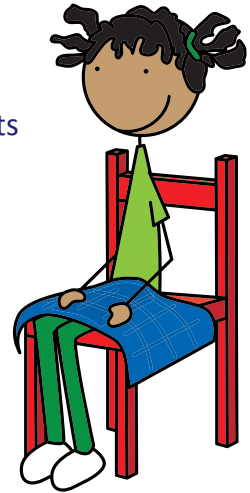


Handy Handouts®

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Using Weighted Materials

By Tara Calder, OTR/L

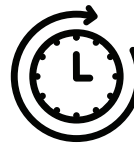


When children use a weighted vest, neck wrap, or lap pad, their attention span may improve, as well as their ability to stay on task and stay in their seats. Weighted materials may also help decrease self-stimulatory behaviors such as repeating sounds (words, laughter) and movements (rocking, clapping). Weighted materials provide proprioception—deep touch pressure—which is calming to the nervous system.

Vest weight and wear time will be different for each child. Some children benefit from using weighted materials all day; other children will become used to them and need to have a wearing schedule. Some children will independently put on or take off weighted materials as needed throughout the day (this is generally easier with weighted neck wraps and lap pads than vests). Most children need a schedule when first using a weighted product.

Use the least amount of weight necessary to produce the desired results. When using weighted products with a child, do not exceed 5–10% of the child's body weight. Use the lower weight range for neck wraps and lap pads and the higher range for vests. Do not use weighted materials on children under four or on children with neuromuscular disorders, breathing issues, or low muscle tone.

If developing a vest-wearing schedule, use the vest for the least amount of time needed to produce desired results, generally 30–60 minutes during an activity, with at least one hour off in between wearing. Try not to remove the vest during an activity (allow child to complete activity before removing vest).



Typical times to use a weighted product include:

- Start of the day
- After recess
- During "specials" (music, art, gym)
- During written work
- During reading activities
- During homework
- Before bedtime
- During stressful activities (appointments, shopping, meeting new people)



Types of weighted products available:

- Vest
- Blanket
- Lap pad
- Glove
- Hat
- Neck wrap
- Wrist and ankle weights
- Pencil weight

Consult with an occupational therapist to determine what type of weighted product to use, the amount of weight to use, and to develop a wearing schedule. Only use weighted products under adult supervision.



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(cont.)

Weighted Materials Schedule

This page provides a form you can use to develop a weighted materials schedule. Remember, consult with an occupational therapist to determine what type of weighted product to use, the amount of weight to use, and to develop a wearing schedule. Only use weighted products under adult supervision.

Time (if applicable)	Activity	Type of Material(s)	Amount of Weight	Amount of Time On	Amount of Time Off

Resources

- Bundy, A. C., Lane, S. J., & Murray, E. A. (2002). Sensory integration: Theory and practice (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis Company.
- Shellenberger, S., & Williams, M. S. (1992). "How does your engine run™?" A leader's guide to the alert program™ for self-regulation. Albuquerque: TherapyWorks Inc.
- Wilbarger, P. (1995, June). The sensory diet: Activity programs based on sensory processing theory. Sensory Integration Special Interest Section Newsletter Volume 18, No. 2, American Occupational Therapy Association.

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