

‘Heavy Work Activities’ to help children remain calm and focused.

Movement is important in our ability to learn, focus, attend, and participate in daily tasks. When we don’t have opportunities to move our bodies, we can struggle to remain calm and organised.

What is ‘Heavy work’?

Heavy work is activity that requires effort from our muscles and these tasks usually involve activation of the muscles and joints of the body through the proprioceptive system by movements such as pushing, pulling or lifting. The movement activities create resistance input to the muscles and this feedback is ultimately what calms and regulates the sensory system.

What Are Some Examples of Heavy Work Activities?

Heavy work can consist of a variety of movements. It can include carrying, pulling, pushing, jumping, chewing, squeezing, climbing, lifting, pinching, and more. The great thing about it is that many of these heavy work activities require little to no extra equipment and space!

- Pushing or pulling boxes with toys/books in
- Help to move furniture
- Opening doors for people
- Pushing lunchbox trolleys
- Carrying a rucksack with books in
- Cleaning surfaces
- Mopping, sweeping or raking
- Carrying beanbags on heads or shoulders across room
- Pulling other children on sheet/blanket
- Seat push ups
- Squeeze toys

- Push against a wall
- Fill up trucks with heavy blocks to push
- Colouring whilst on hand sand knees
- Pushing cars with one hand whilst supporting self with the other
- Playing catch with a heavy ball
- Playing with damp sand
- Squishing play-dough
- Blowing bubbles
- Riding a tricycle or bicycle
- Playing catch with a beanbag
- Animal walks e.g. crab, bear, lizard or army crawls
- Help to put out mats and equipment
- Climbing on playground equipment
- Running and jumping
- Obstacles courses
- Jumping on a trampette

Things to Keep in Mind

Keep activities fun and motivating for the child. Activities should be completed at regular intervals throughout the day. Try integrating heavy work activities before the child is expected to sit still (Eg: before ... snack/lunch time, sitting at group time/story time). Calming does not always happen in the moment but can be delayed until about 20-30 minutes after the activity.