



# Your Therapy Source News

**Digital magazine for pediatric  
occupational and physical therapists.**

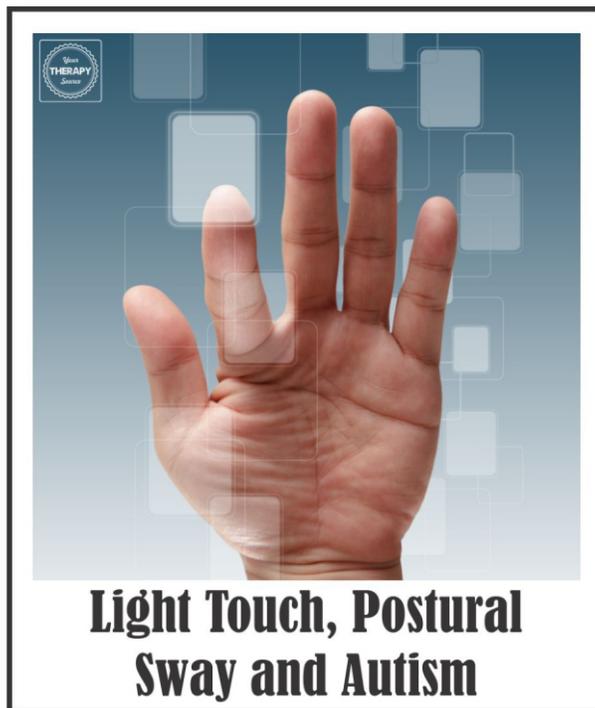
[www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)



**November 2015  
Issue 77**



# Light Touch, Postural Sway and Children with Autism



## Light Touch, Postural Sway and Autism

*Gait & Posture* published research comparing 16 children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and 16 typically developing children (TD) to determine the effects of a light fingertip touch on postural control. Postural sway was measured with a force platform in different conditions: anteroposterior (AP) and mediolateral (ML) directions, light fingertip touch (LT) and no touch (NT) conditions, and with both eyes open (EO) and both eyes closed (EC).

The results indicated the following:

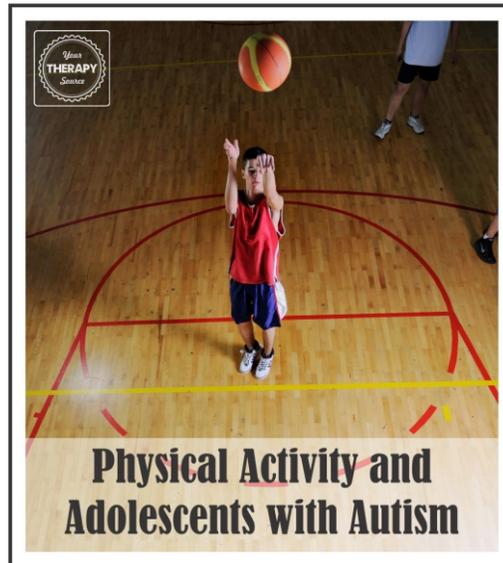
1. ML sway was significantly greater in the ASD group than in the TDC group.
2. a significant reduction in postural sway in the ML direction in the LT condition compared with the NT condition which applied to both the EO and EC conditions.
3. the reduction in ML sway between the NT and LT conditions was significantly greater in the ASD than the TDC group.

The researchers concluded that the effects of a light fingertip touch on reducing postural sway appears to be more efficient in children with ASD compared with TDC therefore suggesting that a light fingertip touch may be helpful in improving postural stability in children with ASD.

Reference: Fu-Chen Chen, Hsin-Lin Chen, Jui-Hung Tu, Chia-Liang Tsai. Effects of light touch on postural sway and visual search accuracy: A test of functional integration and resource competition hypotheses. *Gait & Posture*. Volume 42, Issue 3, September 2015, Pages 280–284

Looking for balance activities? Check out Cross the Beam game to challenge postural control and balance skills at <http://yourtherapysource.com/beam.html>

# Physical Activity and Adolescents with Autism



*Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* published research on a questionnaire completed by 35 adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and 60 typically developing (TD) adolescents comparing physical activity enjoyment, perceived barriers, beliefs, and self-efficacy. The results indicated the following:

1. fewer adolescents with ASD enjoyed team sports – 65% vs. 95% of TD adolescents.
2. fewer adolescents with ASD enjoyed physical education – 84% vs. 98% of TD adolescents
3. more adolescents with ASD perceived that physical activities were too hard to learn – 16% vs. 0% of TD adolescents
4. fewer adolescents with ASD believed that physical activity was a way to make friends – 68% vs. 97% of TD adolescents
5. fewer adolescents with ASD preferred to do physical activity in their free time – 25% vs. 58%, of TD adolescents
6. fewer adolescents with ASD felt that physical activity is fun – 84% vs. 98% of TD adolescents

This research can help to guide physical activity programming for adolescents with ASD.

Reference: Heidi Stanish, Carol Curtin, Aviva Must, Sarah Phillips, Melissa Maslin, Linda Bandini. Enjoyment, Barriers, and Beliefs About Physical Activity in Adolescents With and Without Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*. 2015, 32, 302 – 317.

**Classroom Activity Posters** is a collection of 16 exercise activities, 4 large posters and a brief, simple video demonstration of each exercise. The posters are divided into four groups: posture, alerting, ready to work and focus/balance. All of the exercises are performed in standing. Try these activities prior to starting fine motor activities, for posture breaks, to refocus students attention and for vestibular/ proprioceptive input in the classroom.  
FIND OUT MORE AT <http://yourtherapysource.com/cap.html>

# Help Children to Develop Motor Maps of Their Surroundings

Many pediatric occupational and physical therapists work with children who exhibit decreased sensory processing such as decreased body awareness, motor planning and proprioception. These difficulties of sensing where a child is in space can interfere with motor skill development, peer interaction and safety. We are all familiar with therapy sessions that focus on proprioceptive input, following motor commands and activities that encourage the children to learn where their body is in space. One additional activity to consider is fully exploring the environment where the functional skills are to be learned.



