

# Recipes

For

## DIY Sensory Tools:

A practical booklet of DIY sensory tool building ideas, made for parents by parents.



By Wendy LeSollen-Hinden

 **AUTISM SOCIETY**  
*Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism*  
Oregon

I am a mother, step mother, college student, wife, and Autism mom. My goal in putting this booklet together is to help with the cost of sensory tools for families, teachers, and providers. These are a collection of tools made by parents as an option to less expensive way to provide our loved ones or the ones we care about, with what they need to thrive.

*For all the families like mine, who are constantly looking for  
ways to help their loved ones.*

*Wendy LeSollen-Hinden*

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**Please use your discretion on which activities would be safe and appropriate for your child.**



# Tactile

## (Touch)

*adjective*

adjective: **tactile**

1. of or connected with the sense of touch.

"vocal and visual signals become less important as tactile signals intensify"

- perceptible by touch or apparently so; tangible.

"she had a distinct, almost tactile memory"

- designed to be perceived by touch.

"tactile exhibitions help blind people enjoy the magic of sculpture"

- (of a person) given to touching others, especially as an unselfconscious expression of sympathy or affection.

*"Touch is a freaky thing when you're not used to it. It makes you feel all kinds of things."*

— **Neal Shusterman, The Schwa Was Here**



**Will need:**

¼ package of cooked spaghetti Cost \$1.00

Garden soil (any type of loose soil will work) Free

Large Plastic Container of some sort (could use a rubber maid container or any shallow large plastic container) Free/\$5.00

Tongs (optional)

**Total Cost \$1.00-\$6.00**

**Messy Alert!**

**If not done outside will want to put  
a sheet below sensory bin.**

**Instructions:**

1. Cook a quarter package of spaghetti noodles, Rinse with cold water (noodles will be hard to separate if some of the starch is not rinsed off).
2. Add dirt to plastic container along with the cooked spaghetti noodles and cover with more dirt. Depending how brave you want to be, you could add a little bit of water to make it a muddier consistency.

This give them opportunity to dig around in the dirt and play with the noodles which also provides sensory input for them. While playing in the dirt, they also get to work on their fine motor skills when picking up the noodles. Messy yet constructive fun for them with eye hand coordination!





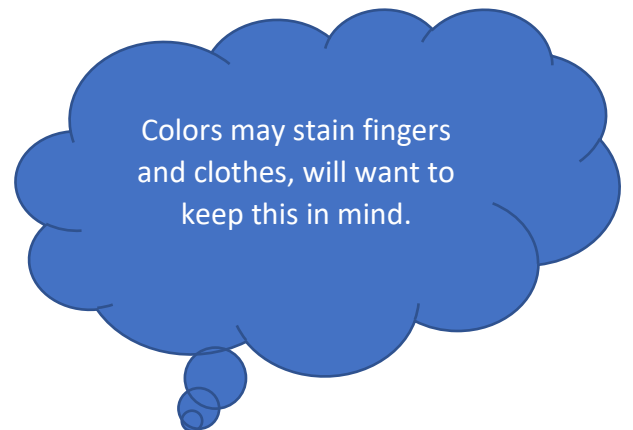
**Will need:**

1 Package of Skittles Cost \$0.75

Light Colored Plate

Warm Water

**Total Cost \$0.75**



**Instructions**

1. Take the plate and add about an 1/8 in depth of warm water. (Might be easier to do this with a spoon as the water out of the faucet will be coming fast)
2. Take the Skittles out of the package and put them in a circle around the plate or actual anywhere around the plate would be fine.

It will not take long before you see the colors of the Skittle seep out into the water. This provides an opportunity for them to play with the colors on the plate with their fingers and doubles as a calming tool. Edible and fun!







