

# My sensory experience

## What is sensory processing?

Sensory processing is how your brain interprets information received from your senses (known as 'sensory input').

This process is how you feel and react to things in your environment and sensations in your body.

The five main senses are: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.

Three other key senses are: balance and movement, spatial awareness, and awareness of internal states.

### **Many autistic people have sensory processing differences.**

This means they experience input from their senses differently to other people. You may be much more sensitive (**hyper-sensitive**) or much less sensitive (**hypo-sensitive**) than other people to the same sensory input.

Or, you may have a **mixed and/or varying experience**, experiencing both hyper-sensitivity and hypo-sensitivity.

You might have different experiences across different senses or within the same sense.

Your sensory experience may change over time, in different environments or due to other factors, such as your mental and physical health.

For more information, visit our web page [\*\*Autism and sensory processing\*\*](#)

## Understanding common reactions

People who experience **hyper-sensitivity** may:

- **avoid** (or become irritated/distressed by) uncomfortable or painful sensory input
- **enjoy** being sensitive to pleasurable or soothing sensory input
- face **challenges** due to hyper-sensitivity.

People who experience **hypo-sensitivity** may:

- **not notice** sensory input
- **seek out** (or become frustrated/distressed by a lack of) sensory input
- face **challenges** due to hypo-sensitivity.

## Reasonable adjustments

Employers and service providers (including education, health and care providers) have a legal duty to make **reasonable adjustments** to stop you being put at a disadvantage because you are autistic. This can include because of your sensory experience.

We have a separate resource that explores [\*\*Common examples of reasonable adjustments\*\*](#) at work.

## How to fill in the table

The example table below includes notes (in yellow) about how to fill in the main table on the following pages.

You can complete the main table digitally by typing into the fields or you can print the document and fill it in by hand.

Our related [Autistic sensory experiences](#) resource may also help you to think about your sensory experiences and complete the main table in this resource.

## Share your feedback

What do you think about this resource? Please tell us by clicking the link below or scanning the QR code to the right to complete a **short survey**. Feedback is reviewed periodically and helps us to update our resources.



<p><b>The sense</b> The sensory input/s</p>	<p><b>My sensory experience</b></p>	<p><b>My reactions and challenges</b></p>	<p><b>Self-management and support</b></p>
	<p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hyper-sensitivity (much <b>more</b> sensitive)  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hypo-sensitivity (much <b>less</b> sensitive)  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A mix of hyper- and hypo-sensitivity                      Tick the box that describes your experience of the sense and sensory inputs listed in the column to the left (eg Sight, Hearing, Touch, etc.)                 </p>	<p><b>My reactions:</b> How do you react to experiencing too much or too little sensory input for this sense?</p> <p><b>Challenges I face:</b> What challenges do you face because of hyper- or hypo-sensitivity to sensory input for this sense?</p>	<p><b>I manage my sensory input by:</b> Are there routines, items, tools or toys that help you to manage sensory input to keep calm and happy, or that you use to enjoy sensory input?</p> <p><b>Other people can help me by:</b> What can other people do to help you be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more comfortable</li> <li>• more able to concentrate, participate or engage</li> <li>• less likely to experience distress or sensory overload (which can lead to distressed behaviour)?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>My triggers of hyper-sensitivity (if relevant)</b></p>		
	<p>If you experience hyper-sensitivity in this sense, list the sensory input/s that trigger it. For example, for the sense of sight, bright lighting can be a trigger.</p>		

# Sight

Light, colour, pattern

## I experience

Hyper-sensitivity  
(much **more** sensitive)

Hypo-sensitivity  
(much **less** sensitive)

A mix of hyper- and  
hypo-sensitivity

## My triggers of hyper-sensitivity (if relevant)

## My reactions and challenges

**My reactions:**

**Challenges I face:**

## Self-management and support

**I manage my sensory input by:**

**Other people can help me by:**

**Hearing**  
Sound / noise

<b>I experience</b>	<b>My reactions and challenges</b>	<b>Self-management and support</b>
<p>Hyper-sensitivity (much <b>more</b> sensitive)</p> <p>Hypo-sensitivity (much <b>less</b> sensitive)</p> <p>A mix of hyper- and hypo-sensitivity</p>	<p><b>My reactions:</b></p>	<p><b>I manage my sensory input by:</b></p>
<p><b>My triggers of hyper-sensitivity (if relevant)</b></p>		

# Touch

Texture, pressure, heat / cold

## I experience

Hyper-sensitivity  
(much **more** sensitive)

Hypo-sensitivity  
(much **less** sensitive)

A mix of hyper- and  
hypo-sensitivity

## My triggers of hyper-sensitivity (if relevant)

## My reactions and challenges

**My reactions:**

**Challenges I face:**

## Self-management and support

**I manage my sensory input by:**

**Other people can help me by:**

# Smell

Odour / scent

## I experience

Hyper-sensitivity  
(much **more** sensitive)

Hypo-sensitivity  
(much **less** sensitive)

A mix of hyper- and  
hypo-sensitivity

## My triggers of hyper-sensitivity (if relevant)

## My reactions and challenges

### My reactions:

### Challenges I face:

## Self-management and support

### I manage my sensory input by:

### Other people can help me by:





# Spatial awareness

Your position in relationship to other objects and people

## I experience

Hyper-sensitivity  
(much **more** sensitive)

Hypo-sensitivity  
(much **less** sensitive)

A mix of hyper- and  
hypo-sensitivity

## My triggers of hyper-sensitivity (if relevant)

## My reactions and challenges

**My reactions:**

**Challenges I face:**

## Self-management and support

**I manage my sensory input by:**

**Other people can help me by:**

# Awareness of internal states

Hunger, thirst, being hot/cold, needing the toilet, being ill or in pain

I experience	My reactions and challenges	Self-management and support
<p>Hyper-sensitivity (much <b>more</b> sensitive)</p> <p>Hypo-sensitivity (much <b>less</b> sensitive)</p> <p>A mix of hyper- and hypo-sensitivity</p>	<p><b>My reactions:</b></p>	<p><b>I manage my sensory input by:</b></p>
<p><b>My triggers of hyper-sensitivity (if relevant)</b></p>		