Let's take this goal for example: Johnny will negotiate the classroom without bumping into stationary objects 100% of the time. As stated previously, therapy may consist of body awareness activities, proprioceptive input (heavy work activities) and motor planning skills. If it is pull out therapy all of this takes place outside of the true environment. If it is push in therapy perhaps skills are practiced during recess, physical education or sometimes in the classroom. BUT do you remember to explore and practice skills in the actual environment?

Remember to not only practice activities but how about really exploring the area where "Johnny" is having difficulties. When the classroom is empty, go inside and have Johnny walk in and around the desks and chairs. Johnny can crawl under desks, kneel down and sit in different locations in the classroom. Add in games or activities to keep it novel. Provide verbal cues as Johnny walks by items ie. this desk is wide or this aisle is narrow. This exploration allows Johnny to develop a motor map of his surroundings with him in it. He can develop a better sense of how big desks are, how tall are the chairs, how wide is the carpet and how far is the bathroom.

This can apply to different areas of the school or home. How about the cafeteria? Let a child explore it to help define a motor map for in between cafeteria tables, on the cafeteria line and around garbage cans. At home, if furniture is changed around allow time to just explore the new areas and obstacles without adding in the stressors of different goals. Now when you do start to add in the actual functional tasks that needs to be accomplished, Johnny should have a much better idea of what you are expecting of him.

In summary, keep it simple sometimes and start out with just simply exploring the surroundings without adding in any other functional tasks to help build a strong foundation.

## **Body Awareness Games Personal Space Journey**

By: Your Therapy Source Inc

Summary: Collection of activities to teach children about personal space including many body awareness exercises and a social story on personal space.

FIND OUT MORE at <http://yourtherapysource.com/personalspacejourney.html>

# Help for App Overload



I'm not sure about you, but I am completely overwhelmed by all the apps out there. I used to try and keep up on all the applications and tools that were available for children. I have completely given up. In my opinion, it is impossible! Therefore I now rely on other sources to help me keep up although I am still not keeping up..... Well anyhow here are some of the websites I count on to get my information:

1. OTs with Apps – Carol Leynse Harpold, MS, AdEd, OTR/L, ATP has over 30 years of experience. The blog focuses on reviewing apps and other technologies for OT's working with children and adults. Highly recommend that you follow this blog – <http://otswithapps.com/>
2. CallScotland.org – This is an amazing website page that organizes apps according to different topics. Each of the infographics are available to download as PDFs with clickable links directly to the internet. There are free infographics on reading, communication, dyslexia, eye gaze, creativity, writing difficulties and powerpoint books. Not all of the infographics are all about apps but they are all worthwhile to check out.
3. SmartAppsforKids – I love this website on Fridays when they create a list of all free apps that are available for FreeApp Friday.

That's basically what I rely on and I know I don't even scratch the surface each week on exploring everything new. Sometimes, first hand recommendations from other people on what works or what is beneficial is the best way to keep up.

do have a Facebook page that focuses on apps if you want to follow along – <https://www.facebook.com/yourtherapysourceapps>

Do you have any websites to recommend that you follow to keep up with it all?

# 5 Ways to Make Cutting Easier

Here are 5 ways to help children learn how to use scissors and to make cutting a little bit easier.

1. Use thicker paper when cutting. Recycled mail, greeting cards or playing cards are fun and easier to cut up than regular paper. Make it functional and the children can cut up junk mail to recycle it. Cut up greeting cards to make a simple puzzle.

2. Use smaller paper. Start out with paper that is not very wide. Index cards are nice because it is small and thick paper. Here are some printable cutting strips that children can start with that only require a few inches of cutting – <http://yourtherapysource.com/freecuttingstrips.html>



3. Draw a line from the edge of the paper to the object being cut out. If a child needs to cut something out in the middle of a paper draw a straight line from the edge of the paper to the object for the child to cut along.

4. Make the line that needs to be cut stand out more. You can thicken the line with a black marker, highlight the line or put stickers along the line to provide extra visual cues of where to cut.

5. Different scissors. Standard scissors may not be the best choice for every child. There are sooooo many different types of scissors available and different ways to cut if a child can not use scissors. Here is a nice slideshow with pictures of various scissors (PS this is a great blog to follow) – <http://teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com/2009/12/special-needs-scissors.html>

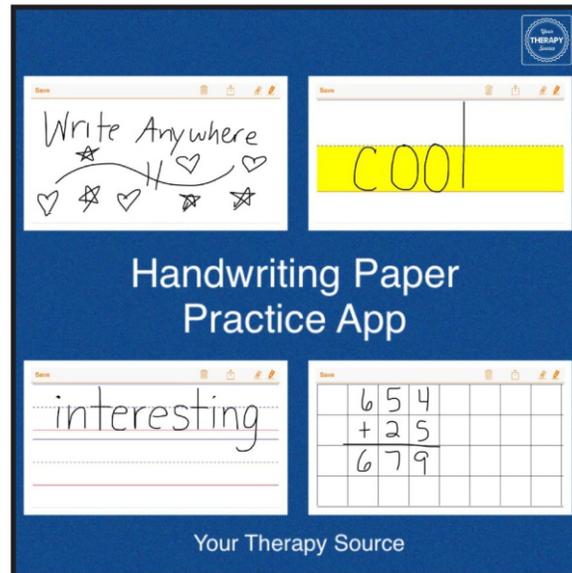
Do you have any tips to add? Need some printables to get started? Check out Cutting Cards and download some free sample pages.

