ages and abilities often benefit from using sensory tools or toys to help focus attention, engage in activities, de-escalate stress, diffuse energy, occupy busy hands/bodies, and calm racing minds.

Here are 5 DIY tips for making effective (and inexpensive) tools at home...



Bottles - Water and soda bottles are great footrests and foot rollers. Want them heavier? Empty and refill with sand, beans, beads, etc. Want them quieter? Wrap duct tape around the neck and the base. Want them more tactile? Freeze them or gently warm them in a water bath then put inside a sock. Worried about leaks or spills? Reinforce caps with duct tape, rubber banded plastic wrap, or top with a deflated balloon.

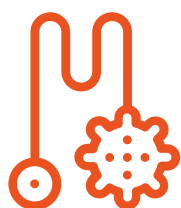


Zipper-Close Bags - Partially fill zipper-close bags with dish soap then freeze to make great stress relief squishies. (These work great for tactile and fine motor skills practice too.) Running low on soap? Sand or rice work great as well! Worried about pica or similar struggles? Use up those old condiments, pudding, and Jello hanging out in the fridge. Wanna get fancy? Fill them with finger paint, playdough, Oobleck, Orbits, slime, etc. - all with awesome homemade recipes found in any internet search. And remember...always, always double bag!! (Balloons work too- just be sure they are latex-free and child safe.)



Laundry Leftovers - Put all those single socks, lonely mittens, and unpaired gloves to good use. Fill them with rice, beans, beads, craft pellets, and more to make bean bags, stress squeezers, pocket weights, etc. "Sew" closed with yarn, hot glue, rubber bands, hair ties, or just knot tightly, then reinforce.

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Dog and Cat Toys: That's right! Pet toys come in all shapes, sizes, sounds and textures and are often on sale in bulk at discount stores. They make fabulous fidgets! Make sure they are age and individual-child appropriate to avoid choking hazards etc. And it might be better to save the loud squeaky ones for outside play (or at least when on Mute.)



Weighted Everything: You know the old saying, "Weight is the Brain's Best Friend?" (No? Well, it should be one.) No need to spring for commercial weighted vests or blankets when homemade versions work beautifully! Need a vest alternative? Try a scarf. Fill zipper-close baggies or socks with weight pellets, beans, sand, rice etc. as described above. Lay an old winter scarf (the longer the better) flat on the table. Place the baggies/socks/etc. a few inches apart up and down the length of the scarf. Lay another scarf on top, then cinch the scarves together above and below the weights with rubber bands or hair ties. Want a lap mat or sensory seat? Fill a gallon (or more) sized zipper-close bag with any of the weighted materials discussed above. Insert into the "body" of an old T-Shirt or inside a pillowcase then secure the corners.



- Feeling crafty? Dive in and make a weighted blanket. [Here's a great "no sew" option on youtube.](#) (Based on experience, we recommend hot gluing the seams between each grid to make pockets in which you can insert and remove weighted bags, but NOT gluing the outside edges before tying them together. This makes it easily repairable and hand-washable because you can remove and replace weights as needed.)

Making each of these is a great sensory/tactile/motor/multistep learning experience in and of itself. Each can be helpful to ALL kids on long virtual learning days or intense activity days. Each can be personalized and decorated. Each is easily replaceable. And each is only one example of hundreds of ideas!