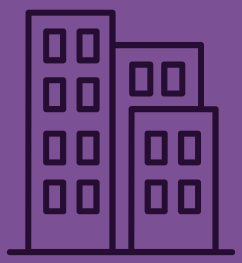
SPECTRUM GAMING

Inclusive Environments Toolkit

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR ACCESSIBLE, ENGAGING SPACES



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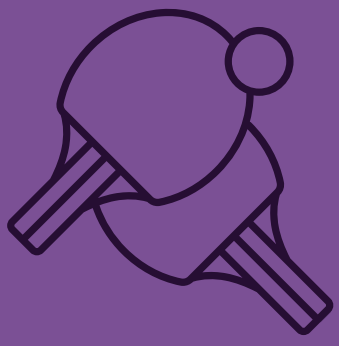

SUPPORTING INCLUSION IN EVERY ENVIRONMENT

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SENSORY AUDIT

Some young people may experience sensory input more intensely, noticing things that others might not. If you haven't experienced these differences yourself, it can be hard to know what to look out for! This page is designed to help you think about and understand these sensory differences.

Selecting a Venue

If you have the luxury of selecting one!

Here are some preferences to think about when deciding on a venue, based on individual sensitivities:

The basics

- Is there a quiet room available? If not, is there a space that can be used as the quiet area?

General

- Do they use easy read signs?
- Simple building layout

Sight

- Soft lights and dimmer switches, rather than hard lights
- Use cream colours rather than white
- Light protection at windows (curtains, not blinds)
- Materials that do not reflect light
- Plain walls with minimal decoration

Sound

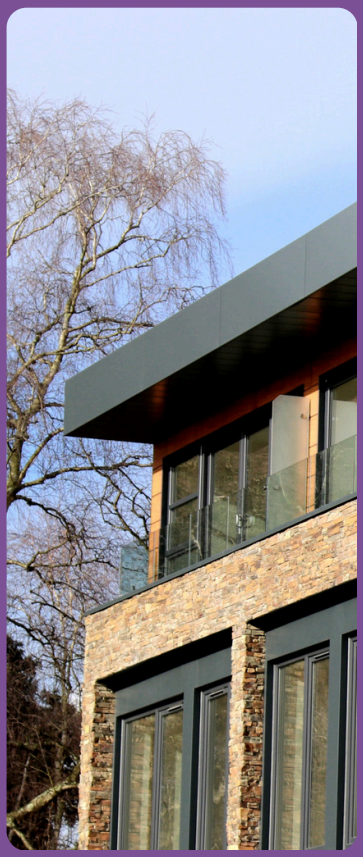
- No or silent hand dryers
- No blaring fire alarms (fire alarm uses a voice instead?)
- Sound absorbing materials e.g. carpets
- Low amounts of ambient noise (fridges, lighting)
- Sound proofing between walls and floors
- Silent clocks
- No music
- No automatic flushing toilets

Touch

- Lots of space
- Comfortable furniture
- No draughts

Smell

- Fragrance free items
- no 'smelly' paints/ furnishings
- Natural smelling toilets e.g. extraction fan
- No harsh cleaning chemicals



SENSORY AUDIT

Improving Your venue

Ways to improve your chosen venue

Here are some suggestions for improving the venue you have chosen (or the one you're stuck with!):

Zone warning system: Rate different rooms and areas in the venue on how much sensory stimulation there is out of low, medium and high so people are aware of the differences throughout. With each sign can be equipment to help with the move to a 'higher sensory zone', for example:

- Ear defenders
- Sunglasses
- Stress relievers, such as fidget spinners and squash balls
- Distractions such as magazines and word searches/ mazes/ colouring activities
- Weighted lap pad or massager
- Visuals to make communication easier

Turn off hand dryers But also bring paper towels!

Put up easy to read signs/ directions to the toilets, the quiet room and other rooms that will be used

Space out tables chairs and other furnishings

Ask if it is ok to remove unnecessary decoration/ clutter

No music

Is it possible for someone to visit the venue and do a sensory audit? There are lots more ways to make venues more sensory friendly, and visiting in advance helps to identify what needs to be done

Is there an accessible and easy to read map of the building?

PREPARATION

What to do before the day

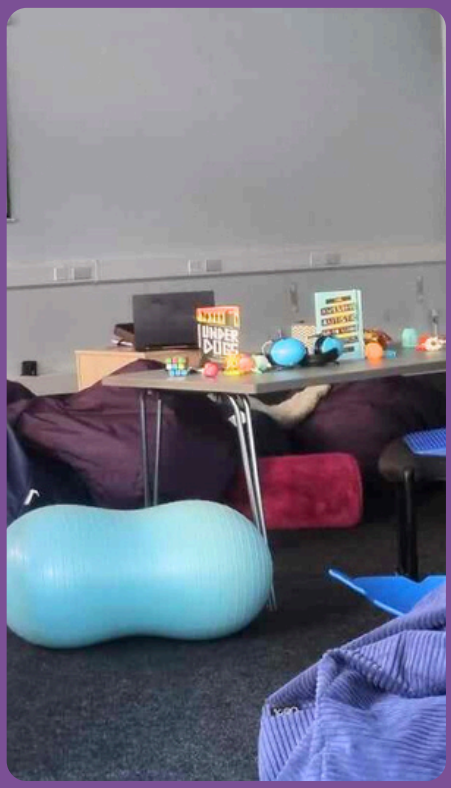
In advance to the day, you should be clear about:

- The purpose of the day and who is attending
- Detailed instructions for travel and parking
- The schedule (if there is one)
- Who the contact is for any problems
- If anything needs to be prepared in advance
- The rules and expectations
- The adjustments that will be in place
- You also need to ask for any specific accessibility/ dietary requirements so you can plan for them!

