

Proprioceptive Rich Activities for Different Environments

Proprioception is one of the eight sensory processing systems. Proprioceptive-rich activities each day involve activities which give deep pressure to the muscles and joints. Any activities that involve making the muscles stretch/contract, and the joints and tendons move (e.g bending/stretching, pushing/pulling, lifting, pressing, squeezing, reaching), will help trigger the proprioceptive system and can help promote feelings of being grounded, which in turn can help the young person to remain calm.

Proprioception provides **organising, grounding input**, helping with:

- Emotional regulation
- Attention and readiness to learn
- Body awareness and motor planning
- Reducing sensory overload
- Increasing engagement in daily occupations

Home Environment

Heavy Work

- Carrying laundry baskets or grocery bags
- Moving cushions, rearranging furniture (small/light items)
- Helping take out rubbish or recycling bins
- Vacuuming, sweeping, mopping
- Pushing a weighted box or laundry basket across the floor
- Gardening (digging, lifting soil bags)
- Cooking (kneading dough, stirring thick mixtures)
- Cleaning tasks (vacuuming, scrubbing)
- Carrying laundry baskets or grocery bags
- Moving cushions, rearranging furniture (small/light items)
- Jet washing
- Pushing a heavy wheelbarrow
- Self care – textured bathing items like loofahs, sponges etc, pressure from shower

Deep Pressure / Joint Compression

- “Sandwich squeezes” between pillows
- Rolling child up in a duvet (“burrito”) and applying gentle pressure
- Wrapping tightly in towel or blanket
- Crawling through tunnels or under tables
- Climbing up stairs on hands and knees
- Building with large blocks or furniture rearranging

Calming Input

- Wall push-ups
- Chair push-ups
- Slow, heavy blanket pressure
- Slow rocking in a rocking chair with foot-presses into the floor
- Small safe spaces can be down regulating. A cuddle swing or similar

- can help support return to a calm and alert state.
- Foot spa/soak, massage tools

Activities:

- Dance routines or Zumba
- Yoga or Pilates (especially poses that challenge balance)
- Blowing bubbles or using musical instruments – recorder, mouth organ
- Art/craft – drawing, painting with big movements, collage, ripping and sticking pictures.
- Signing/singing familiar songs etc.



School / Classroom Environment

Heavy Work

- Carrying books or handing out supplies
- Pushing a trolley, cart, or stack of chairs
- Wiping down desks or whiteboards
- Sharpening pencils (manual)
- Opening/closing heavy doors
- Carrying a backpack with heavy weight inside

Fine-Motor Proprioception

- Using hole punchers
- Using resistive materials (theraputty, playdough)
- Stapling papers (manual)
- Squeezing stress balls or hand grippers
- Therapy putty strengthening
- Clay modelling or pottery
- Pressing palms of hands together

Movement Breaks

- Wall sits
- Chair push-ups
- Isometric desk pushes (“push the desk without moving it”)

Playground Heavy Work

- Climbing ladders, ropes, monkey bars
- Pushing friends on swings
- Hanging and swinging from bars
- Crawling up slides
- Pushing/pulling resistance bands
- Rope pulls or tug-of-war
- Weighted beanbag toss or ball toss

Outdoor Environment

Nature-Based Proprioception

- Carrying logs, rocks, garden tools
- Digging in sand, dirt, or mud
- Pushing wheelbarrows
- Raking or shovelling
- Building dens or obstacle courses

Whole-Body Actions

- Jumping off low platforms
- Running uphill/downhill
- Rolling down grassy hills
- Obstacle courses (crawling, jumping, balancing)

Community Environments (Shops, Parks, Errands)

Functional Heavy Work

- Carrying shopping bags
- Loading/unloading the car
- Pushing a shopping trolley
- Walking the dog (light pulling resistance)
- Helping with community garden tasks

Movement Opportunities

- Climbing local play structures
- Scootering or biking
- Using outdoor gym equipment

Sports & Outdoor Activities

- Rock climbing or bouldering, indoor climbing walls
- Skateboarding or scootering
- Swimming, hydrotherapy
- Trampoline jumping
- Horseriding
- Karate and taichi, martial arts
- Cycling

Bedtime / Calming Settings

Deep Pressure Calming

- Weighted blanket (appropriate weight)
- Slow, firm compressions through arms/legs
- Heavy pillow “steamroller”
- Slow yoga poses (child’s pose, downward dog with heel presses)
- Massage or reflexology

Slow Heavy Work

- Slow animal walks (bear, crab, turtle)
- Gentle wall push-ups
- Slow joint compressions guided by an adult



Transitional Environments (Hallways, Waiting Rooms, Car Parks)

Quick Regulation Options

- Isometric pushes (hands together, against wall, against thighs)
- Slow marching with heavy footfalls
- Carrying a weighted backpack (short term only)
- Squeezing a resistance ball
- Wall push-ups

Movement and Proprioception

- Big steps
- Slow heel drops
- Shoulder shrugs with deep breath synchronisation