



How to Guide... Fidgets/Concentration Aids

What are they?

Fidgets, also known as concentration aids, are small, handheld objects designed to provide tactile or movement-based sensory input. They come in many forms; stretchy bands, spinning or clicking gadgets, squishy balls, textured shapes, putty, or multi-sensory combinations, all offering subtle physical activity that can help a pupil stay regulated and focused. These tools engage the sensory and motor systems through repetitive movement, pressure, or texture. The aim is not distraction, but regulation: gentle, controlled movement can help the brain maintain an optimal level of alertness for attention and learning.

Why would they be used?

Sensory processing research shows that the nervous system constantly seeks the right balance of input to stay alert but calm. Some children need *more* sensory input to reach that state. When they fidget or move, they are often self-regulating rather than misbehaving. Fidget tools give that regulation a purposeful, discreet form. Through touch, resistance and rhythm, fidgets stimulate proprioceptive and tactile receptors, helping the brain to filter irrelevant stimuli and sustain attention. They can reduce anxiety, support impulse control, and provide a grounding experience during stress. For pupils who are under-responsive, the movement or texture offers needed sensory “wake-up” input; for those who are over-responsive, the rhythmic action can be soothing.

Used appropriately, fidget tools don't distract, instead they *free up cognitive energy* so pupils can concentrate on the task at hand.

Who would use them?

Fidget tools or concentration aids can benefit a wide range of pupils who need additional sensory input to maintain concentration. They are particularly useful for children with ADHD, Autism, anxiety or sensory processing differences, as these pupils often struggle with self-regulation and may seek extra movement or tactile feedback to stay focused. They can also support pupils who experience restlessness during long periods of listening, or who find transitions and waiting times difficult. In some cases, a fidget provides an outlet for energy that might otherwise appear as pencil-tapping, chair-rocking, or constant shifting, behaviours that can be distracting to both the pupil and their peers.



How are they used?

Begin by introducing a small selection of fidget tools and observing which types the pupil naturally gravitates towards, smooth, textured, stretchy, or resistant. Each child's sensory profile is unique, and preference often depends on what kind of input their body needs.

Teach explicit expectations: the fidget is used quietly, below desk level, and without interfering with others. It is a tool for helping focus, not for play. Some pupils may respond best to a single consistent item, while others may need to switch between types depending on mood or activity.

Monitor how the tool affects attention and behaviour. Signs of effective use include calmer posture, steadier focus, and reduced fidgeting elsewhere. If a fidget becomes a source of distraction or competition, remove it and reintroduce later with clearer structure. Clean and rotate regularly to maintain hygiene and novelty. Where possible, link use to the pupil's sensory plan or regulation strategy so that all staff understand when and why it is appropriate.

When can fidgets be used?

Fidget tools can be used in almost any learning environment when a pupil needs additional sensory input to aid focus. They are most effective during listening activities, independent desk work, assemblies, or transitions between lessons. They can also be incorporated into regulation zones or calm corners as part of a wider sensory support strategy.

At home, they may help children during homework, travel, or waiting periods/rooms where stillness is expected.

The key is purpose and timing: fidgets should be introduced as a support, not a toy, with clear boundaries about when and how they are used. Pupils benefit most when adults model this and when fidget use is discussed as a shared regulation strategy.



For more information on fidgets visit: [Calming & Fidgets for Children & Nursery Schools | TTS](#)

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