Getting Started with Sensory Space



A practical guide to their first steps into sensory learning.

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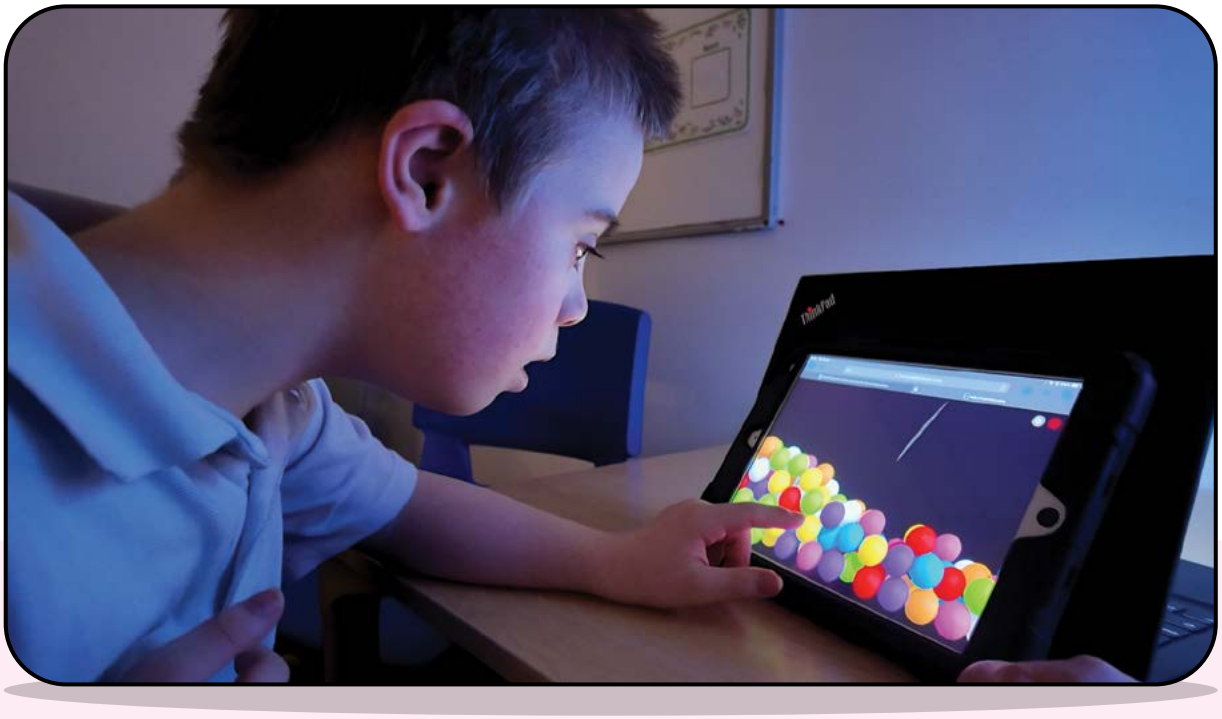
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Welcome to Sensory Space.



Welcome to Sensory Space, a new and engaging way to support learners with special educational needs through interactive sensory experiences.

Whether you're working in a school setting, a therapy space, or a calm corner, Sensory Space provides a safe and accessible environment for exploration, learning, and self-expression.

This guide is designed to help you get started quickly and confidently. We'll walk you through the features, explain how the activities work, and show you how to personalise the experience to meet the unique needs of each learner.

Whether your students are taking their first steps into sensory learning or building on their understanding of cause and effect, Sensory Space has something for everyone.

What is Sensory Space

Sensory Space is an online collection of sensory activities developed for learners with special educational needs.



Whether you're using it in a sensory room, calm corner, or on an iPad in a dark tent, Sensory Space brings inclusive, meaningful learning to life.

It focuses on:

- Sensory exploration.
- Interactive engagement.
- Cause and effect learning.

Each activity is carefully designed to align with developmental milestones and is grouped into progressive categories:

Control, **Engage**, **Interact**, **Switch**, and **Explore**.

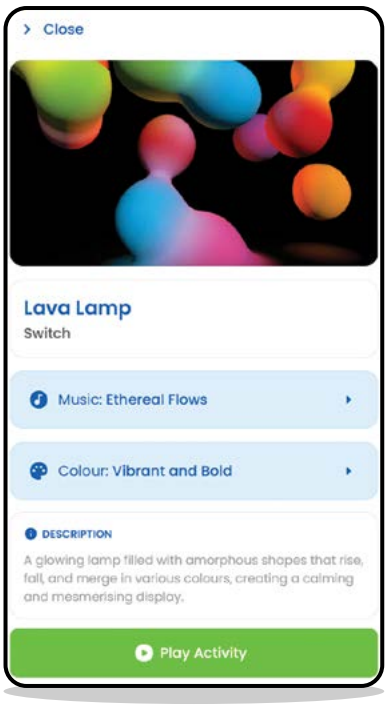
With Sensory Space, you can:

- Support learners in developing attention, anticipation, motor skills, and independence.
- Adapt the sensory environment to suit each learner's needs using customisable colours and music.
- Use any preferred access method — including eye gaze, switch, touch, and mouse.
- Track engagement using built-in analytics.
- Save time with personalised Student Profiles and Playlists.

Personalised learning.

