

Sensory Pathway Family Fun!



A Sensory Path provides a creative and fun way for children to burn off energy and build skills at home. With a few simple and easy to find everyday items you can create a variety of obstacles that will challenge your child's balance, coordination, and thinking skills — in whatever space you have available!

Create a Sensory Path Using a Yoga Mat and Painters Tape

Here's a quick and easy way to "roll out" an activity for your child. Place long and short pieces of painters tape to make lines and pathways on one or both sides of your yoga mat. You can roll up and store when you are done! No yoga mat? No problem! You can also use painters tape directly on tile or wood floors.

Hopscotch: Recreate the familiar chalk version with tape lines, numbers, letters, or shapes. Jump with two feet and hop with one foot. Add some upper body and eye-hand coordination work by using a small stuffed animal to toss and choose which shapes to stop on or to avoid.



Pathways: Tape lines, zig-zags curves, or a series of X's down your mat. Roll, crawl, or step to each shape. Then try jumping with 2 feet, hopping on one foot, hop from a crouch like a frog.

For play in sitting or on your belly or side, use the lines like roads to roll or hop toys along and over. Being aware of the lines and the shapes the lines make can be even more fun if the tape lines make the letters of your name. Different shaped pathways can be different colors and shapes.



Jump Around Two lines of tape, side-by-side, show where your feet will land each time you step or jump. Encourage jumping and landing with two feet at the same time. Start slow and build up speed calling out the direction the child is facing — front—right—front—left—front—apart— front—etc. You can add cues describing where they will face in your space like "window, right" "door, left" to help them learn their directions.

A small table top version of this game can be made for hands. Try bouncing a favorite doll along the path changing their direction as they go. If your child usually uses one hand to hold things holding the doll can be a fun challenge to encourage using two hands together.



Shape to Shape: Connect matching shapes with paths that intersect to create practice for perceptual skills, working memory, attention, and balance.

In sitting or lying on your side dance a doll, or roll a ball or car back and forth on the lines. Crawl on your belly and creep on hands and knees to drive cars or trains along tape roads, this will increase eye-hand coordination, challenge balance, encourage trunk rotation, and build strength. Ready for more? Walk heel-to-toe, tip-toe, and backwards along the path between matching shapes.

Free Style: Create a path on the ground to propel a wheelchair through, try to "stay in your lane!". Weave in and out of different shapes that are taped on the floor. Tape letters on the floor and encourage your child to jump, crawl or propel their wheelchair to each letter of their name in order or in silly mixed up order.



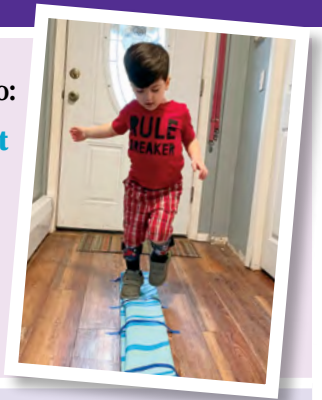
Remember... Play is the Work of Childhood Kids are designed to play and play is how they learn about their bodies and the world around them. It is the foundation for all social and academic learning. Nothing you create with your family needs to be perfect to provide an opportunity for fun and growth together.

Personalize! Your child can play these games on their tummy, when sitting, side-lying, crawling, walking, and jumping. You know your child better than anyone else. Use these ideas and add the things your kids love to create truly meaningful and engaging play. For some kids creating pretend play scenarios about being in a car driving down a road might work. For

Balance Beam Roll the long edge of the mat and tape it to the floor then demonstrate how to:

- Roll or crawl over the roll or lay along side it and drive toys cars or roll balls over or along it
- Walk heel to toe on top of the roll
- Stand beside the mat and jump side to side back and forth over it
- Face across the rolled up mat and jump forward and backwards over the long side.

Propel wheelchair over “hills” created by placing bath towels or small pillows under the mat.



Burrito Roll Following jumping or other exciting activities, provide calming and organizing pressure input to the entire body. Being wrapped in deep pressure with slow and predictable rolling (vestibular input) can calm and organize at the end of a play session. Some kids like their arms rolled in the mat at their sides, others hold theirs out like superman as they are slowly and carefully rolled. This is a great opportunity to “share your calm” by using a calm, quiet voice to talk about how you are seeing your child use their body. Try phrases like, “I see your whole body slow down as you are rolling.” “You are really learning to control your body.” “You can slow down.”

This is also great assisted rolling practice for kids learning to roll.