<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/785948572440412199>

**Will need:**

Corn Starch \$2.00-\$4.00

Balloons \$1.00-\$2.00

Funnel \$2.00

**Total Cost \$5.00**

**Added Options for filling the balloon:**

- Rice \$2.00
- Beans \$2.00
- Flour \$3.00
- Water Beads (Price varies) \$5.00

**Instructions**

1. Stretch out balloon by inflating it a couple of times.
2. Take funnel and insert the tip of it into the balloon
3. Add cornstarch leaving enough room to tie balloon.

Let them squeeze till their hearts content. This provides tactile input but is also a great had strengthening activity. A bonus to this sensory tool is that it could double for working on oral motor strengthening, breath control and core activation if you let them stretch out the balloon by inflating it themselves.

**Make extra for yourself, great stress reliever!**





<http://www.thebudgetdiet.com/homemade-5-minute-diy-slime-entertain-your-kids-for-hours>

### **Will need:**

Glue (either clear, jell, or white) \$1.00

Borax Detergent Booster \$4.00

Measuring Cup & Spoon \$1.00

Three Bowls & a Spatula \$1.00

Glitters, Small Toys, or any Embellishments \$2.00

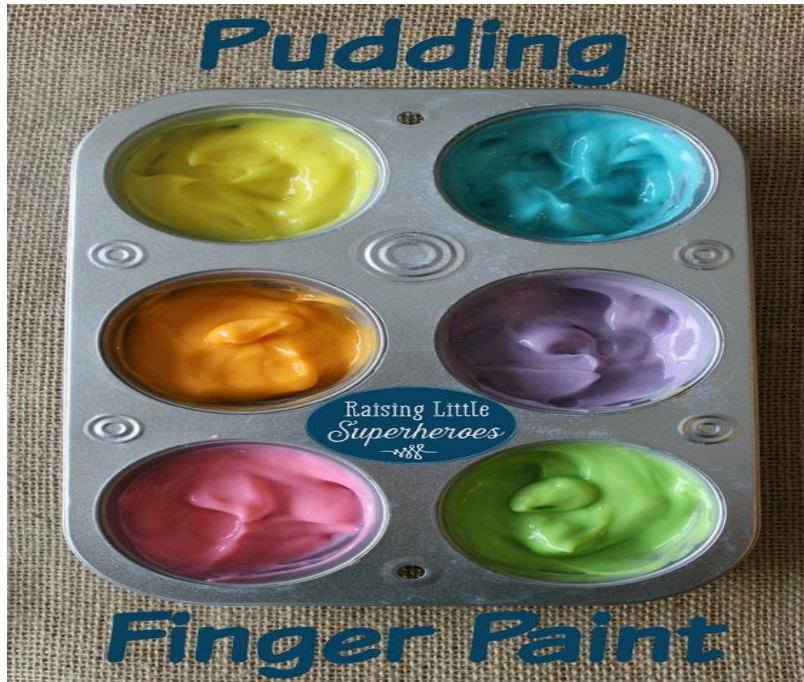
**Total Cost \$6.00-\$10.00** (most items needed can be bought at the Dollar Store)

### **Instructions**

1. Mix 1/3 cup of water and a teaspoon of Borax in the bowl
2. Mix one cup of water and entire container of glue in separate bowl
3. Add the two solutions together in a separate bowl and mix
4. Stir until it becomes the consistency of slime and all the water is absorbed
5. Add what you would like i.e. Glitters or small toys

This provides a great tactile experience. Slimy with different textures in it. Fun to squish and hold in your hand. Store in a zip log bag to keep the slime from drying out.





