

Tîm Camau Bach
SESSION PLAN FOR HOME ACTIVITIES
BALANCE AND MOVEMENT



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The Vestibular Sense

Activities

- Peanut ball
- Messy play – sand
- Hit the Pinata
- Sensory mats
- Movement and song – Sally Go round the sun
- Blanket Ride
- Hammock Swing
- Beam

PEANUT THERAPY BALL FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

- Anti-Burst Peanut Therapy Ball
- Offers greater stability than a traditional ball to inspire confidence and for safety
- Ideal therapy tool for kids with special needs for gross motor activities and strengthening
- Can also be used in rehabilitation exercises for many conditions
- Available in 4 sizes - 35cm (Yellow), 45cm (Orange), 55cm (Green) and 65cm (Blue)
- Price: between £22.95 - £39.95.



MESSY PLAY – kinetic sand

The benefits of Messy Play:

- encourages curiosity and builds self-confidence and self-esteem
- offers an outlet for feelings, experiences and thoughts
- practices good concentration
- Nurtures early form of writing
- supports ability to play independently
- strengthens body control.

HIT THE PINATA

Squish some newspaper and put it in a plastic bag to form a round shape. Hang it up from a piece of rope so that the bag hangs free. Roll up newspaper and tape it closed to form a bat.

Hang a beach or balloon instead of a bag of newspaper. To increase the challenge, have a smaller item.



JUMP TO COLOURS / SENSORY MATS

As well as taking turns your child can listen to instruction and jump to different colours. As a variation you could create different shapes or sad, happy and angry faces. For those who cannot yet 'catch air' beneath their feet when jumping, stand behind and physically lift them up while you both are jumping forward.



SALLY GO ROUND THE SUN

Move around the room in big circles twirling the streamers/scarves/exercise bands etc. and sing:

SALLY GO ROUND THE SUN;
SALLY GO ROUND THE MOON,
SALLY GO ROUND THE CHIMNEY POTS,
EVERY AFTERNOON. BOOM and fall.

Benefits of activity

- Turning in circles provides vestibular input
- Moving along with the song improves auditory discrimination and rhythm, both of which foster receptive language development and the rhythm of writing.
- Moving among the chimney pots improves balance and force.
- Avoiding the chimney pots involves the visual skills of focusing, depth perception, and figure-ground.
- Swishing the streamer improves the ability to cross the midline.
- Falling down on purpose provides a satisfactory proprioceptive jolt.
- The child who is uncomfortable moving in circles can enjoy this activity by walking in straight lines.

BLANKET RIDE OR BOX RIDES

Put one child on the blanket and have another child and an adult, if help is needed, pull it so that the child gets a ride. Put one child on the blanket and have an adult to pull so that the child gets a ride. Switch positions if possible.



You could also swoosh the blanket this way and that way in unexpected directions to make the ride more exciting, but make sure the ride doesn't get wild enough to throw the child off. Add fun sounds for the kids to imitate.

Sometimes make it a group activity. Have two or more children riding together and two or more pulling. Sometimes, have the children spin the child by running in a circle, rather than asking them to pull the blanket.

VARIATIONS

Riding together and bumping into others may be difficult for some children. Start them off with only one other child and go slowly. At the other extreme are the children who crave a lot of physical touch – riding fast with others falling on them and over them is just what they like and need. This is a game that can accommodate everyone!

OUTCOMES

Vestibular stimulation; Proprioceptive input; Awareness of others; Balance; Strength; Awareness of cause and effect.

While sitting on a moving blanket, children are getting experience with balance. In order to stay seated upright while being jiggled and moved in various directions, they have to continually adjust their trunk muscles.

Children who are pulling, strengthen their muscles, especially those in their arms and legs.

Monitor for sensory overload, such as increased distractibility or confusion, rapid breathing, or sweaty skin, and stop the activity if

Deep Pressure Techniques



- Calms the nervous system
- Increases Dopamine (feel good chemicals) in nervous system.



- Deep pressure massage
- Snuggling under weighted blanket



- Sandwich with bean bags, couch cushions.
- Cocooning with blanket or sleeping bag.
- Pillow press or neutral warm.

these occur. Provide deep pressure input to normalise the arousal level.

Here are examples of Deep Pressure Techniques:

A BLANKET FOR HAMMOCK SWING IKEA SWING CHAIRS

Have 2 adults hold either side of the cloth. The adults pick up the cloth so that the child is suspended, then slowly rock the cloth from side to side.

Your child can also hold the blanket teddy bear or other toy a hammock ride!



and give

blanket. Have one



a

BEAM

Your child could walk on beam while following different commands such as

- Walk forward with one hand on head
- Walk forward with arms crossed
- Walk sideways
- Walk on tiptoe etc.

A plank of wood (or cardboard) approx. 1.5 m long and wide enough to walk down easily can be a useful piece of indoor physical play equipment.

- Introduce the beam first by placing it flat on the ground and playing 'follow the leader' along its length. Try putting something your child wants at the end, for him to retrieve.
- Later try propping it about 10cm off the floor – use blocks of wood. Once your child is confident with it, place one end on a sofa to make a slide – there are lots of crawling under, crawling up, sliding down possibilities.
- If your child is really enjoying this type of activity and can take some direction try making a 'circuit' for him e.g. 'across the beam, jump into the hoop, ten jumps on the trampoline and a big jump onto a pile of cushions! Remember to introduce each element first on its own otherwise a collection of challenges could be completely baffling.
- Try placing a bean bag under the middle of a board to aid balance.