Sensory Space offers a highly personalised learning experience, ensuring that activities meet the diverse needs of learners. With flexible settings, customisation tools, and built-in features, you can tailor each session to meet individual needs, preferences, and abilities.

How to personalise an activity:

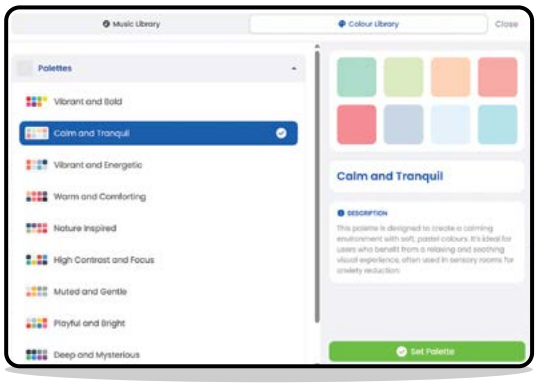


1. Click on an activity.
2. Click the **Music tab** to preview and set a track.
3. Click the **Colour tab** to choose a palette.
4. Press **Play** when you're ready.

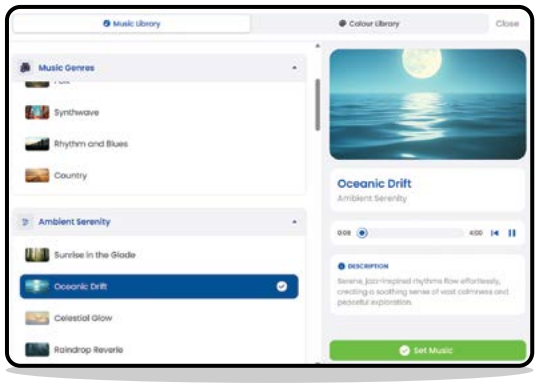
Involve your learner by letting them choose their favourite colours or sounds.

Customise Colours and Music:

Each activity comes with a default colour scheme and soundtrack, but you can change both to suit your learner:



- **Colours:** Choose calming palettes for relaxation or bold colours for alertness and visual tracking.



- **Music:** Select from AI-generated tracks — from gentle nature sounds to upbeat melodies that encourage movement, focus and interaction.

Before you begin.

A few simple checks will help you get ready to explore Sensory Space or use an activity with a learner.

Choose who's playing.

When you open the software, you will be asked "Who's playing?"

Select **Default** if you want to explore the activities yourself. You can get started without creating a Student Profile.

Select **Change Profile** to choose an existing learner profile or create one. A Student Profile saves the learner's access settings and allows you to review their activity results in Student Analytics.

If you want to review an individual learner's progress over time, select **their profile** before they begin.

You'll find full setup instructions in the **Student Profiles** section later in this guide.



You can save the access method in a Student Profile or change it within an activity using the settings (cog) icon.

Supported access methods.

- **Touch** - direct selection on touchscreens and tablets.
- **Mouse or trackpad** - move the cursor and click or tap to select.
- **One-switch scanning** - the highlight moves through options and the learner presses to select.
- **Eye gaze with dwell** - the learner looks at a cell for a set time to select it.

Quick setup tips.

- If using scanning, slow the scan speed at first so the learner has time to notice the highlight.
- If using eye gaze, turn the mouse cursor on so you can see where the learner is looking.
- Adjust dwell time so the learner can select without accidental activations.
- Test the activity before the session so the access method is ready.

The Categories.

Navigating the Interactive Categories.

Each activity is designed to support learners at various stages of development:



Control.

Builds intentional engagement through **press-and-hold** interactions.



Engage.

Reinforces anticipation and sustained focus through **timed** interactions.



Interact.

Supports active exploration with immediate **cause and effect** responses.



Switch.

Helps develop an understanding of **on/off** control and decision-making.



Explore.

Encourages independent discovery through **movement-based** interactions.

Let's take a closer look at each category on the next page and explore how the activities work, their unique features and the value they bring to learning.

Control.



Control activities introduce learners to the early stages of cause and effect understanding by encouraging active engagement. Control activities require the learner to initiate and sustain an action to see and hear the effects. These activities are designed to help learners make the connection between their actions and the outcomes on screen, reinforcing their sense of control over their environment.

Each Control activity only works while the learner is actively engaging with their access device. As soon as the learner stops interacting the animation and audio will also stop. This immediate response helps learners develop intentional interaction with their access method.

This method of interaction is often referred to as 'press and hold', marking a key cause and effect milestone. Learners begin to understand that their actions have a direct influence on what happens on screen, which can help build confidence and provide an early foundation for more advanced interaction skills.

How Control activities work:

- Animations and sound continue only while the learner activates their access device.
- As soon as interaction stops, the activity pauses.
- Encourages intentional, sustained interaction - often called "press and hold."

The value of Control activities.

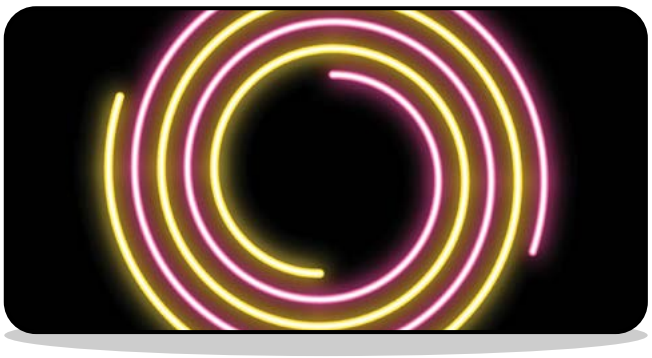
These activities strengthen the connection between actions and responses, helping build a sense of control and confidence.