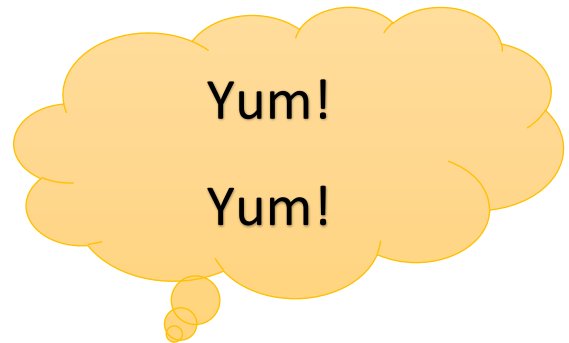
<http://raisinglittlesuperheroes.com/pudding-finger-paint/>

**Will Need:**

Food Coloring \$3.65

Instant Vanilla Flavored Pudding \$1.00

**Total Cost \$4.65**



**Instructions**

Make the pudding according to directions, unless already premade. Set aside 4 different containers and put pudding into containers (could be more than 4). Add one or two drops of different food coloring into the separate containers. The pudding will soak through any regular piece of paper so either laying down newspaper below the regular sheet of paper or getting poster board my work best, use at your discretion.





<http://pagingfunmums.com/2014/10/30/sand-foam-two-ingredients-for-super-sensory-fun/>

### **Will Need:**

3 Cups of Play Sand \$5.00 (for a 1.5 lb. bag)

One can of shaving foam \$1.00

**Total Cost \$6.00**

### **Instructions**

Pour your sand into a tub. Then pour in your shaving foam – mixing as you go. Keep mixing and adding the shaving foam until you are happy with the texture. This also provides a great opportunity for kids to get tactile input through the texture of the sand and foam. You could put sea shells or trucks for additional play and play hide and seek, use your imagination!

This also provides a great opportunity for kids to get tactile input through the texture of the sand and foam. You could put sea shells or trucks for additional play and play hide and seek, use your imagination!

**Texture Book**







[https://www.etsy.com/listing/215685820/?utm\\_source=OpenGraph&utm\\_medium=PageTools&utm\\_campaign=Share](https://www.etsy.com/listing/215685820/?utm_source=OpenGraph&utm_medium=PageTools&utm_campaign=Share)

### **What you need:**

Paper dividers \$2.99

1 three ring binder \$2.00

Whatever texture you want to glue \$3.00

(could get these at a craft or dollar store)

Elmer's Glue \$1.00 (or hot glue gun)

### **Instruction**

Lay out cardboard dividers on a table. Have a plan on what a where you would like to place your tactile sensory items on the boards. Once you fill one side let dry for a half hour and you have the option of flipping it over and doing the other side. One will need to be mindful at the possibility that pieces of the sensory board may be picked off or fall off for those who loved ones like to put things in their mouth.

This can provide a great opportunity to journal some of the textures they do and don't like. Journaling this can provide a pattern of behaviors that can be useful in making decisions later. More than likely you have various textures in your home that your loved one already likes and could add to this booklet. This also gives them the opportunity to choose to either seek out or avoid any one texture with the options you provided them.





## Water fun

### What you need

A plastic container

Various toys that are plastic and can get wet

Plastic cup \$1.00

If it's too cold to play outside have them use the cup during Bath time!

### Instructions

Take one of the plastic cups and poke 3 or 4 small holes in the bottom and have the child fill the cup part way with water. This gives them the opportunity to feel the water come out of the cup and on to their hand. The toys are for just additional entertainment as they feel the cool or warm water on their skin and play in the water.





