

# Fidget Bag

# 16



## Materials

- Pencil bag
- Any items that can be used to calm, comfort, and support, such as the following:
  - Small toys (mini-Slinky, little car)
  - Manipulatives (Unifix cubes, counting bears)
  - Squeeze toys (stress ball, water tubes)
  - Textured objects (smooth rock, strip of hook and loop tape, ribbons, shoe laces)
  - Bendable objects (straws, paper clips, rubber pencils)

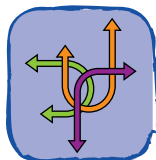


## Description

If students in your classroom do not need the amount of support provided by the items in a sensory box (see adaptation 15), but do need some help to stay focused on daily lessons, a *fidget bag* can be a good alternative. The fidget bag is different from a sensory box not only in the size and type of items included but also in the fact that it is portable. Bags are small and kept either in a student's desk or inside his or her binders.

Items that therapists or teachers commonly call “fidgets” are small manipulatives that provide sensory input and keep the student occupied. These little toys often allow restless students to listen to teacher lectures, attend events such as concerts and assemblies, and get through test days without disrupting others or needing excess movement. As a teacher from a study by Kasa-Hendrickson explains, using this simple support can make the difference between a student's presence in the classroom and his participation in an activity:

At the beginning of the year Sam could not stay seated through morning meeting and his mom suggested that we give him something to hold. She sent in the Koosh ball. Ever since then he [sits] through meeting just fine. (2002, p. 134)



## Directions

When working with an occupational therapist, if possible, stock a pencil bag with materials from therapy catalogs, or talk to the therapist about teacher-created sensory supports. Some of the best fidgets will be items you have around the house or classroom. Try, for starters, balloons filled with sand (and knotted securely), smooth stones, seashells, combination locks, textured ribbon, and straws.

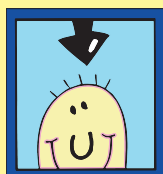
In addition to working with your therapist, you can also observe across environments to determine what to put in an individual student's bag. Pay attention to what he or she does when no fidget

toy is available. Does he twirl a pencil? Does she draw on her desktop? Does he pick at his Band-Aid? These simple observations will help you determine what fidgets to provide.



## Example

Cullen, a third-grader with an emotional disabilities label, keeps a fidget toy on his desk almost constantly. His teacher is always on the lookout for new gadgets for him to try. She has had fun, in particular, looking for content-related gadgets such as a globe-themed bean-bag ball and a U.S. Presidents slide rule.



## Keep in Mind

Giving a child fidgets will only work to a certain extent. Providing a stress ball will help a child stay seated longer, but it won't be a replacement for active learning, movement breaks, or responsive instruction.



## References/ Recommended Reading

Kasa-Hendrickson, C.R. (2002). Participation in the inclusive classroom: Creating success for non-verbal students with autism. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63(3), 903A. (UMI No. 3046836).

Rotz, R., & Wright, S. (2005). *Fidget to focus: Outwit your boredom: Sensory strategies for living with ADD*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse.



## Vendors

### Autism Shop

<http://www.autismshop.com>

A large selection of fidget toys and sensory items—often small enough for a pouch or a pocket—including wiggle pens, Wikki Stix, cushions, tangle toys, and more

### Office Playground

<http://www.officeplayground.com/fidgettoys.html>

A fun array of fidget toys appropriate for both children and adults

### **Toys for Autism**

<http://www.toysforautism.com>

Several little toys appropriate for a fidget bag; check the sensory integration section of the site to view smaller items



## **Web Site**

### **ADDitude: Living Well with ADD & Learning Disabilities**

<http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/1975.html>

A link to a useful article on fidgeting as well as an entire web site of resources, tips, and stories related to learning disabilities.

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