By experimenting with pressing and holding, learners gain a clearer understanding of cause and effect.

These activities are a great foundation for helping develop the skills for more complex activities that require timing, coordination and decision-making.

Example Control activities.

Each **Control** activity offers a unique visual and sensory experience designed to be engaging and motivating. Here are some activity examples to try.



Neon Lights.

Vibrant neon lights animate in various patterns with the patterns changing every 10 seconds creating a dynamic and colourful visual effect.



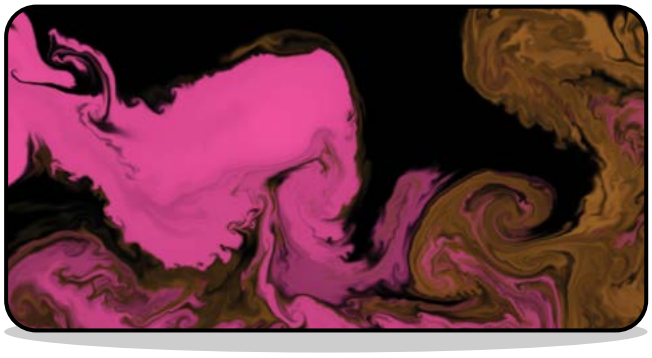
Stars.

Small dim stars twinkle and grow in brightness gradually filling the screen with glowing light before fading back to their original state.



Leaves.

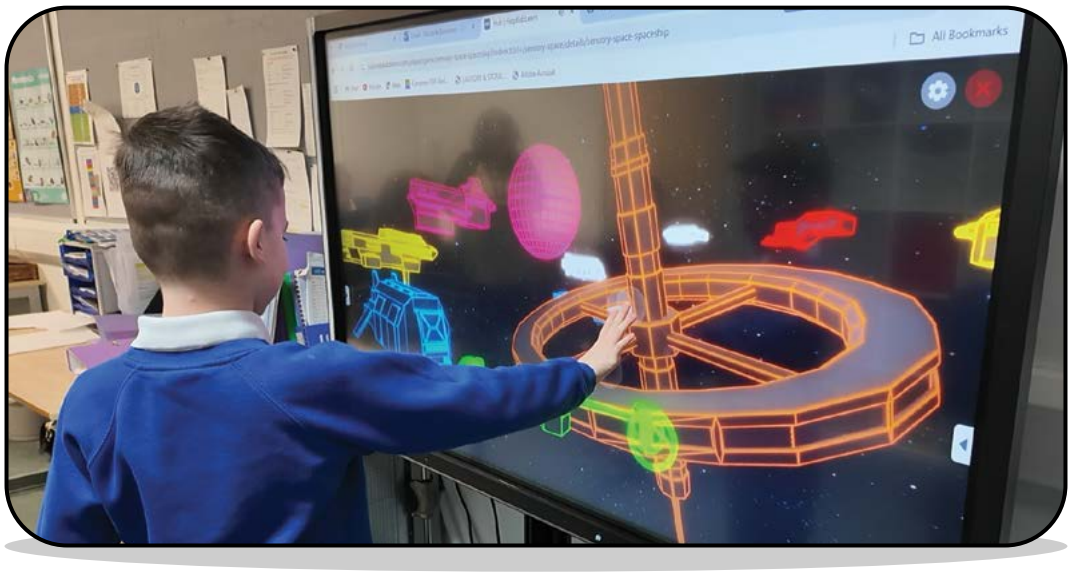
A flurry of different coloured leaves drift around the screen mimicking the natural movement of the wind from various directions.



Liquid.

Coloured liquid flows and merges across the screen shifting direction throughout the activity creating a mesmerising and calming effect.

Engage.



Engage activities support learners in exploring cause and effect through timed interaction. This supports anticipation and timing skills by encouraging learners to press and let go, reinforcing purposeful activation and sustained focus.

Each Engage activity is designed to encourage deliberate and repeated interaction. A single activation triggers an animation that plays for a set duration. During this time, further interaction has no effect. This helps learners focus on the outcome of their action. Once the animation pauses the learner can activate the activity again to continue with the animation.

This method known as 'press and watch, introduces early decision making and timing skills helping learners refine their ability to engage with their environment in a more structured way.

How Engage activities work:

- Learners press once ("press and watch").
- The animation plays automatically for a fixed duration.
- Further input won't affect the animation until it ends.
- Encourages learners to observe, wait, and interact deliberately.

The value of Engage activities.

Engage activities provide an important step towards more structured interaction and decision making. By introducing timed responses learners begin to recognise patterns in interaction, understanding when and how their actions influence the activity.

This helps to support the development of:

- **Anticipation and engagement** - predicting when to press again.
- **Turn taking and waiting skills** - understanding that actions have a set response time.
- **A sense of control, confidence and independence** - encouraging active participation in the activity.

Example Engage activities.

Each **Engage** activity offers a visually stimulating and rewarding experience designed to keep attention and encourage repeat interaction. Here are some activity examples to try.