# Vestibular

ves·tib·u·lar

və 'stibyələr, ve 'stibyələr/

*adjective*

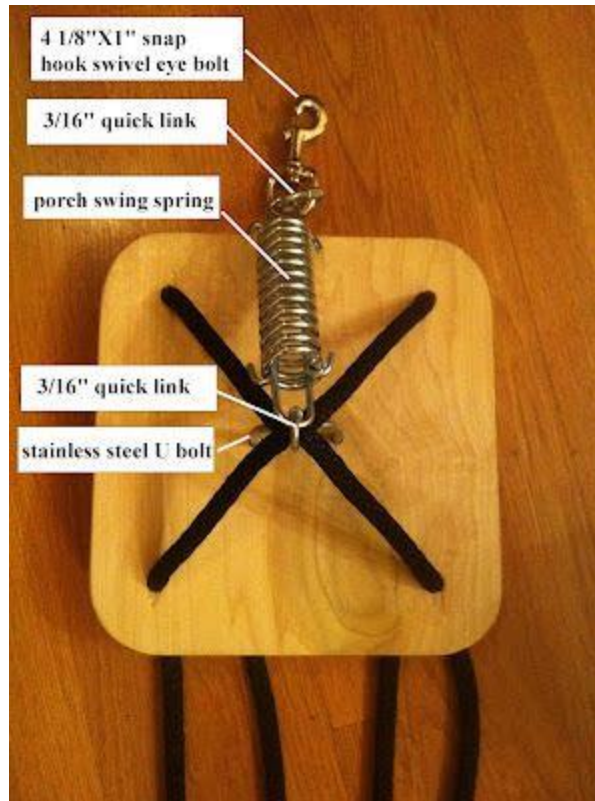
Anatomy

adjective: **vestibular**

1. relating to a vestibule, particularly that of the inner ear, or more generally to the sense of balance.

“How one walks through the world, the endless small adjustments of balance, is affected by the shifting weights of beautiful things.”

— **Elaine Scarry**



<http://lovingamiracle.blogspot.com/2012/03/how-do-you-make-platform-swing.html?m=1>

### **What you will need:**

Stainless steel U bolt \$3.00

2x Quick link \$2.50 each

Porch Swing Spring \$9.20

4 1/8 xi Snap Hook Swivel \$4.20

Total **Please note this is not the cost of all the hardware that will be needed. The full list of supplies along with their disclaimer can be found by typing in the link above.**

### **Instructions**

The full list of instructions can be found by the above link. The idea is to give them a swing that they can use inside for those that love vestibular input. Please make sure you read instructions and disclaimer carefully.







## Benefits of a Balance Board



<http://www.mymundaneandmiraculouslife.com/the-benefits-of-using-a-balance-board-with-kids/>

### **What you will need:**

1 Pool noodle \$2.50

Depending on what you have in your house, one could use a detachable shelf section.

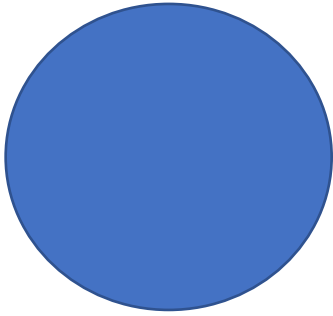
It will just need to be the width for what you need.

You will also want to make sure that all surfaces on the board are smooth.

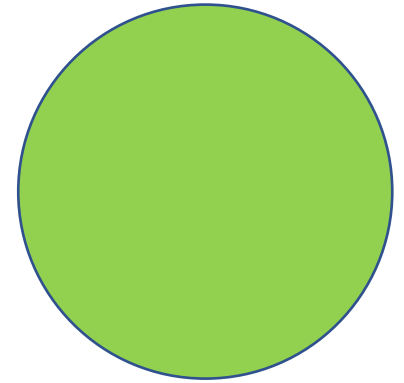
### **Instructions**

Put board on top of noodle so that the noodle is relatively in the middle. Make sure it is in a safe place so if they do fall off they will not crash into anything. The idea here is to provide vestibular input by letting them use their weight to rock back and forth on the board. They could also use both of their hands to push the board back and forth or sit on the board and rock back and forth that way.





## **EXERCISE BALL** for Sensory Therapy



<http://www.mymundaneandmiraculouslife.com/more-ways-to-use-an-exercise-ball-for-sensory-therapy/>

### **What you will need:**

Yoga Ball \$8.00

Total cost \$8.00

### **Instructions**

Have them lay on the ball face forward. They can roll around on the ball which will give them vestibular input. Again, you will want to make sure this is done in a safe place so they do not crash into something like furniture. One way to make this even more fun is you could put a piece of paper on the floor to color or they could practice picking up something from one side and putting it in another. Get creative!