## Cutting Cards

By: Your Therapy Source

Summary: This download includes over 200 3"x5" cards to print and cut out to practice scissor skills. The collection is in color and black and white. The small cards allow success for children who are learning to cut. FIND OUT MORE at <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/cuttingcards.html>

# Handwriting Paper Practice App Review



I heard about Writing Practice – Educators Edition with Ruled Paper from SmartAppsforKids and it is free today – 10/23/15. I was just testing it out briefly and it seems like it could be useful for the following:

Free form writing – you can just write letters, shapes and numbers anywhere in different colors. It is very basic but that is a positive. Sometimes other apps that can do this have too many features or ads running on it. This has just one writing option with different colors and no ads.

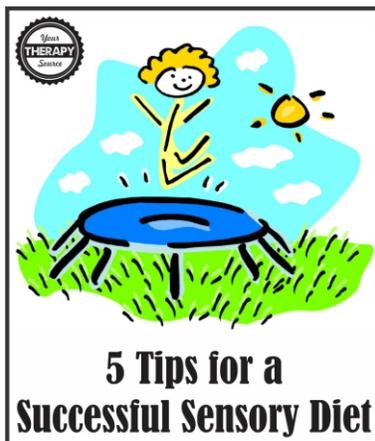
Graph paper option – you can change the size of the graph paper to assist students in lining up math problems. Just email or text the answers to the teacher to show the student's work. Many handwriting practice page templates – there are many different lined papers to choose from and according to the developer if you need a certain one they will try and add it. The variety of papers currently available is an easy way to test out if certain types are more suitable for a specific student rather than having to print out all different kinds.

One problem occurs when you are using a stylus which occurs in many drawing type apps. If you put your hand on the screen while writing with the stylus, your hand will mark up the screen and divert the lines you are writing.

Free today so it may be worth it to check it out! You can download it here <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/writing-practice-educators/id925315031?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>

Need handwriting activities? Check out all of the Your Therapy Source publications at <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/handwriting.html>

# 5 Tips for a Successful Sensory Diet



So you have created a sensory diet for a child and now it is time to carry it out. Here are 5 recommendations to help ensure a successful sensory diet:

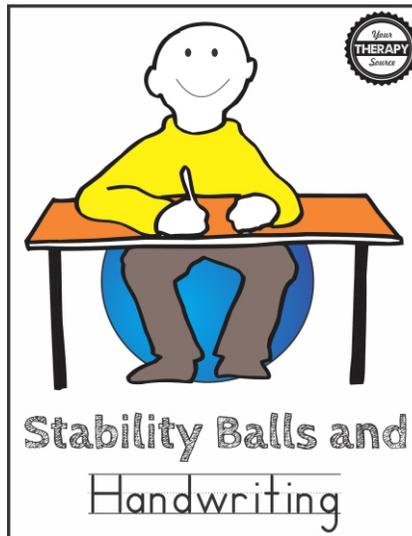
1. Educate, educate, educate. One of our main jobs as pediatric therapists is to educate children, parents and teachers. Make sure everyone understands why you are suggesting these specific sensory diet activities and how each one will help.
2. Offer a child centered approach to establishing a child's sensory preferences and dislikes. Help children to develop their own coping strategies along with the child's parents, therapists and teachers. Need help with this? Check out Sensory Mini Books and Charts at <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/minisensory.html>
3. Make it a part of the child's everyday routine. Use activities that can be easily infused into the child's regular day. For example, going on a trampoline in the middle of math class may not be feasible but bouncing gently on a therapy ball may work!
4. Suggest just right challenges. Make the activities achievable and challenging all at the same time.
5. Collect data. I know this one sounds boring but once the sensory diet is implemented collect data. What suggestions are working? What activities are not successful? A sensory diet is not a static prescription. It is constantly changing based on the child's need and environment. Try the The Scale of Sensory Strategies (S.O.S.S.) Tool Kit™ to collect data during sensory trials. Find out more at <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/soss.html> What is your favorite tip to encourage a successful sensory diet?

## **Cut and Paste Sensory Diet**

By: Your Therapy Source

Summary: Download of the materials to create 2 sensory diet books, one for home and one for school with over 150 picture word cards. Find out more at <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/sensorydiet.html>

# Stability Balls and Handwriting



Recent research (Master's thesis) explored whether the use of stability balls affect the development of handwriting. The study used a pre-test, intervention, post test design with the Handwriting Without Tears Screener of Handwriting. The experimental group consisted of 19 kindergartens who used stability balls. The control group consisted of 19 kindergartens who did not use stability balls. Both groups participated in 12 weeks of handwriting instruction where the same amount of letters were taught using the Handwriting Without Tears curriculum.

The results indicated the following:

1. no significant growth in the areas of memory, orientation, placement, and total growth between the experimental group and the control group.
2. when growth scores for all of the tests were compared between the boys and the girls in both groups the only section of the assessment that showed significant growth was placement.
3. the overall total average growth for the experimental group was 5.66 percentage points higher than the control group, indicating that students in the experimental group grew at a faster rate than those in the control group.
4. the experimental group average growth in memory was 7.25 percentage points higher than the control group showing that the students in the experimental group grew at a faster rate in the area of memory.

Although this study included a small number of subjects, the clinical implications indicate that the development of handwriting is positively impacted by sitting on a ball by helping students recall how to form a letter correctly and helping girls with letter placement.