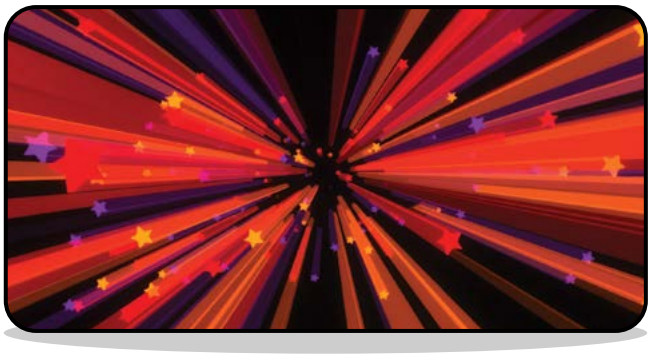
Spaceship.

A neon spaceship glides through a futuristic space scene navigating planets, space stations and glowing rings along its path.



Snakes.

A collection of colourful snakes of different sizes slithers around the screen in time with the music creating a lively and engaging experience.



Shooting Stars.

A mesmerising display of stars in varying sizes and colours zooming across the screen at different speeds creating a time warp effect.



Jellyfish.

Jellyfish of various colours, sizes and speeds pulse and drift gracefully across the screen mimicking the movement of the ocean.

Interact.



Interact activities give learners full control to explore at their own pace. It encourages learners to explore cause and effect through repeated and flexible interactions, known as 'press it again'.

Each activation of the access device triggers an animation, allowing learners to engage as often as they like. Multiple animations can occur at the same time.

Interact activities promote curiosity, active exploration and purposeful engagement - helping learners develop a sense of control and confidence through their interactions.

These activities provide immediate visual and auditory feedback, encouraging learners to experiment and understand the impact of their actions in an engaging pressure-free way.

How Interact activities work:

- Every activation (tap, switch press, etc.) triggers a short animation.
- Multiple animations can run at once.
- Animations reset automatically, allowing for repeated exploration.
- Often referred to as "press it again" activities.

The value of Interact activities.

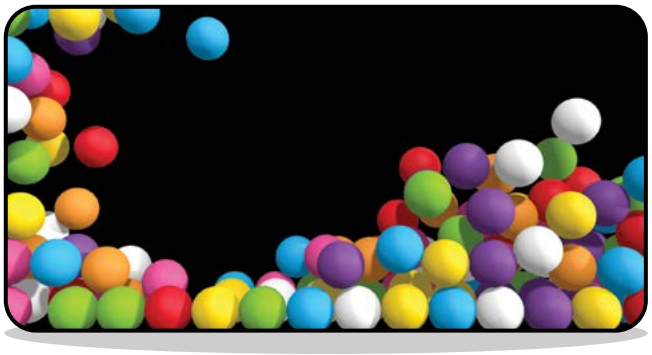
Interact activities are designed to encourage repeated interaction and experimentation. They help learners strengthen cause and effect understanding by offering instant feedback.

This helps to support the development of:

- Increased confidence by allowing unlimited attempts to activate the activity.
- Engagement and curiosity by enabling learners to explore freely.
- Motor skills and intentional interaction, reinforcing consistent engagement with their access device.

Example Interact activities.

Interact activities encourage learners to actively explore by pressing repeatedly, triggering immediate animations with each interaction. Here are some activity examples to try.



Cannon.

At the start of the activity, colourful balls drop to the bottom of the screen. When the learner interacts, the balls bounce, collide and reposition creating a lively chain reaction.



Emojis.

A screen full of expressive emojis! When the learner interacts with the activity, the emojis animate with an emotion, before popping with fun sound effects.



Butterflies.

Each interaction releases a butterfly from a flower. The butterfly flaps its wings and flies around the screen, then returns to it starting position.



Aquarium.

A colourful coral reef with various sea creatures including fish, sea horses and anemones. When the learner interacts, their creatures swim, open and close or produce bubbles.

Switch.



Switch activities introduce learners to the concept of "on-off," helping them develop an understanding of cause and effect. Learners use their access method to start an animation, which continues until they activate their device again to stop it.

In switch activities, animations begin with a single activation of the access device. The animation continues until another activation stops it. This approach helps learners to recognise how their actions control events - building their understanding of how they can interact with and influence their environment.

How Switch activities work:

- A single activation starts the animation.
- Another activation stops it.
- Encourages learners to take control and make decisions about when something should start or stop.

The value of Switch activities.

Switch activities help learners understand the concept of cause and effect by demonstrating how their actions can control events.

They provide a fun and engaging way to practise using an access device.

This helps to support the development of:

- Motor skills while reinforcing the idea of turning things "on" and "off."
- Independent exploration and active learning.
- Building confidence in an engaging and pressure-free way.

Example Switch activities.

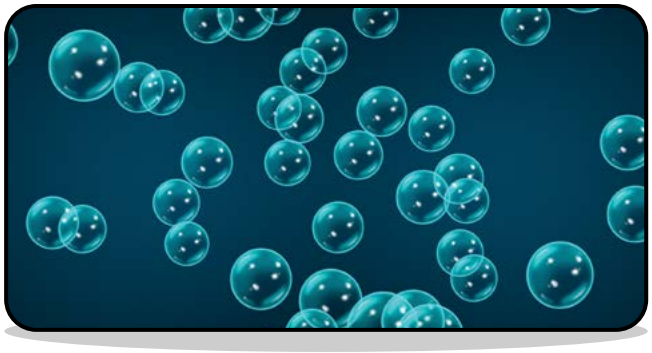
Each **Switch** activity starts with a dark screen and a faded image of the scene, which becomes fully animated when activated. Here are some activity examples to try.