The above information should be shared as soon as possible and there are a variety of ways to do so, whether it is via email, it is explained in a leaflet or poster, or written in the form of a Social Story).

PREPARATION

What to do before the day



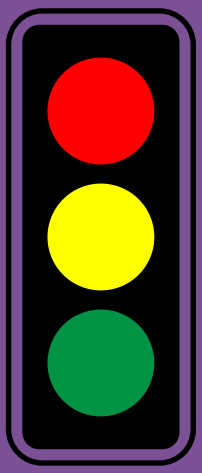
Here are some examples of helpful things to do share:

- Include pictures of the venue and the rooms in the above information (including toilets!)
- Have pictures of the people running the event
- Have relaxed arrangements where possible
  - Allowing people to wear what they find comfortable
  - Making clear you don't have to sit on a chair for people who find it difficult to sit still and concentrate. Can people pace the room, stand up, sit on the floor or anything else? If stimming is not causing any harm, let it happen!
- Make agreement that no photos will be taken (or if they are taken, have tables for people who do not want to be in photos - and **do not use flash**)
- Let people know they are welcome to leave or go for a break at any time
- Would it be useful if everyone is asked to create a One Page Profile in advance of the event? You can make an online one using Carrd - here are some examples:
  - https://andy-sg.carrd.co/
  - https://kirstiesg.carrd.co/
- Brief the staff at the venue so they are aware of the event and the visitors.

THE BIG DAY

How to help the event run smoothly (part 1/3)

Here are some ways to make the event itself more accessible and enjoyable for young people who may have communication differences:



Traffic Light System for social interaction:
Offer three different coloured stickers that people can use depending on how much interaction they would like from others. Most people who use this system actually choose a green sticker anyway, but just having the option helps to lower anxiety and makes it easier to attend groups and sessions.
Make sure that people are able to (and know they are able to) change their sticker to a different colour at any time:

Optional Name Tags
Because remembering names can be difficult! You can also put the traffic light sticker on the name tag so it is easier to see.

Use a visual timetable - So people can see if you are on track with the schedule.

Make sure the quiet room is quiet.

Consider an extended registration/ arrival time to avoid queues.

Provide handouts where applicable (preferably on cream paper and with font size of at least 14).

Provide whiteboards and pens for people who are not comfortable with talking (whiteboard is more comfortable than pen and paper as you can erase what you write!)

THE BIG DAY

How to help the event run smoothly (part 2/3)

Activities to do during wait times and for sensory regulation (recommended for when transitioning between activities as well as when someone appears over or understimulated - try doing regulatory activities at regular intervals throughout the day)

- **For general waiting**
  - Drawing, crosswords, word searches, mazes etc.
  - Games and other distractions
- **Equipment free**
  - Hard/ crunchy foods
  - Chewing gum
  - Giving 'push fives' (high fives, but where you push for a while, but try not to topple each other at the same time!)
  - Finger nail squeezes (squeezing the base of each nail for 5 seconds)
  - Stair climbing
  - Carrying heavy items
  - Body stretches
  - Joint compressions
  - Running, skipping and hopping
  - Jumping jacks/ wall pushups
  - Massage
  - Wheelbarrow walking
  - Any hanging/ pushing/ pulling/ lifting heavy objects
  - Breathing techniques
- **Using equipment (Don't forget to tell people they can bring their own!)**
  - Hand fidgets
  - Stress ball
  - Hand putty (search online how to make your own or use blue tack)
  - Weighted backpack
  - Scent cards
  - Tug of war
  - Catching and throwing
  - Kicking e.g. a football
  - Scooterboard activities
  - Lego, magnetic toys etc.
  - Stretchy toys
  - chew tubing
  - play dough
  - Trampette
  - Move 'n' sit cushion
  - Vibrating pillow, pen, toy massager

THE BIG DAY

How to help the event run smoothly (part 3/3)

Have someone (or some people) available to welcome and guide newcomers

Schedule regular comfort breaks, you can add in sensory regulation exercises during these breaks (anything that is heavy muscle work or any form of deep pressure has a regulating effect)

Use flapplause - this is where you wave your hands in the air rather than clapping, helpful when people who are sensitive to sound are present!

Create a feedback mechanism so you know how to improve for next time (and email Spectrum Gaming at info@spectrumgaming.net if you have suggestions to improve this document based on the feedback!)

Above all, make people feel welcome and valued!