

A Sensory Circuit for School

A short sequence to help pupils regulate and get ready to learn.

Follow the order: ALERTING → ORGANISING → CALMING.



1 What is a sensory circuit?

A planned 10–15 minute movement sequence:

- Alerting wakes up the body and attention.
- Organising adds control, balance and planning.
- Calming slows the body ready for learning.

Use the same order, while adapting activities.

2 Before starting

- Choose a predictable place and time.
- Show the sequence with pictures or a checklist.
- Offer choice without skipping the final calm stage.
- Keep it supportive — never a punishment.
- Notice the pupil's energy level before and after.

3 ALERTING: 2–4 minutes

PRIMARY IDEAS

- Star jumps, skipping, hopping or animal walks.
- Jogging on the spot or bouncing a large ball.
- Fast action song or short playground circuit.

Start gently and increase movement as tolerated.

4 ALERTING: older pupils

DISCREET SECONDARY IDEAS

- Brisk walk, stairs or a short outdoor lap.
- Resistance-band pulls or standing knee lifts.
- Quick sports warm-up or rhythm sequence.

Offer age-respectful choices and privacy.

5 ORGANISING: 3–5 minutes

PRIMARY IDEAS

- Mini obstacle course: crawl, step, balance, throw.
- Beanbag target throws or balloon tapping.
- Balance line, stepping stones or simple yoga.

Aim for slow, controlled and purposeful movement.

6 ORGANISING: older pupils

DISCREET SECONDARY IDEAS

- Resistance-band sequence with counted repetitions.
- Balance poses, cross-body taps or wall press-ups.
- Throw and catch, dribbling or a short gym circuit.

Use a written sequence to support independence.

7 CALMING: 3–5 minutes

PRIMARY IDEAS

- Wall pushes, chair push-ups or slow stretching.
- Roll or press a therapy ball with adult guidance.
- Slow breathing, quiet tent or dimmer space.

Finish with water and a clear next-step cue.

8 CALMING: older pupils

DISCREET SECONDARY IDEAS

- Slow stretches, yoga poses or paced walking.
- Firm hand presses or resistance-band stretch.
- Longer out-breaths, water and a quieter space.

Allow a calm transition rather than rushing back.

9 Home-time reset

After holding it together all day, try:

1. A familiar snack and drink with few questions.
2. A firm hug/deep pressure — only if welcomed.
3. Exercise: walk, cycle, trampoline, dance or sport.
4. Quiet recovery before homework or conversation.

10 Adapt, observe & review

- No single circuit suits every pupil or every day.
- Reduce activities that increase distress or agitation.
- Stop for pain, dizziness, breathing difficulty or injury.
- Seek OT/clinical advice for complex sensory needs.
- Review with the pupil, family and school team.

Move → organise → calm → connect.

The goal is regulation and readiness — not compliance, exhaustion or “perfect” behaviour.