Lava Lamp.

On: Lava rises and changes shape, merging and shifting into different colours.

Off: The animation stops, and the screen goes dark.



Bubble Tube.

On: The bubble tube lights up, bubbles rise, and the colours change automatically.

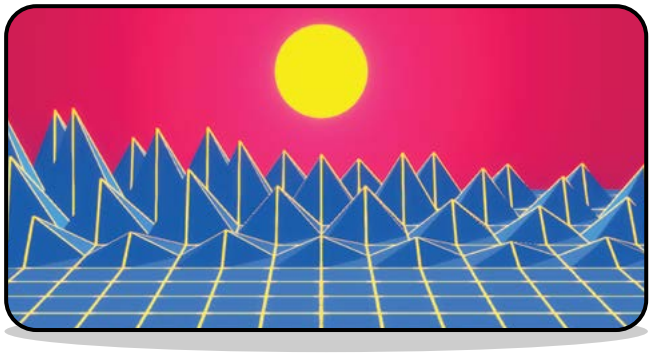
Off: The animation stops, and the screen goes dark.



Disco Ball.

On: The disco ball rotates and lights up casting a reflection across the screen.

Off: The animation stops, and the screen goes dark.

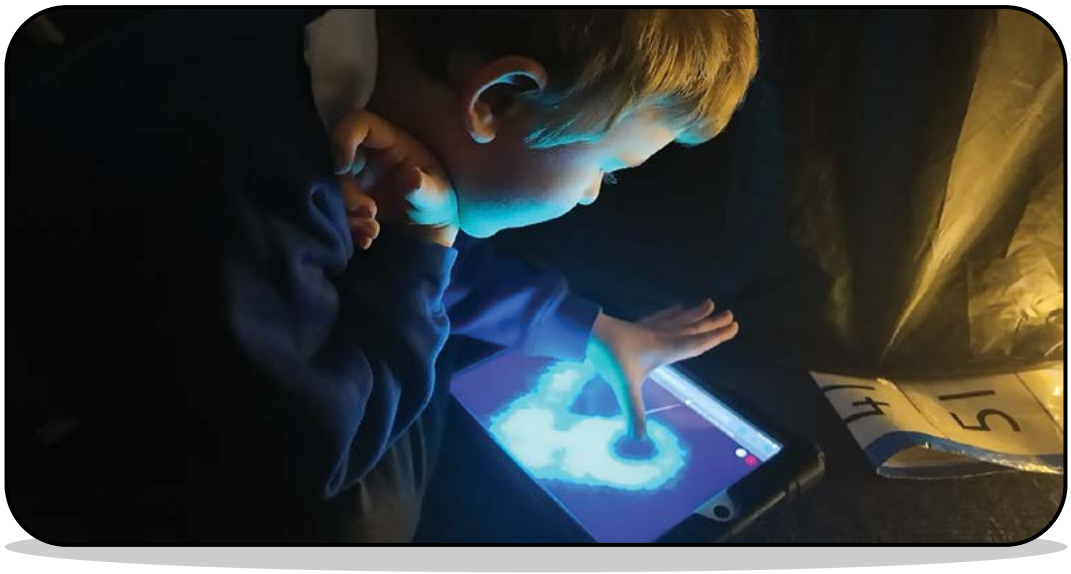


Synthwave.

On: The floor, mountains and sun animate like soundwaves in sync with music.

Off: The animation stops, and the screen goes dark.

Explore.



Explore activities encourage learners to move or activate their access device to influence on-screen animations. This approach supports curiosity and discovery.

In Explore activities, animations respond each time a learner activates or moves their access device across the screen. This encourages curiosity and discovery helping learners connect between actions and outcomes while building an understanding of cause and effect.

These activities are similar to 'Exploring Arches' or 'Hidden Stars' in our Games and Activities.

How Explore activities work:

- Animations respond to movement across the screen or repeated activation.
- Learners are rewarded with dynamic visual and sound effects as they explore.
- Similar to free play - there are no right or wrong actions.

The value of Explore activities.

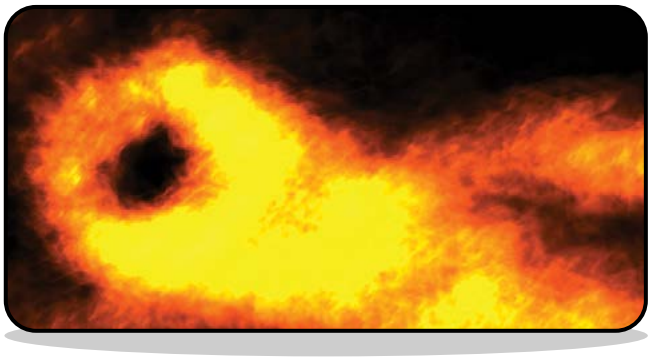
These open-ended activities inspire curiosity, creativity, and independence. They support the development of cause and effect understanding through interactive exploration.

These activities provide a fun and engaging way for learners to practise using their access device, helping to develop motor skills and cognitive abilities.

They also promote independent exploration and active learning - enabling learners to discover, experiment and build confidence in a pressure-free environment.