Bubble Wrap Bubble wrap is a simple add-in to your path that adds interesting visual, texture, and sound elements. Tape a strip over your path to encourage jumping to pop the bubbles.

If your child is practicing tummy time or rolling, the feeling and sound of the plastic adds interest and encourages reaching and grabbing.



Lazer Maze A lazer maze offers a different kind of challenge. Moving successfully through the maze takes spatial skills, planning, control, and coordination to avoid touching the maze lines. Use yarn or painters tape to make hanging obstacles back and forth across a hallway or door frame. Leave enough space between the hanging lines for your child to fit successfully. Obstacles could be things to step over, crawl under, roll their wheelchair past or under. Challenge your child to get through the “lazer maze” without touching the yarn or tape.

These ideas use simple, everyday objects to make sensory paths — yoga mats, painters tape and bubble wrap. What can you find around the house to encourage play; activities like looking, reaching, rolling, crawling, walking, and jumping? A box to create a streamer car wash to creep and crawl through. Tables or chairs to crawl under, a child sized step stool to step on and off? Make a texture box by cutting different textured fabrics (re-purpose worn clothing) and other safe material into napkin sized pieces. Stuff them into an empty tissue box to pull out and explore with hands and feet. Most importantly have fun engaging with your child.

others being a favorite character or animal who moves in different ways might be better.

Demonstrate! Most people find seeing how things are done helpful when learning new tasks. Talk through what you are doing out loud as you or another family member demonstrate how to use the challenges you create. Use a few simple words or phrases as cues that can be repeated as people move through the actions.

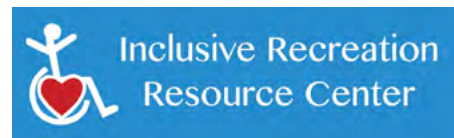
Have Fun and Laugh Together! Nothing needs to be perfect! Kids can add their own ideas to play and laugh together. Shared experiences are powerful ways to build mental and emotional resilience, especially while we are living through a pandemic.

The Inclusive Recreation Resource Center

We help people of all abilities play wherever they choose!

The Inclusive Recreation Resource Center is a Free Online Recreation Database

- This database helps people with disabilities and their families and friends better plan their recreation experiences by knowing what to expect before they leave home!
- Public parks, forests and recreation areas are entered into the on-line database. Families can search this database by activity, venue, and location.
- Certified Inclusivity Assessors have personally reviewed thousands of recreation sites in New York State and even around the World!



Find us at . . .

<http://search.inclusiverec.org>

Resources

Find more Screen-Free Gross Motor Ideas at <https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog/2020/03/23/gross-motor-skills-and-activities/>

Ready for more? Try this educator's list of 101 sensory play ideas [https://childhood101.com/sensory-play/#:~:text=There%20are%20sensory%20play%20ideas,\(jello\)%20for%20something%20fun.](https://childhood101.com/sensory-play/#:~:text=There%20are%20sensory%20play%20ideas,(jello)%20for%20something%20fun.)

Play ideas for rainy days and physical distancing during a pandemic <https://mommypoppins.com/ny-kids/50-indoor-activities-for-a-rainy-day>

More ideas for homemade sensory paths at <https://www.yourkidsot.com/blog/sensory-motor-paths-make-your-own>

Does a screen time activity fit your life? Move along with the Cosmic Yoga playlist on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5uIZ2KOZZeQDQo_Gsi_qbQ

Try a wide range of GoNoodle and other movement songs at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1vdKfXLB_g

Why a Sensory Path?

We interact with and learn from our environment using our senses. Touch, sight, taste, hearing, and smell give us a great deal of information.

We also rely on **proprioception**. This is the perception of force our muscles and joints are experiencing through weight bearing and muscle activity against resistance. Efficient proprioception helps us automatically use just the right amount of pressure to hold a crayon to draw, or to pick up something heavy without losing our balance.

Our **vestibular system** helps us unconsciously understand our head position and movement through space to maintain our balance and respond successfully when we need to change our speed during movement.

Learning to respond and adapt to the sensory experiences of our everyday lives is a process that can improve with practice. For kids, this means play! Playing on a sensory path encourages looking, reaching, rolling, crawling, walking, and jumping. These are important experiences for growing and learning. Because a sensory path can be repeated over time it provides an opportunity to practice and build skills.

The Family Fun Series is a collaborative project of Golisano Center for Special Needs, Arise Adaptive Design, and David's Refuge. More info: <http://FitnessInclusionNetwork>

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