BENEFITS OF ACTIVITY

- Finding the balancing point on the board improves the sense of where the child's own body centre is.
- Balancing improves body awareness, motor control, postural stability, force and self-esteem.
- Because back and forth motion stirs up the language centres of the brain, the child's speech and language output may increase after teetering and tottering for a few minutes.

Activities with Vestibular Sensations

- Sit on a swing – regular stop/go
- Dancing activities



- Jump on a trampoline
- Use a rocking horse/toy or chair
- Play on spinning toys (check your child does not become too over stimulated)
- Roll on or sit on gym ball
- Roll down an incline
- Twirl self on an office chair
- Play on playground equipment
- Hang upside down from bar

SOME MORE IDEAS A mini trampoline is good for the Vestibular Sense

Jumping improves rhythm and helps to regulate the nervous system. Always be nearby while your child enjoys this activity. It also provides deep pressure to the joints and muscles to strengthen proprioception and gross motor skills.

Some children may feel uncomfortable jumping. Other calming experiences are standing on the trampoline and just bending and straightening knees or sitting on it and rocking. The playground also provides an opportunity to play with siblings and friends in physical games that are easier to understand and take part in than complex imaginative games or games with rules such as card and board games. Provides the space for hyperactive children to run off excess energy and have a better night's sleep. Is a good practice ground for coping with processing lots of sensory input in a safe and controlled environment.

Is a good environment to practice physical skill such as balancing and co-ordinating movements on different surfaces.



Your child may notice things you've never seen before or enjoy sounds, sensations and reflections that have never occurred to you. Allow some 'free time' where your child does what he/she wants. Also shadow him and imitate his actions, drag the twig across the gravel, flick water droplets off leaves, squint at the sunlight pouring through trellis – experience your child's interpretation of the outdoors as well as showing your child's yours, join in and be responsive. Work out what elements he/she finds attractive and incorporate them into your games.

- Most vestibular input is during the start/stop phase of the movement.
- Fast start/stops are alerting
- Slow rocking is soothing and calming



WHAT IS THE VESTIBULAR SYSTEM?

Vestibular processing is nearly always at work in everything we do, arguably more than any other sensory system. Vestibular activities, when used correctly, can calm and soothe a child,

as well as improve many aspects of development like coordination, handwriting, attention, and even reading!

Vestibular input is received in the brain every single time we move our head because the receptors for this [sensory system](#) are located deep within our inner ear. These receptors are very sensitive and pick up the information on the position of our heads in relation to our bodies, tell us about movement and gravity information as well as helping us to stabilise our eyes when we are moving. The vestibular system also controls levels of muscle tone and helps with co-ordinated movement. The vestibular system is made up of canals that are lined with tiny little hairs and these canals also have some fluid in them. When we move, the fluid swishes around in the canals and touches the hairs. The brain gets the message about what hairs the fluid has touched, and we know how and where to move.

That means that we get vestibular input, albeit mildly, when we turn our head or walk across the room. **The greater the movement, the more vestibular input we receive** because that fluid is swishing around on the receptors more! Therefore, our vestibular seeking kids are always trying to up the ante. They want bigger, more powerful vestibular input and they'll get it when they move fast, climb high, hand upside down, swing, or spin.

A form of sensory processing is the means by which information from our eyes tells our brains where our heads and bodies physically are in the space they occupy – not just whether we are upright or lying down but the varying degrees and movement in between. This called the **vestibular system**.

The vestibular receptors have a very powerful effect on arousal by helping to modulate our nervous systems by calming those who are hyped up or revving up those who are sluggish. Be aware that there are very different types of movement input that are alerting to those that are calming! The effect of vestibular input can be very strong and have a lasting effect of up to 8 hours and may be delayed in showing.

Children with autism who have problems processing vestibular information may display all or some of the following behaviours e.g.

- Aversion to being lifted off the ground or tilted
- Throwing their head back without any sense of what may be behind it
- Problems correcting balance and frequent falling, banging into things
- Being particularly rough when playing
- Be uncomfortable on stairs, clinging to walls or banisters
- Feel seasick when riding in a car or elevator

The child who seeks extra movement may:

- Crave intense, fast, and spinning movement (rocking/swivelling in chairs, jumping on a trampoline, racing around corners and not get dizzy.
- Be a thrill seeker and daredevil, e.g. enjoy jumping from high places
- Need to move constantly (rocking, swaying, spinning, jiggling, shaking hands, fidgeting) in order to function. The child may have trouble staying seated.
- Enjoy being in upside down positions.

The child with poor discrimination of movement may:

- Fall frequently off seat or while moving or standing
- Become easily confused when turning or changing directions
- Be unable to tell when she has had enough swinging, possibly continuing until she feels sick.

The child who is over-responsive to movement may:

- Dislike physical activities such as running, biking or dancing.
- Avoid playground equipment such as swings, slides and merry-go-rounds.
- Be cautious, slow-moving hesitating to take risks.
- Not like head to be inverted, as when being shampooed over the sink.
- Be very tense and rigid to avoid changes in head position.
- Demand continual physical support from a trusted peer or adult.
- Have gravitational insecurity, a great fear of falling experienced as primal terror.

The child who is under-responsive to movement may:

- Not notice or object to being moved
- Seem to lack inner drive to move actively
- Once started, swing for a long time without dizziness
- Not notice sensation of falling or being off-balance, and not protect self well.

**REMEMBER WHEN THE PROPRIOCEPTIVE AND VESTIBULAR SYSTEMS ARE
ACTIVATED GREATER LEARNING HAS BEEN SHOWN TO TAKE PLACE.**

Have fun playing with your child.

Suzanne Davies, Team Camau Bach