



Occupational Therapy Tip Sheet

HEAVY WORK SUGGESTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

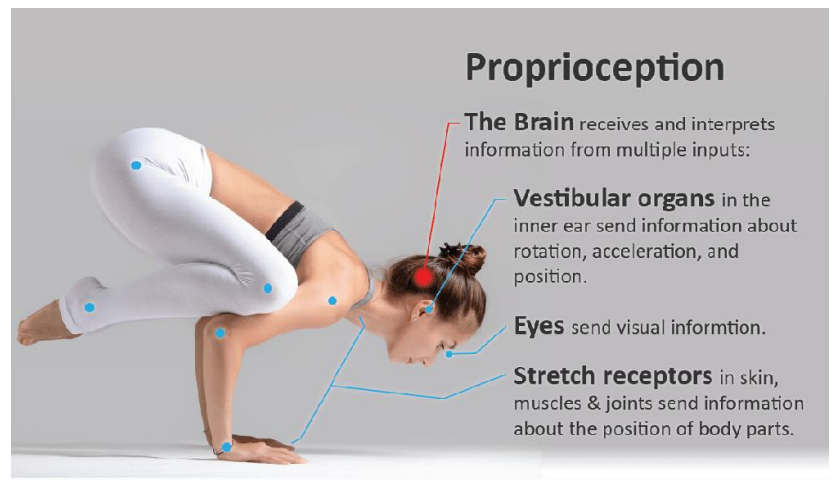
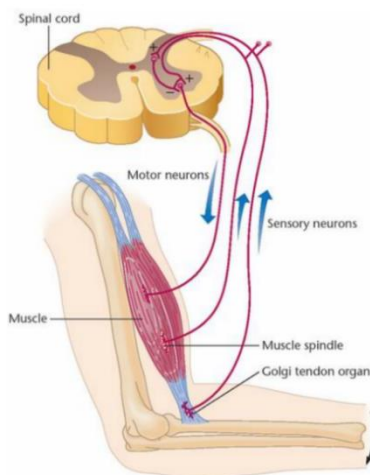


What is heavy work?

- Heavy work means moving your body against resistance which activates *proprioceptive receptors* in your muscles, tendons or joints

Why is heavy work important?

- This system helps us understand where our body is in space (e.g. tying shoes without looking)
- It also tells us how much force we are using and whether we need to use more or less force in order to successfully complete a task (e.g. when colouring, cutting our food or opening/closing a door)



How does heavy work help students?

- The resistive input obtained through heavy work activities generally has a calming or organizing effect
- It allows children to improve their arousal level to a state where they can pay attention and learn
- Proprioceptive input also helps to improve body awareness which helps with overall coordination

How to incorporate heavy work into the classroom?

- The best activities are the ones that can be easily incorporated into daily routines and are enjoyed by the students; try a few of the following and see what works best:

1) Pushing/Pulling Activities:

- Pushing a cart down the hall (weighted with book, recycling, snacks etc)
- Singing “row, row, row your boat” with a partner by sitting on the floor, holding hands, pushing and pulling each other
- Try to stand up with a partner by sitting back to back, interlocking arms, placing feet flat on the floor and pushing against each other into standing
- Doing full or knee push-ups or wall push-ups or crawling activities
- Pulling friends outside in a wagon or sled
- Playing in a hands-and-knee position or lying on tummy while reading or doing homework
- Pushing and holding open heavy doors



2) Squeezing:

- Playing with resistive putty or play-doh while incorporating tools such as scissors, rolling pins, cookie cutters and stamps
- Cutting out items from thick cardstock paper

3) Lifting/Carrying:

- Lifting or taking down chairs
- Helping to rearrange desks in the classroom
- Erasing chalk or dry erase board
- Carrying bins full of recycling or books
- Helping around the school, carrying and stacking books, printer paper or supplies
- Carrying a heavy backpack (wearing one even when not needed)
- Setting up/ putting away gym supplies ex. hanging mats on the wall, lifting balls into storage bins, hanging rings over post, etc.



4)Climbing:

- Most easily done at a play structure with ladders, rock wall and monkey bars or climbing area
- Going up and down stairs

5)Jumping/Running:

- Play jumping games like hopscotch or jump rope
- Sitting and bouncing on a hippity hop ball
- Jumping in and out of hoops or hopping on one foot
- Galloping or skipping in gym
- Most sports (e.g. soccer, basketball, flag football, gymnastics, ball hockey, volleyball, etc)

6)Chewing/Sucking/Blowing:

- Allow gum chewing
- Provide chewy snacks/candy for rewards (licorice, fruit roll-ups, tootsie rolls, starburst)
- Offer crunchy foods for class snacks (carrots, celery, apples, pears, pretzels, popcorn)