Example Explore activities.

Explore activities respond to movement and discovery, allowing learners to influence on-screen animations through touch, motion, or cursor control. Here are some activity examples to try.



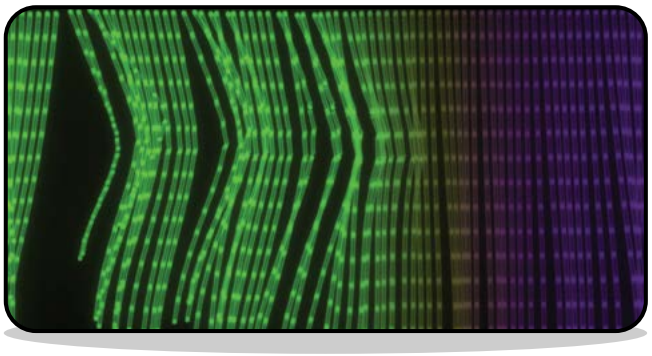
Fire Trail.

A trail of fire moves around the screen following the cursor or learner's touch. A ring of fire indicates the cursor's position creating a visual trail.



Scene.

A lively farm scene which includes a horse, cow, pig, sheep, duck, cockerel, dog and tractor. When the learner interacts with any images, it performs an animation with sound effect.



Optical Lights.

A curtain of optical lights sways and shifts when the learner moves the cursor or activates their access device gradually changing colour.

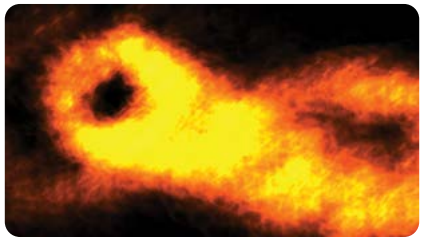


Smoke.

Similar to the fire trail, swirling smoke and light flares follow the learner's movement or activation creating colourful effects.

Teaching strategies and implementation.





Fire Trail

Sensory Space fits easily into a wide range of teaching and therapy settings.

Whether you're planning structured lessons, creating calming routines, or supporting early learners in exploring cause and effect, these ideas will help you make the most of every session.

Ideas to incorporate activities into learning.

Themed learning: Link Sensory Space activities to topics of special interest. For example use the **Leaves** activity for an autumn unit, or the **Fire Trail** activity during a dragon-themed story session.

Lesson starters: Use an activity to transition learners into focused learning, such as **Stars** to capture attention at the start of a session.

Multi-sensory exploration: Combine Sensory Space with real-world experiences e.g. **Scene** alongside toy animals, sound effects or sensory props.

Music and movement: Encourage learners to respond physically, dancing or moving to changes in visual effects and music.

Student Profiles.

Student Profiles help you personalise the experience and keep sessions consistent.

They are especially helpful if different adults support the same learner, or if you are working across teaching and therapy.

Use a profile to keep access choices and preferences consistent, and to make it easier to pick up where you left off.



Why Create a Student Profile?

- **Consistent experience:** Profiles remember access method and key settings.
- **Time-saving:** No need to reconfigure settings each time.
- **Supports independence:** Learners can access their preferred setup with less adult input.
- **Tracks progress:** Profiles link directly to Student Analytics for meaningful progress tracking.
- **Works across titles:** Profiles apply to all HelpKidzLearn products.
- **Manage groups:** Create groups for classes, therapy groups or specific cohorts.
- **Use playlists:** Assign grouped activities to individual learners.
- **Share information:** Keep support consistent across staff teams.

It's easy to get started.



Step 1:

Log in to your HelpKidzLearn Hub account.



Step 2:

Click the profile image on the top right to select profiles.



Step 3:

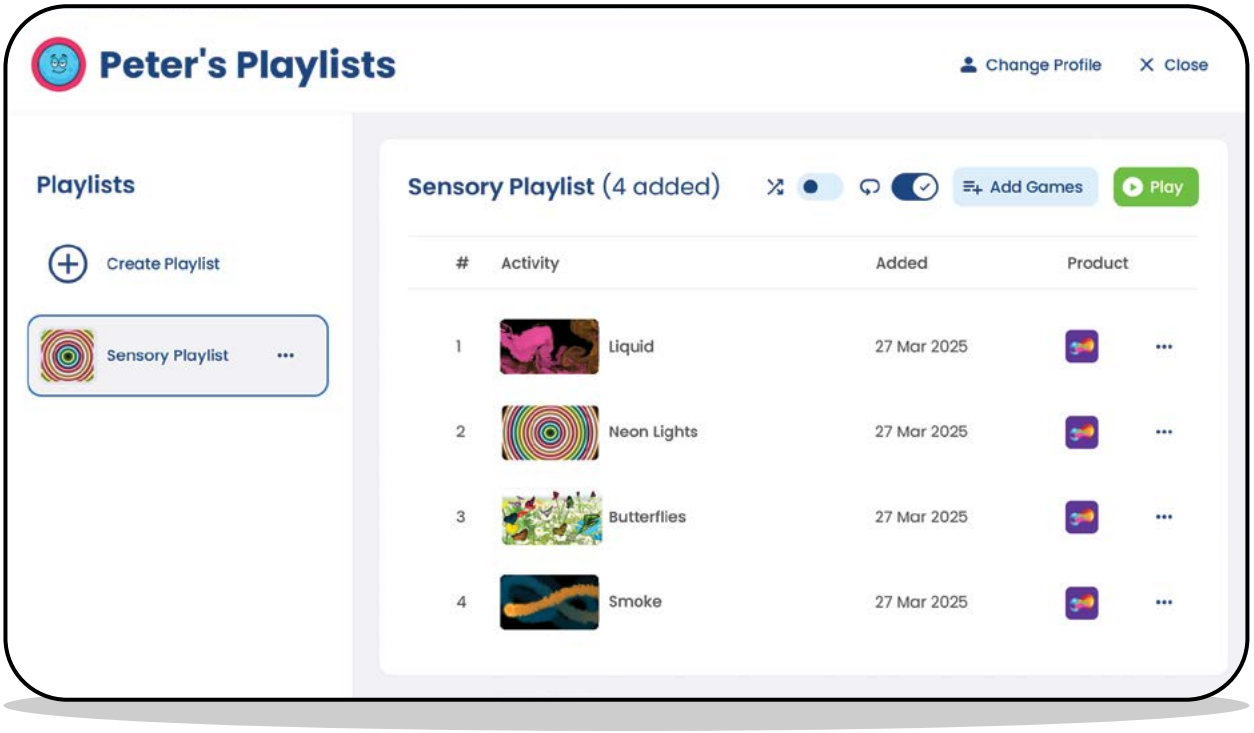
Select Create Profile.