Reference: Haan, Megan, "Stability Balls and Handwriting Proficiency in a Kindergarten Classroom" (2015). Master of Education Program Theses. Paper 86.  
[http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/med\\_theses/86](http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/med_theses/86)

**Need handwriting help?** Check out all of our resources at Your Therapy Source at <http://yourtherapysource.com/handwriting.html>

# Sensory System and Handwriting



The sensory motor system plays a vital role in the ability to produce functional handwriting. Yes, handwriting obviously requires motor movements – fine motor skills to hold the writing utensil, wrist and shoulder movements to move the arm across the page and postural movements to hold the body upright. From the surface it may appear that handwriting is strictly motor movements to control a writing utensil. Keep in mind that the sensory system plays just as important of a role to establish effective handwriting. Here are the four sensory components that influence handwriting:

*Visual system* – the eyes need to register visual input correctly in order to produce legible and efficient handwriting.

*Proprioceptive system* – the joints and muscles need to provide information on how much pressure to put on the writing utensil and how much the muscles should respond to move the fingers on the writing utensil and hand/shoulder complex along the paper.

*Tactile system* – the hand needs information on where and how to touch the writing utensils and paper.

*Vestibular system* – the inner ear helps to distinguish where to position the head, neck and trunk in order to maintain visual focus and an upright posture.

This is why sensory processing activities such as wall push ups, finger push ups, finger massages, etc. can be effective warm up activities prior to handwriting practice. In order for an appropriate motor output to be formed (legible handwriting), the incoming sensory information needs to be processed correctly.

**Handwriting Stations** include the materials to create a handwriting station on a tri-fold or in a folder. The station includes proper letter formation for capital and lower case letters, correct posture, pencil grip, warm up exercises, letter reversals tips and self check sheet. In addition, there are 27 worksheets for the alphabet and number practice (Handwriting without Tears® style and Zaner-Bloser® style). This download is great for classroom use, therapy sessions or to send home with a student. FIND OUT MORE at <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/hwstation.html>

# 5 Tips to Help Children Develop Body Awareness

Body awareness is the ability to understand where our bodies are in space and how our bodies move. Body awareness helps us to understand how to relate to objects and people at home, at school and outdoors. For example, proper body awareness tells us how far to reach for objects or how close to stand next to a person. Sometimes, if people have difficulties with body awareness they may appear clumsy, uncoordinated or have delays in motor skill development.

Here are 5 tips to help children develop body awareness:

- **Proprioceptive input (heavy work activities):** This type of input gives our muscles and joints information about how our arms, legs, head and trunk move. Any weight bearing activities are technically proprioceptive input. Here are some examples: wheelbarrow walking, jumping, stomping the feet, push ups, pushing/pulling, carrying heavy objects, etc.
- **Play games that involve identifying body parts.** Simon Says is a wonderful game to encourage body awareness and self regulation. Call out more than once activity to increase the challenge such as “Simon Says touch your right hand to your left knee”. Try Body Parts Lotto.
- **Mirror Games:** Give each child a partner. When one person moves the other person has to copy their movements exactly. Have children try to mimic poses of different movements with these body position cards or click here <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/personalspacejourneyfreebie.html> Body Position Cards Freebie from Your Therapy Source Inc
- **Practice spatial awareness.** Set up obstacles courses for children to go under, over, through and around objects. Here are more ideas for spatial awareness.
- **More and More Ideas.** Still looking for ideas? Check out all these blogposts on activities that encourage body awareness including group games for in the classroom or click here <http://yourtherapysource.com/blog1/category/body-awareness/>



## **Personal Space Journey**

By: Your Therapy Source Inc

Summary: Collection of activities to teach children about personal space including many body awareness exercises and a social story on personal space. FIND OUT MORE AT <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/personalspacejourney.html>

# ADHD, Motor Activity and Executive Functions



*Research in Developmental Disabilities* published a study on the motor activity of boys (age 8–12 years) with ( $n = 19$ ) and without ( $n = 18$ ) ADHD during different executive function tasks. Motor activity was objectively measured during two working memory tasks, a choice reaction time task (less demand on executive functions) and a reaction time task (least demand on executive functions). The following results were recorded:

the boys in the ADHD group exhibited greater motor activity compared to children in the non-ADHD group.

the ADHD and the non-ADHD group both exhibited the greatest motor activity during conditions with high working memory demands, followed by the reaction time and control task conditions, respectively.

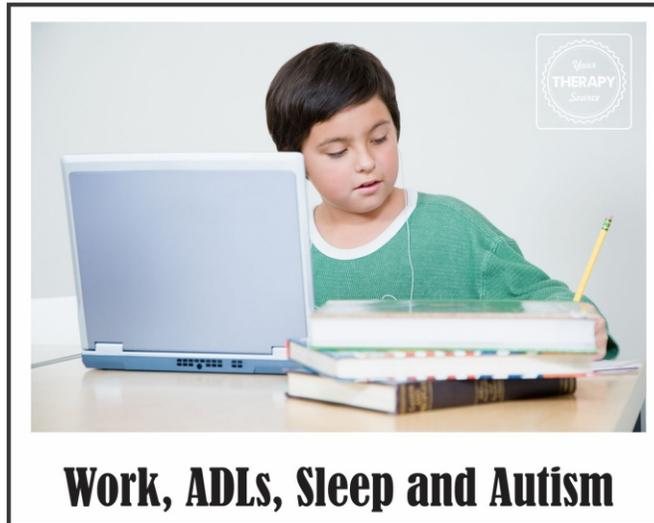
in general large-magnitude motor activity increases were associated with working memory demands.

small to moderate increases in motor activity were also seen during non-executive processes.