<http://www.simplykinder.com/>

### **What you will need**

1 bouncy ball \$ (the kind you see at the grocery store)

1 milk crate \$10.00 (otherwise check with your local store to see if they would donate one to you)

### **Instructions**

Make sure that their legs will reach the floor when sitting on top of the ball. Also, be mindful of their surroundings, bouncy balls equal bouncy kids. This idea was put together by a teacher for her classroom but certainly could be implemented at home for a fun vestibular activity.





<http://www.theottoolbox.com/2016/03/shamrock-st-patricks-day-balance-beam-vestibular-sensory.html>

### **What you will need:**

Paper

Scissors

### **Instructions**

Cut out any two shapes that you would like. It does not matter if they are different colors. Put the shapes on the floor in such a way that no two shape are side by side. The idea here is that you can make up your own balancing beam. You could have them walk on only the circles one way and then on the way back walk on the squares. It is up to you and your imagination.







<http://www.theperfectplaygroundny.com/>

**What you will need:**

- 1 Sheet that will hold the child
- 2 people strong enough to hold their weight

**Instructions**

Lay the sheet down on the ground and have the child lay down in the middle. With one person on each hand slowly lift the child as you compensate for their weight. Slowly start to move them side to side making sure you have a firm grasp on the sheet. You will also want to make sure this is done in an area that is safe. The idea here is that the swinging motion will provide them with the vestibular input for their whole body





# Oral

*adjective*

adjective: **oral**

1. 1.

by word of mouth; spoken rather than written.

"they had reached an oral agreement"

synonyms: [spoken](#), [verbal](#), [unwritten](#), [vocal](#), uttered, [said](#), by mouth, [viva voce](#)  
"an oral agreement"

antonyms: [written](#)

- o relating to the transmission of information or literature by word of mouth rather than in writing.

noun: **oral tradition**; plural noun: **oral traditions**

"oral literature"

## Oral Motor

Exercises are non-speech activities that involve sensory stimulation to or actions of the lips, jaw, tongue, soft palate, larynx, and respiratory muscles which are intended to influence the physiologic underpinnings of the oropharyngeal mechanism and thus improve its functions.

[www.speech-language-therapy.com](http://www.speech-language-therapy.com)