Step 4:

Add a name and set the access method.

Student Playlists.



Playlists let you group activities together so they are ready when you need them.

They are useful for short sessions, structured routines, specific targets and topic-based learning.

For example, you might create an Animal Sounds playlist, a Morning Routine playlist, a Choice Making playlist or a topic playlist for weather, transport or celebrations.

Why Use Playlists?

- **Time-saving:** Set up once, use again and again.
- **Structured sessions:** Start with a familiar activity, build to a target task, and end with a predictable finish.
- **Flexible:** Group activities by theme, skill, access method or lesson objective.

Playlists can support:

- **Personalisation:** Match activities to a learner's interests and goals.
- **Consistency:** Access settings apply when used with a Student Profile.
- **Progress tracking:** Use alongside Analytics to reflect on engagement and next steps.
- **Mixed learning:** Combine Sensory Space with ChooseIt Maker, Games & Activities, Inclusive Stories and other HelpKidzLearn content.

Student Analytics.

Sensory Space doesn't just support engagement -

it also helps you measure it.



The built-in Student Analytics feature gives educators and therapists valuable insights into each learner's progress, helping you personalise activities, monitor development, and celebrate every milestone.

What Can You Track?

Analytics are tailored to each activity category:

Control:
Interaction location, frequency and duration.

Engage:
Response time, intentionality, and interaction count.

Interact:
Interactions, reaction time, and consistency.

Switch:
Interaction location, activations, and duration.

Explore:
Interactions, location, and movement patterns.

Why Use Analytics?

- **Track engagement:** See how long a learner interacts, how often they activate content, and which activities they revisit.
- **Identify progress:** Spot patterns in behaviour, interaction style, and skill development.
- **Personalise support:** Use data to refine Playlists and activity choices based on real-time insights.
- **Measure impact:** Monitor whether a learner's attention, independence, or cause and effect understanding is improving over time.

Use Analytics regularly to build a complete picture of each learner's journey - from first glance at the screen to confident, independent interaction.

Adapting activities for different learners.



Sensory Space flexibility allows educators to tailor activities to suit different learning needs.

Learners using eye gaze, switch, or touch access methods can engage with activities like **Spaceship**, which promotes exploration at their own pace.

For learners at the early stages of cause and effect understanding, **Control** activities in a darkened environment can help enhance visual tracking and engagement.

For more interactive learners, activities can be extended by introducing challenges. **Cannon**, for example, can be used to build focus and decision-making skills by asking learners to activate specific colours or respond to instructions such as “Can you make the red ball jump?” or “Can you find the blue ball?”

Encouraging exploration within these structured activities promotes engagement and supports cognitive development.

Tips for supporting learners.

Providing a structured and encouraging learning environment helps learners gain confidence and develop skills progressively.

Allowing learners to make choices, such as selecting colours or music, promotes independence and engagement.

Gradual progression is important - starting with simpler activities before moving to more complex interactive experiences ensures that learners develop skills at a comfortable pace.