Reference: Kristen L. Hudec, R. Matt Alderson, Connor H.G. Patros, Sarah E. Lea, Stephanie J. Tarle, Lisa J. Kasper. Hyperactivity in boys with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): The role of executive and non-executive functions. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, Volumes 45–46, October–November 2015, 46

TIP: Provide brief movement breaks throughout the school day. Check out all of these brain breaks at <http://yourtherapysource.com/brainbreaks.html>

# Work, ADLs, Sleep and Autism



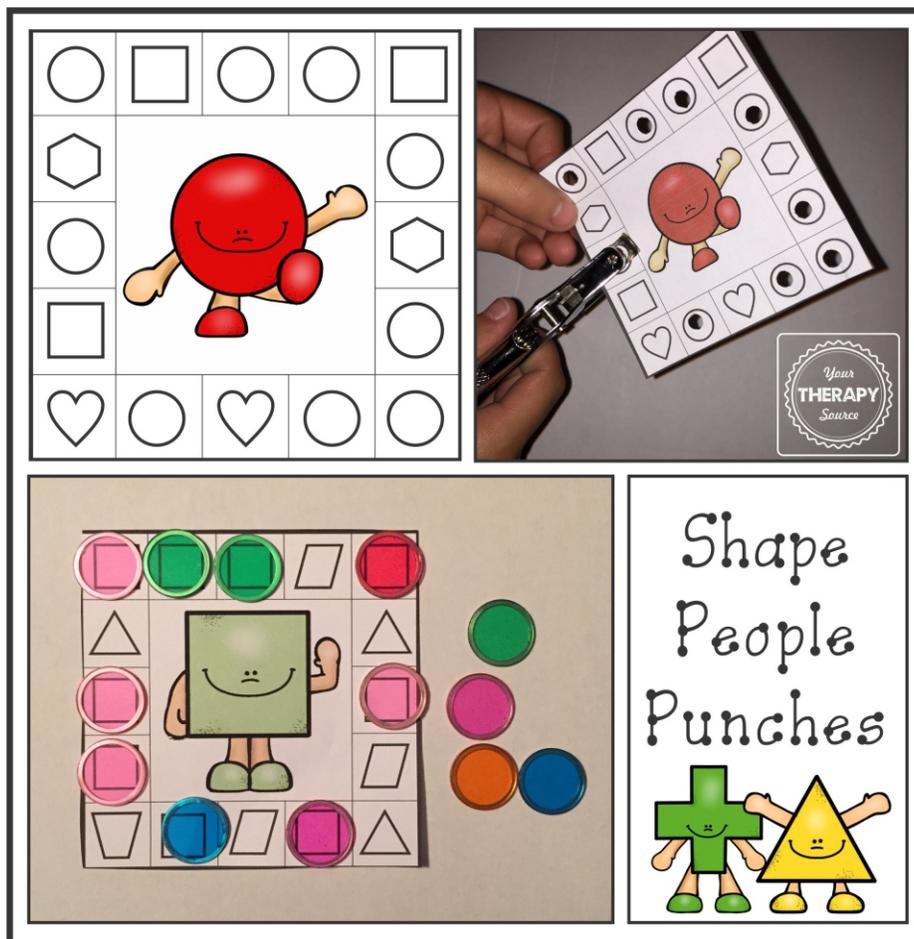
*American Journal of Occupational Therapy* published a systemic review on the effectiveness of work, activities of daily living (ADL), instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) education, and sleep interventions for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The author found a total of 23 studies: 9 work related, 11 ADL/IADL, 3 education-related interventions and 0 sleep studies were identified. The following results were found:

Use of mobile and tablet technologies for vocational skills was supported.  
for ADLs and IADLS some results indicated that Cognitive Orientation to Occupational Performance, sensory integration, and contextual interventions may increase occupational performances  
daily yoga and brief exercise may improve classroom performance and behavior  
group physical activities may assist with school readiness variables.  
evidence for using technologies for IADLs was limited  
evidence determining effective interventions for feeding and eating issues was limited  
The researcher concluded that more studies are needed to advance science-driven occupational therapy practice and research for people with ASD.

Reference: Weaver, L. Effectiveness of Work, Activities of Daily Living, Education, and Sleep Interventions for People With Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, September 2015, Vol. 69, 6905180020p1-6905180020p11. doi:10.5014/ajot.2015.017962

**Move with Me Yoga and Brain Gym**: check out all the yoga activities to help support children with autism spectrum disorder at <http://yourtherapysource.com/yoga.html>

# Shape People Punches



Here is a cute hole punch activity freebie – Shape People Punches. Punch a hole in the matching shapes to the shape person.

You can download it here <http://yourtherapysource.com/freeshapepunch.html>

# Pool Noodle Seat



Do you have any students who need just a little extra reminder of where the chair ends? Maybe an external cue of where to put their hips? Grab a pool noodle. Measure it to fit the seat of the chair and cut off the excess. Use some duct tape and strap it to the chair. That's it – for just a dollar now you have a classroom chair with that extra cue to help students with body awareness issues or balance concerns. Give it a try!

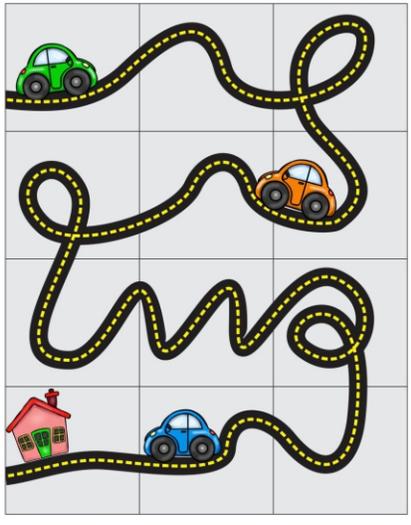
**Body Awareness Games - Personal Space Journey** from [www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

Summary: Collection of activities to teach children about personal space including many body awareness exercises and a social story on personal space.