<http://makingmerrymemories.blogspot.com/2012/02/candy-party.html?m=1>

### **What you will need**

1 Package of Gold Fish \$3.00

1 Straw \$1.00

1 bowl

**Total \$4.00**

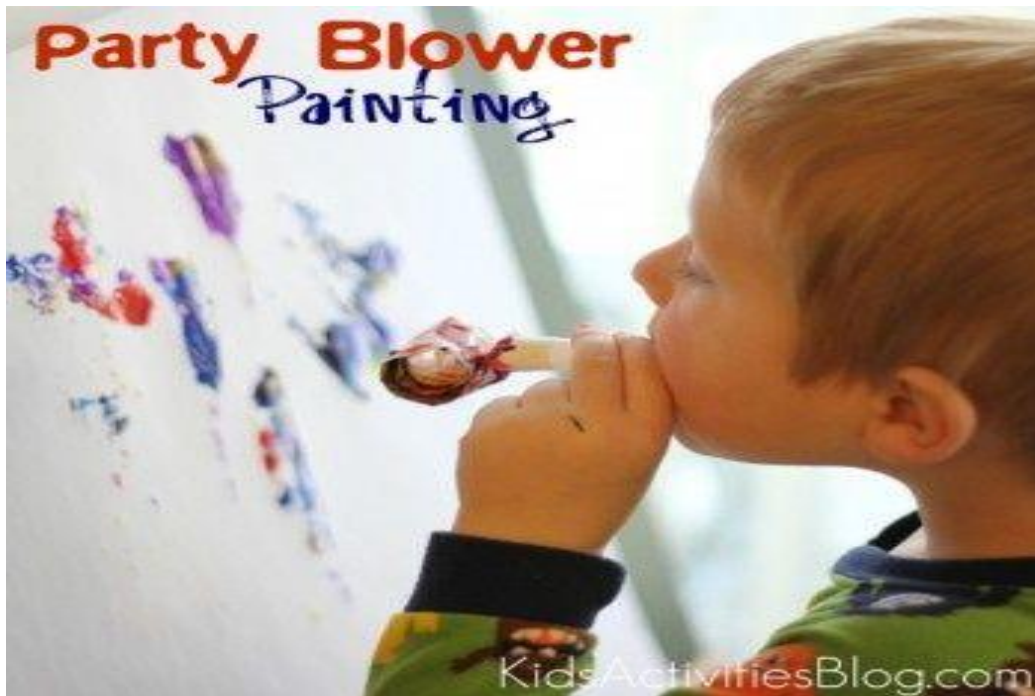
### **Directions**

1. Take a hand full of gold fish and lay them on a small section of a table spread out.
2. Put a bowl about a foot away opposite from the gold fish on the table.

Have them try to use their breath to pick up the gold fish with a straw and then place the gold fish in the bowl.

Fun oral motor activity that you can eat too!





<http://kidsactivitiesblog.com/10015/things-paint-with-a-party-blower>

### **What you will need**

3 Party favor blowers \$1.00

Acrylic Paints \$5.00

Large pad of paper \$5.00

Paper or plastic plate

**Total \$11.00**



### **Directions**

1. Tape paper on to a wall. Put dabs of different colored pain on to paper plate. Dab blower into paint. Have them stand close enough that the blower will reach the paper.

Another oral motor activity that doubles as fun sensory play. It also allows them an opportunity to do lip pursing which is a great way to work on sound formation.



**Space Provided to Journal if the Activity Did or Did Not Work for Them or Modifications to Activity**

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<http://handsonaswegrow.com/fun-kid-activity-lines-of-colored-tape/>

### **What you will need**

Multi colored electrical tape \$8.00 (or could use just one color)

1 straw \$1.00

1 Pom Pom \$1.00

**Total \$10.00**

### **Directions**

1. Place 3 different colored lines on a hard surface floor. You can make them straight, curvy or even into shapes.

At some point, though, the all 3 lines must intersect with one another. Have them place the pom pom on one of the lines anywhere and start blowing through the straw to move the pom pom along the lines of tape.

The idea here is to use deep breathing to help regulate sensory over load. It helps with controlling the inward and outward breath the person takes. It can also act as a preventative, when you notice the person is receiving too much input.

**Space Provided to Journal if the Activity Did or Did Not Work for Them or Modifications to Activity**

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<http://beafunmum.com/2012/01/its-raining-today-we-are-sailing-away/>

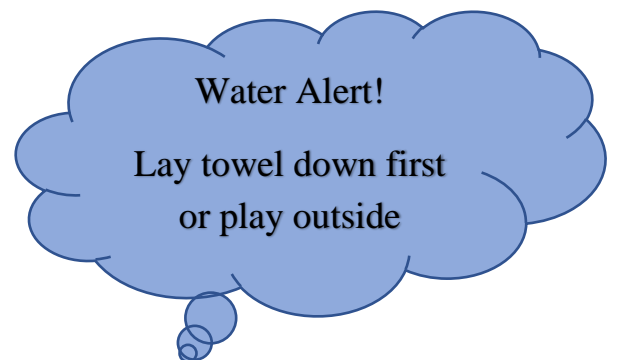
### **What you will need**

1 Milk Cap

Blu-tack (the blue putty glue) \$2.00

1 toothpick

1 green leaf



### **Directions**

1. Press a small piece of blu-tack into the base of a milk bottle lid. To ensure the boat floats, use as little blu-tack as possible.
2. Thread the leaf on to the tooth pick and press the bottom of the tooth pick into the blu-tack (snip the sharp end off when you're done)
3. Place boat in shallow container full of water and have them use their breath to blow the boat around.