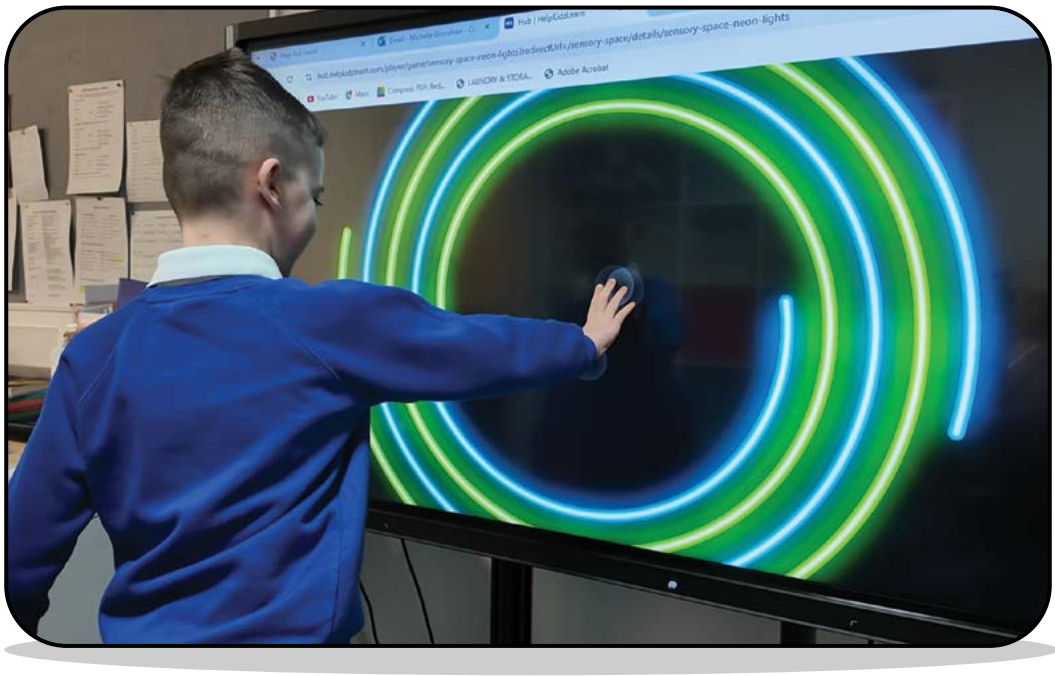
Visual cues, such as pairing Sensory Space activities with symbols or real-world objects, can enhance understanding and communication.

Additionally, offering consistency in learning by integrating activities into daily routines provides a sense of familiarity, reducing anxiety and supporting ongoing progress.



- **Offer choice:** Let learners select their own music or colour palette.
- **Keep it consistent:** Use familiar activities to build routines and reduce anxiety.
- **Use symbols or objects:** Reinforce meaning and encourage communication alongside screen interaction.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Even a glance, press, or smile is progress.
- **Track Progress:** Use **Analytics** to track progress and monitor learners' engagement and skill-building over time.
- **Use Progression Guides:** Link Sensory Space activities to our **Switch, Eye Gaze Journey guides** to guide gradual progression.
- **Use Playlists:** Use **Playlists** to deliver structured learning that meets individual needs.

Suggested areas for using Sensory Space.



Sensory Space is designed to be flexible and accessible across many learning environments - not just classrooms.

Whether used for therapy, regulation, or exploratory play, it provides powerful support for learners in the spaces where they feel most comfortable and focused.

- **Sensory Rooms:** Use calming activities like **Jelly Fish** or **Lava Lamp** to support relaxation.
- **Dark Tents:** Ideal for using Sensory Space on iPads. High-contrast visuals like **Disco Ball** work well here.
- **Calm Corners:** Provide a self-regulating space with personalised settings.
- **Learning Resource Areas / Nurture Bases:** Sensory Space can become a go-to activity in these areas for learners who need a personalised pace.
- **Home:** Use calming or interactive activities as part of morning routines or after school wind-downs.

Sensory Space in practice.

Green Fold School, Bolton, UK.



At Green Fold School, Sensory Space was used in their immersive room to incredible effect. In one standout moment, a teacher paired the Spaceship activity with physical movement, gently rocking a pupil's chair to mirror the animation.

The learner was fully immersed - responding with vocalisations, body movement, and even signing "more" to continue. Staff were amazed at how naturally the software supported communication and anticipation.



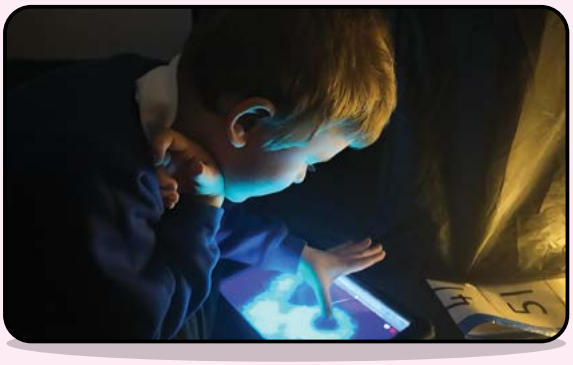
Totally accessible and a perfect stepping stone into more advanced HelpKidzLearn activities.

Caitlin McNiven - PMLD Teacher.

Read the full case study

helpkidzlearn.com/resources/case-studies

Holly Grove School, Burnley, UK.



Holly Grove learners explored Sensory Space using iPads in a dark tent, laptops, and interactive boards.

Staff were impressed by how quickly the children began customising the activities - changing music and colours to match their preferences.

Descriptive language flourished during Engage activities ("stars", "aliens", "turning"), while Cannon promoted collaborative play and turn-taking.



The school was so impressed, they immediately decided to subscribe and integrate Sensory Space into their daily routine.

Laura Byrne - SEN Teacher.

Read the full case study

helpkidzlearn.com/resources/case-studies

Not yet got Sensory Space?



Sensory Space

Explore a world of **online sensory activities**, designed to support learners with special educational needs. Sensory Space offers engaging activities that encourage **interaction**, **exploration** and **cause and effect** learning.

- Interactive activities designed to build key development skills.
- Customisable colours and AI-generated music.
- Universally accessible for touch, switch, and eye gaze users.
- Start your free 14 day trial, no credit card details needed.

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