FIND OUT MORE at <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/personalspacejourney.html>

# Road Puzzler

**Road Puzzler**  
Directions: Trace the path with your finger from the green car to the house. Cut apart the puzzle along the thin black lines into 12 cards. Mix up the cards and try to put the road back together.



**Road Puzzler**  
Practice scissor skills, visual motor and visual spatial skills.



© Your Therapy Source Inc. [www.YourTherapySource.com](http://www.YourTherapySource.com)

Here is a fun but challenging freebie – the Road Puzzler. Practice scissor skills, visual motor and visual spatial skills with this printable. You can download Road Puzzler here <http://www.YourTherapySource.com/freeroadpuzzler>

Need more visual spatial and visual motor activities?

Check out Find the Animals

By: Your Therapy Source, Inc

Summary: This download is a set of 10 activities that challenge visual spatial, visual tracking and visual motor skills. There are 10 find and color the animal activities or 10 find and draw specific shapes around the animal.

FIND OUT MORE here <http://www.yourtherapysource.com/findanimals.html>



# Whooooo Do You See on Thanksgiving?

Directions: How many of each owl can you find in the picture? Record the numbers below.

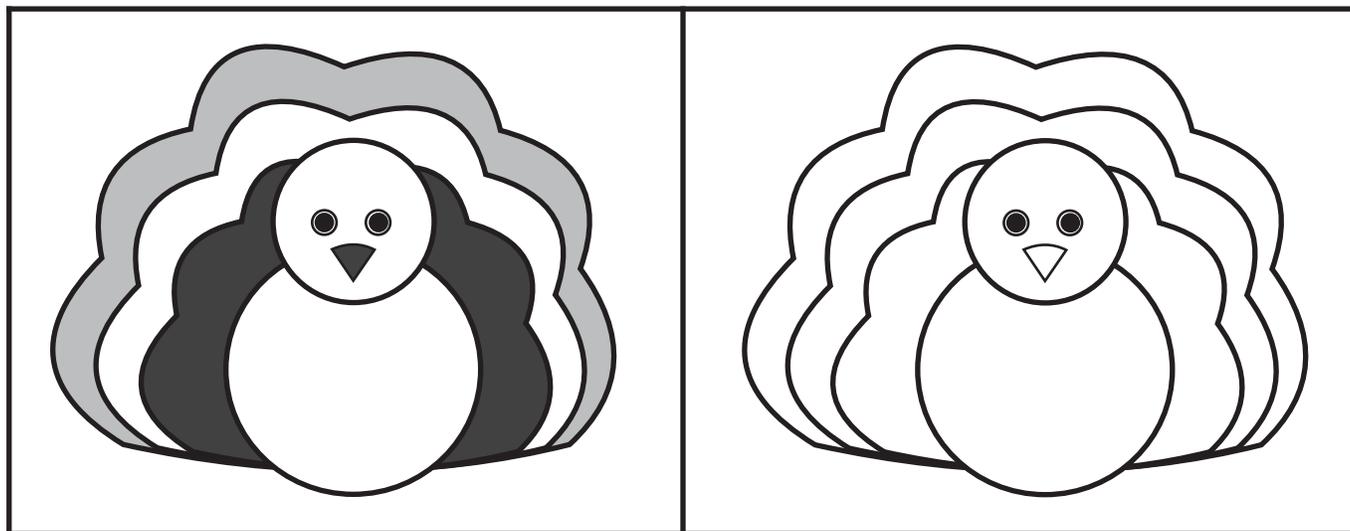
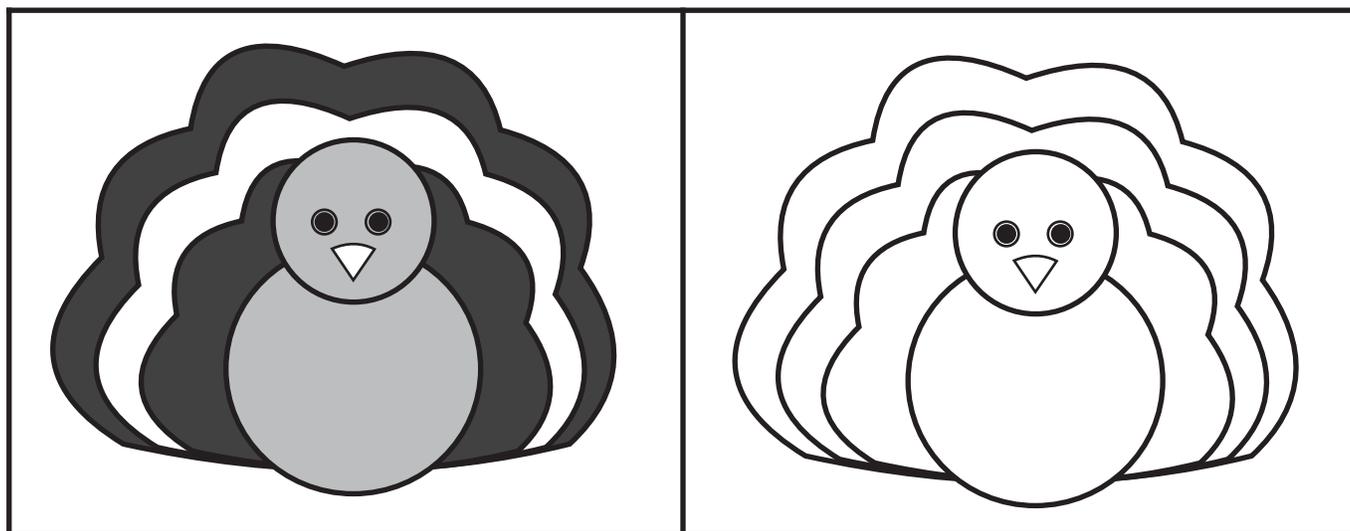
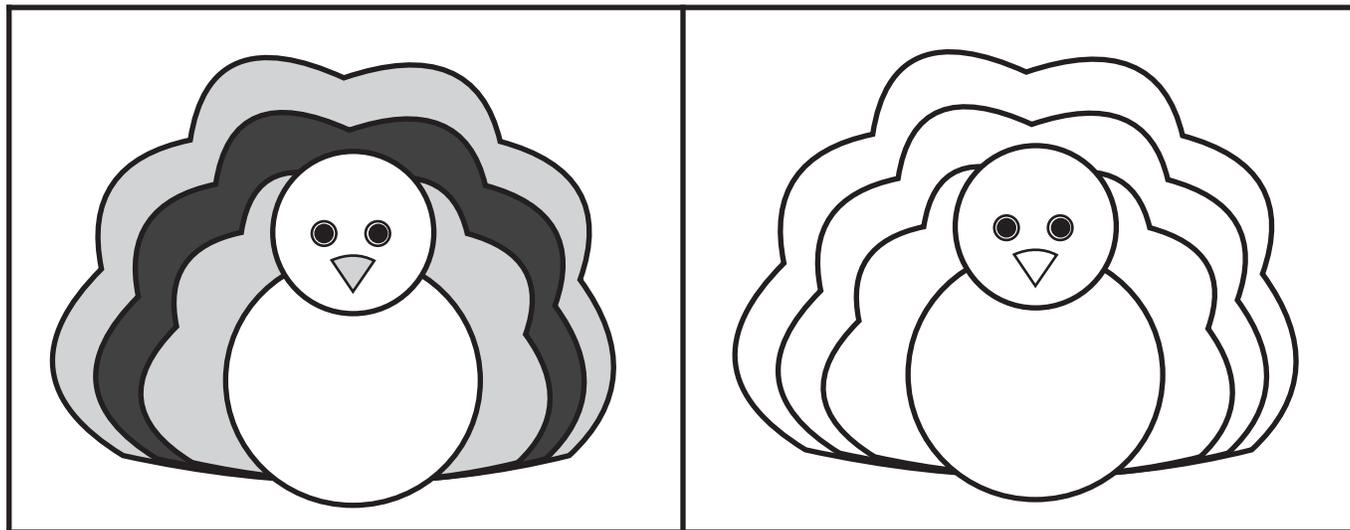