**Space Provided to Journal if the Activities Did or Did Not Work for Them or Modifications to Activity**

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<http://www.andnextcomesl.com/2016/02/diy-chewelry-sensory-hacks-for-kids.html>

## Easy Fabric Bracelets

### What you will need:

Scrap Fabric (could even be from an old shirt)

Sewing thread and needle or sewing machine if you have it \$3.00

**Total \$3.00**

This is just one idea out of many from this link.

### Directions

1. Cut 3 strips of fabric 2" x 12"
2. Sew all 3 pieces together
3. Braid the 3 strips together but slightly loose.
4. Pin and sew the other end together and then sew the two ends together to make a bracelet

This is a great way for them to get the oral input they need. The fabric allows them to chew on it, meanwhile not ruining clothes or other such items and will always be with them.

**Space Provided to Journal if the Activity Did or Did Not Work for Them or Modifications to Activity**

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# Proprioceptive

pro·pri·o·cep·tive

ˌprɒprɪəˈseptɪv/

*adjective*

Physiology

adjective:

1. relating to stimuli that are produced and perceived within an organism, especially those connected with the position and movement of the body.



[www.hartleyboys.com](http://www.hartleyboys.com)

### **What you need**

A weight scale \$15.00- \$20.00

(or if you already have one-free)

### **Instructions**

You or someone else hold the scale up against the wall in a place where the child or person can push on it that is level to their shoulders. The scale will need to be held against the wall the whole time. The idea here is to use their upper body muscles to push on the scale. Because it is a scale they will be able to see how much pressure they are putting on the scale. You can keep track of the progress they are making and even make goals to see how much pressure they can put on the scale.





<http://www.artbarblog.com/inspire/children-draw-with-their-feet-and-mouths/>

### **What you will need**

A sheet of paper from a roll at least 3ft by 5ft. (cost may vary)

*I would check with your child's school, this may be a less expensive route  
appose to buying a whole role*

1 or two Crayons \$1.00

**Total \$ may vary**

### **Instructions**

Tape paper firmly to a wall to a height that when they lay down on their backs, their toes can reach the paper easily. Have them practice holding a crayon between their toes to have an idea of what that feels like and which toe/foot works best for them. While they are lying on their back, position them so that they can draw on the paper that minimizes the chances they will draw on the wall. For example, give enough room to draw a half circle starting from the floor boards for each leg. This is a fun exercise where your child gets to work on movement and position of their legs.





[www.goldenreflectionsblog.com](http://www.goldenreflectionsblog.com)

### **What you need:**

A laundry basket \$5.00

Stuff: toys, balls etc.

### **Instructions**

The idea here is to put some weight in the basket for the child to push. Depending on their age and how much they can push will depend on what you put in the basket. So, for older kids, this might work best if heavier stuff is put into the basket. You can have them push the basket on the floor from one side to the other, or you could have them carry it depending on the weight of the basket and age of the child. This provides some great muscle input when the outdoors is not an option.





<http://www.cindyutzinger.com/2012/03/28/blanket-pulls/>

**What you need:**

One blanket

2 children

Make sure there is a safe pathway in your house, clear from furniture and any other objects that could get ran over.

**Instructions**

Lay out blanket on the floor. Have one of the kids sit in the middle of the blanket. Have the other child bunch the blanket as such (they may need help with this) that they can pull the other person along the floor without the blanket falling apart. The input that the child receives here is by having to use their legs and arm muscles to pull the other child in the blanket. Yet another fun activity to do indoors.



**Space Provided to Journal if the Activity Did or Did Not Work for  
Them or Modifications to Activity**

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[www.cantgoogleeverything.blogspot.com](http://www.cantgoogleeverything.blogspot.com)

**What you will need:**

1 cardboard box with at least 3 intact sides

Paper that will wrap around the box (could even use the back side of wrapping paper)

1 black marker

Tape

**Instructions**

Tape the paper around the box so that you can write on each side, top and bottom of the box. Have fun and involve your child in what type of activities should be written on the sides of the box. When you are done you or the child can roll the box on the floor or toss up in the air (be cautious of what's above you) and try out the different activities that are listed as you go. This would be something fun for the whole family all mean while the child is receiving muscle input in all sorts of ways.

