



SHOE SENSITIVITIES & SHOE TYING TECHNIQUES IN OT



Many children experience shoe sensitivities, also known as tactile defensiveness, a sensory processing difference in which everyday touch sensations, such as shoe seams, socks, or certain footwear materials, are perceived as uncomfortable or overwhelming. According to AJOT, occupational therapy uses individualized sensory-based strategies and graded exposure to improve a child's tolerance for wearing shoes and increase participation in daily activities (Little et al., 2020).

PROBLEMS

Fine Motor Challenges:

Difficulty tying laces, fastening Velcro, or buckles can make shoes frustrating to wear

Difficulty with sensory processing: Children may be hypersensitive to touch, pressure, temperature of an enclosed shoe.

Difficulty with bilateral skills, crossing midline, and motor planning: Children may struggle with using both hands together to tie their shoes and struggle with the sequencing of putting on shoes.

SOLUTIONS

Activities that promote pincer grasp:

- Putty play with beads
- Coin slot
- Clothespin activities



Use graded exposure by slowly increasing the amount of time the child wears shoes or incorporate sensory play with their feet (walking on different textures, sensory bins)



- Pop Beads
- Lacing cards
- Stringing beads
- Obstacle course
- Scooter activities
- Peel and place stickers across midline



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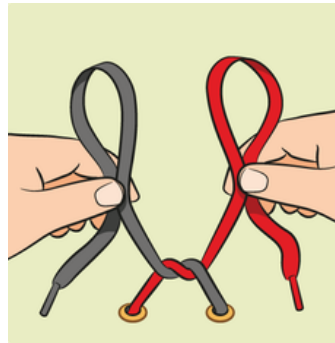


With this being said, wearing properly fitting shoes is important for protecting the feet, providing stability and support, and promoting safe participation in daily activities. Learning to tie shoes is also an essential self-care skill that fosters independence and confidence. When children experience challenges with wearing or managing their footwear, occupational therapy can help them develop the sensory and motor skills needed for successful shoe wearing/tying.

SHOE TYING TECHNIQUES

Bunny Ears Method:

- Create two loops ("bunny ears")
- Cross loops and pull through
- Helpful for visual learners



One Loop Method:

- Make one loop
- Wrap lace around loop
- Pull second loop through
- Appropriate for older children with stronger motor skills



Color Coding:

- Use two different colored laces
- Helps children distinguish right and left lace movements
- Improves sequencing and visual tracking

TIPS AND TRICKS

1. Have your child wear their shoes during favorite activities, such as playing outside or going to the park. Positive experiences can help increase comfort and tolerance.

2. Choose shoes with soft materials, a wide toe box, and a proper fit. Seamless socks may also help reduce discomfort. Adaptive shoe options include: Velcro or slip on shoes!

3. Try foot massages, firm squeezes, jumping, or animal walks before putting on shoes. Proprioceptive input can help your child feel more comfortable wearing footwear.

VIDEO LINKS

Video 1: https://youtu.be/M8AE_1fOY2M?si=WRfwdNxQMNCw2UJJ

Video 2:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/XxAlWy-bSc>

REFERENCE

Lin LY. Activity Participation and Sensory Processing Patterns of Preschool-Age Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder. Am J Occup Ther. 2020 Nov/Dec;74(6):7406345010p1-7406345010p7. doi: 10.5014/ajot.2020.039297. PMID: 33275571.