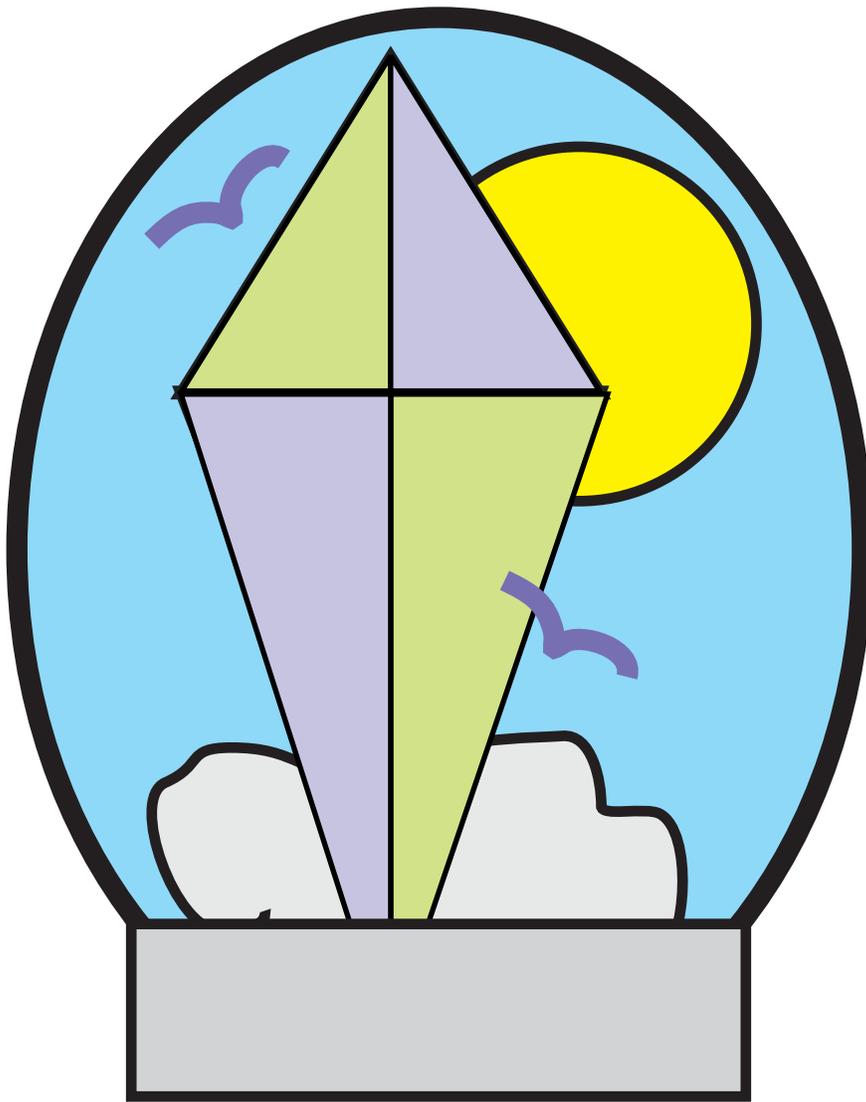
How many can you find of each owl? Write the number in the box.

