

Classroom Sensory Strategies & Accommodations

Sensory supports for an autistic student, organized by sensory system. Tick the ones that fit your child, and paste the wording into the accommodations section of the IEP or 504 plan.

How to use this sheet: find the two or three systems that match your child, tick the strategies you want, and bring it to the meeting. Replace each bracketed field ([Student], the interval, the signal) with your child's specifics. Once wording is written into the plan, the school is required to provide it, not just willing to.

Proprioception (body awareness and pressure)

Looks like: The child crashes, leans on others, or chews on pencils and collars to get calming input.

Request in the plan:

- ☐ A heavy-work job before hard transitions (carrying books, stacking chairs, pushing the cart, wiping the board)
- ☐ A resistance band around the front chair legs to push against while seated
- ☐ Wall push-ups, chair push-ups, or a quick errand as a movement reset between tasks
- ☐ A weighted lap pad for grounding deep pressure during seated work

COPY-PASTE IEP OR 504 WORDING

[Student] will have access to proprioceptive heavy-work input (a classroom job carrying or pushing weighted items, wall push-ups, or a resistance band on the chair) at least once every [30-45] minutes and before major transitions, provided proactively by staff rather than only after dysregulation.

Vestibular (movement and balance)

Looks like: The child rocks the chair, wraps legs around the legs, slides to the floor, or seems to fall out of the seat.

Request in the plan:

- ☐ Flexible seating: a wobble cushion, therapy-ball chair, or a chair with a footrest so the feet are grounded
- ☐ Scheduled movement breaks built into the day, not held back until the child falls apart
- ☐ The option to stand or use a standing desk for part of seated work
- ☐ A seat placed where a little movement will not distract others and a break can be taken without crossing the room

COPY-PASTE IEP OR 504 WORDING

[Student] will be provided with flexible seating (such as a wobble cushion or foot band) and scheduled movement breaks of [3-5] minutes at least every [30] minutes, and may request an additional movement break using a nonverbal signal without losing access to instruction.

Tactile (touch and texture)

Looks like: The child reacts to a clothing tag, refuses glue or paint on the hands, or is distressed by being bumped in line.

Request in the plan:

- ☐ A spot at the front or back of the line, where the child will not be bumped from both sides
- ☐ Tools instead of fingers for messy work (a brush for glue, a spoon for a bin, gloves for paint)
- ☐ The option to opt out of hand-holding and required touch, with an agreed alternative
- ☐ Advance warning before any hands-on help, so touch is never a surprise

COPY-PASTE IEP OR 504 WORDING

[Student] may stand at the beginning or end of lines to reduce incidental contact, may use tools rather than bare hands for messy or tactile activities, and will be given advance verbal warning before any physical assistance. Staff will honor [Student]'s clothing and texture preferences as a sensory need, not a preference to be corrected.

Auditory (sound)

Looks like: The child covers their ears, bolts, or shuts down at the bell, the hand dryer, the fire alarm, or the cafeteria.

Request in the plan:

- ☐ Noise-reducing headphones or earplugs kept within reach, usable without asking
- ☐ Advance warning of fire drills and assemblies, with the option to wait in a quieter spot
- ☐ A seat away from high-noise sources (the door, the pencil sharpener, the AC unit)
- ☐ An agreed quiet space for a regulation break, framed as a reset and never a punishment

COPY-PASTE IEP OR 504 WORDING

[Student] will have access to noise-reducing headphones or earplugs at all times and may use them independently. Staff will provide advance notice of fire drills and assemblies when possible, and [Student] may access a designated quiet space for a sensory break upon request or staff observation of overload.

Visual (sight and light)

Looks like: The child squints under fluorescent lights, reports headaches, or cannot find the one thing to look at in a busy room.

Request in the plan:

- ☐ Reduced clutter in the child's direct line of sight, and a calm area around the board and desk
- ☐ Softened harsh lighting where possible (a fabric filter, a lamp, or a seat by natural light away from flicker)
- ☐ A visual schedule and clean, uncluttered worksheets so key information is easy to find
- ☐ A study carrel, privacy folder, or a seat facing a blank wall for focused work

COPY-PASTE IEP OR 504 WORDING

[Student] will be seated to minimize visual overload (reduced clutter in the line of sight, away from glare and light flicker) and may use a privacy folder or study carrel for focused work. A visual schedule will be provided and kept current, and [Student] may use a brimmed hat or tinted lenses if needed for light sensitivity.

Oral and gustatory (mouth and taste)

Looks like: The child chews a collar, sleeve, or pencil, and at lunch may eat few foods or gag at certain textures and smells.

Request in the plan:

- ☐ A chewable necklace, bracelet, or pencil topper made for the purpose, so clothing and objects are spared
- ☐ Water bottle access, since sucking through a straw or sports cap gives organizing oral input
- ☐ Crunchy or chewy snacks (where allergy rules allow) as a regulating option during hard parts of the day
- ☐ No requirement to eat, taste, or sit near foods that trigger a strong aversion, with an alternative lunch spot allowed

COPY-PASTE IEP OR 504 WORDING

[Student] will have access to a designated chewable tool and a water bottle throughout the day for oral-sensory regulation. [Student] will not be required to eat or remain in close proximity to non-preferred foods, and may eat in an alternative, quieter location when the cafeteria environment causes distress.

Interoception (internal body signals)

Looks like: The child misses hunger, thirst, temperature, or the need for the bathroom until it becomes urgent or turns into a meltdown.

Request in the plan:

- ☐ Scheduled bathroom breaks, rather than relying on the child to notice and ask in time
- ☐ Scheduled snack and water breaks so hunger and thirst do not build into dysregulation
- ☐ A feelings or body check-in chart to connect a physical signal to a word
- ☐ Gentle prompting on late signals (flushed face, fidgeting, rising agitation) instead of waiting for a request

COPY-PASTE IEP OR 504 WORDING

Recognizing that [Student] has reduced interoceptive awareness, staff will offer scheduled bathroom, water, and snack breaks rather than relying on [Student] to identify and report these needs, and will use a body or feelings check-in to support interoceptive awareness. Accidents or dysregulation linked to unmet internal needs will be treated as a sensory-support issue, not a behavior issue.

Bringing this to the meeting

Ask that the wording go into the accommodations section (sometimes called supplementary aids and services) word for word, adjusted with your child's specifics. Sensory accommodations are among the easiest supports for a school to say yes to, because most cost nothing. The full searchable set lives in the free Accommodations Bank at spectrumunlocked.com/tools/accommodations-bank.