**Space Provided to Journal if the Activity Did or Did Not Work for  
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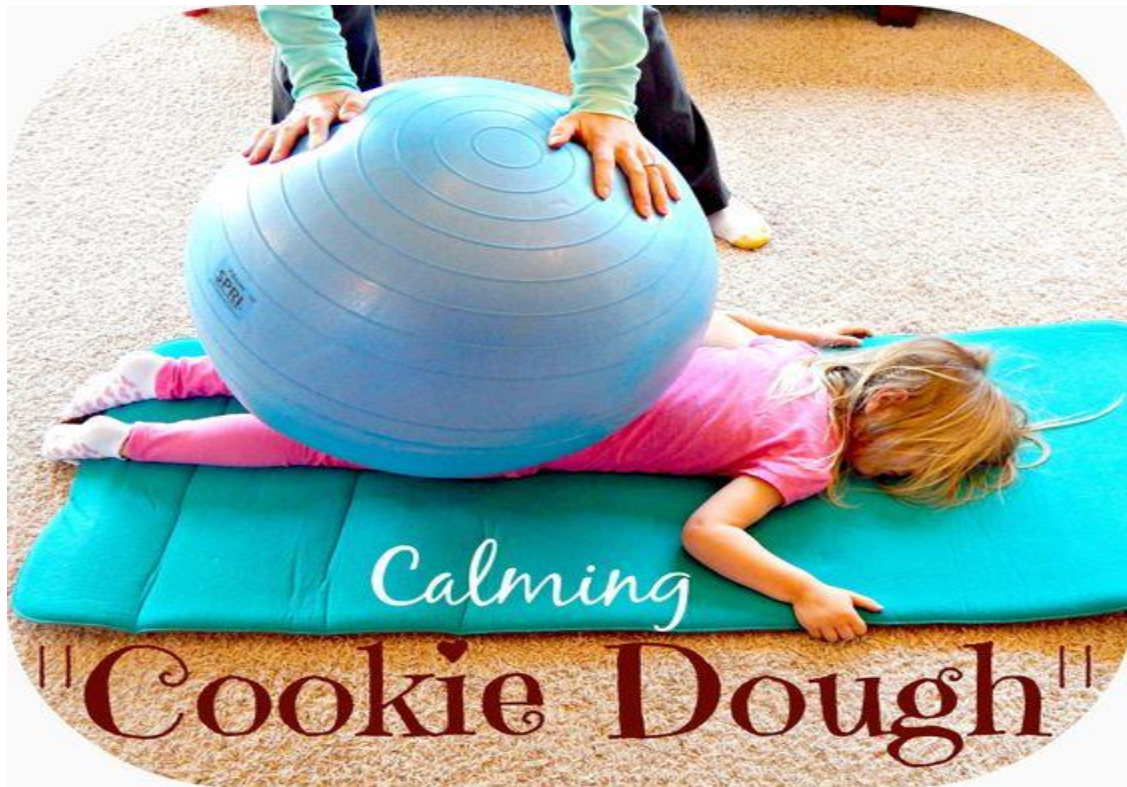
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[www.KidsPlaySmarter.com](http://www.KidsPlaySmarter.com)

**You will need:**

One Yoga Ball \$8.00

Some sort of soft padding under the child like a heavy sleeping bag or mat

**Instructions**

Have the child lay face down on the mat. Now gently roll the ball up and down on their body. The amount of pressure you apply depends on what will feel comfortable for that child. The idea here is that you are providing pressure to muscles in the child body that may not normally get stimulated through every day activities.

**Space Provided to Journal if the Activity Did or Did Not Work for Them or Modifications to Activity**

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