3							
							

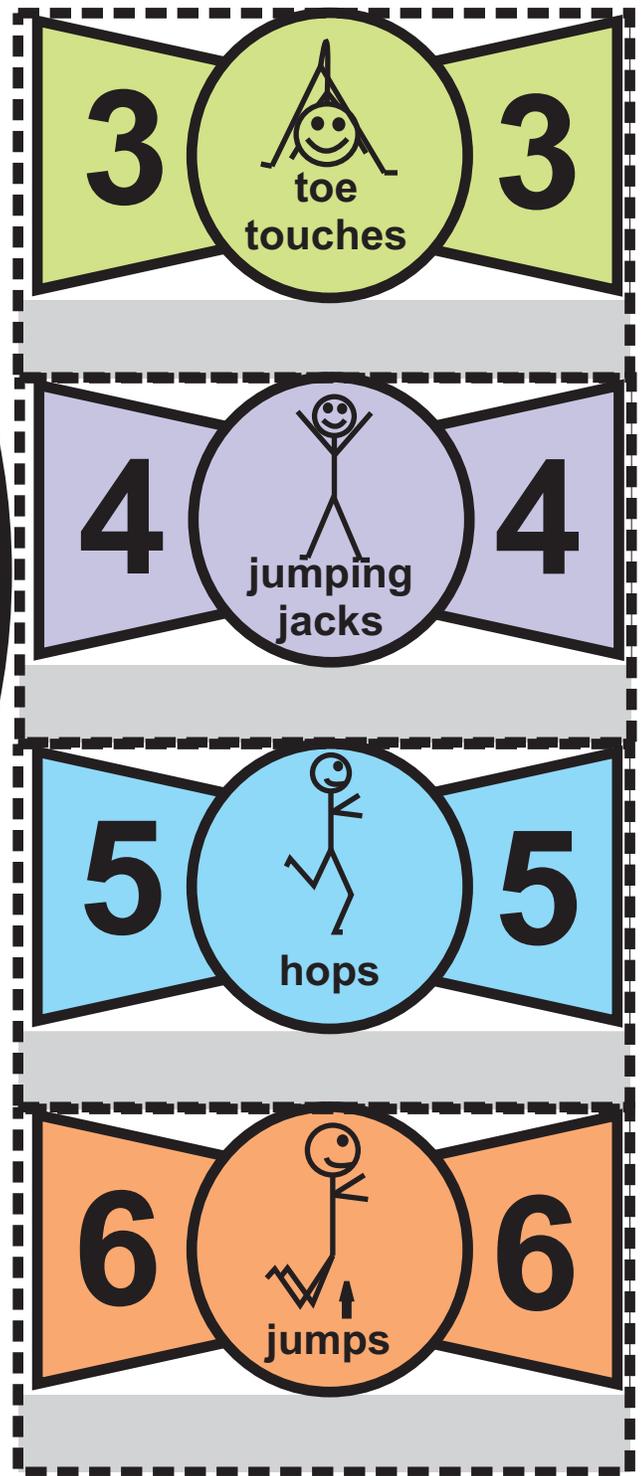
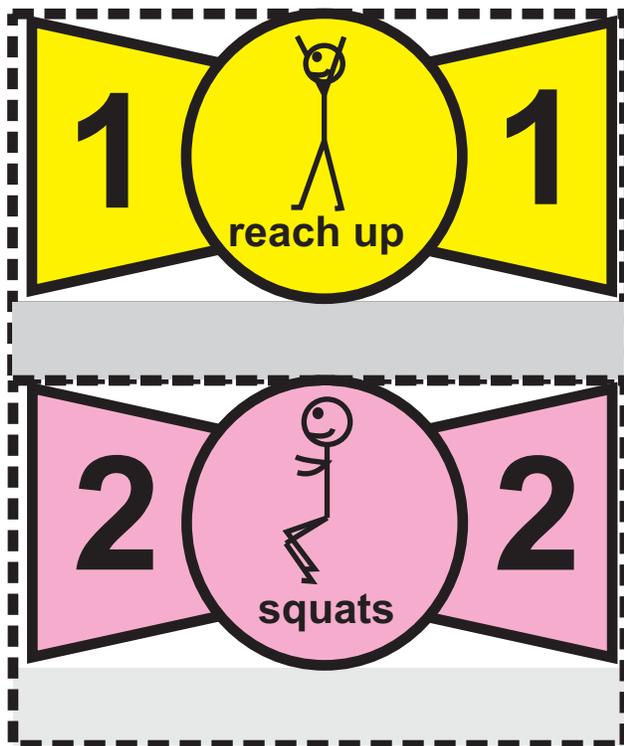
# Turkey Tinting

Directions: Practice proper pencil pressure by coloring in the turkey on the right exactly the same shades as the turkey on the left.





**JUMP UP, UP AND AWAY!**



**Directions:** Cut out the kite and each of the kite tails (include the gray boxes). Scatter the kite tails on the floor. Child squats down, picks the number 1 kite tail, performs the action the number of times on the kite tail (i.e. reach up overhead one time) and glue the tail to the kite at the gray box. Find kite tail 2 and glue on top of the gray box on kite 1. Now child reaches up 1x and squats 2x. Find kite tail 3, glue on to kite tail 2. Child then reaches up 1x, squats 2x and performs 3 toe touches. Repeat process until all 6 kite tails are on the kite.

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- sensory processing resources
- visual perceptual activities
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