

## Scent-Based Sensory Learning Activities for SEN Pupils

### Memory Match with Scents

**Objective:** Improve memory and recall skills by associating scents with images or objects.

**Materials:** Essential oils or scented markers, flashcards with images or symbols.

**Activity:** Introduce a few distinct scents (e.g., lavender, cinnamon, orange). Pair each scent with an image card, such as a lavender flower for lavender oil. Have pupils smell each scent and match it to the correct card. Repeat and see if pupils can recall the matches more easily over time.

**Extension:** Use this activity as a 'pre-test' to boost memory before a more challenging lesson.

### Scented Story Time

**Objective:** Enhance narrative comprehension and engagement through scent.

**Materials:** Scents that match story elements (e.g., pine for a forest scene, citrus for a sunny day).

**Activity:** As you read a story aloud, introduce scents at relevant points (e.g., waft pine when the character is in a forest). Encourage pupils to describe what they smell and guess how it relates to the story.

**Extension:** Let students create their own 'scented story' by choosing scents and writing scenes around them.

### Emotional Scent Check-In

**Objective:** Help pupils recognize and express emotions using scent associations.

**Materials:** Calming and energizing scents (e.g., lavender, peppermint), sensory jars.

**Activity:** Begin class by having each pupil select a scent that matches their current mood. Discuss why they chose the scent, using it as a way to check in with emotions and set a positive tone.

**Extension:** Pupils can change scents throughout the day, using different scents to regulate emotions.

## Cultural Exploration through Scents

Objective: Foster cultural awareness by exploring scents tied to different regions and traditions.

Materials: Scents from various cultures (e.g., jasmine for Southeast Asia, vanilla for Central America).

Activity: Introduce a region and let pupils experience a related scent. Discuss what foods, plants, or practices might be associated with the scent. Pupils can draw or write about what they imagine based on the scent.

Extension: Create a 'scent passport' for pupils to stamp after each scent exploration.

## Scented Scavenger Hunt

Objective: Promote teamwork and following directions.

Materials: Scented clues hidden around the classroom or playground (e.g., essential oils on cotton balls).

Activity: Place scented items along a scavenger hunt route. Pupils follow the scent clues to find objects or places around the room. Each scent could represent a different clue, and pupils work together to find the destination.

Extension: Include puzzles or math problems at each stop that need solving before moving on.

## Scented Sensory Bottles for Self-Regulation

Objective: Teach self-regulation techniques through calming scents.

Materials: Small bottles filled with water, glitter, and calming scents like chamomile or eucalyptus.

Activity: When pupils feel overwhelmed, they shake their sensory bottle, watching the glitter settle while breathing in the calming scent. This is ideal for relaxation and can be kept at their desks as a personal regulation tool.

Extension: Experiment with different scents and let pupils choose their favorite for self-soothing.

## Science of Scent Exploration

Objective: Teach basic science concepts about smell and sensory processing.

Materials: Scented jars with lids, various food extracts, and essential oils.

Activity: Teach pupils about how scents travel and how our brain processes smells. Create stations with different scents and have pupils guess each one, learning to describe scents in terms of strong, faint, sweet, or spicy.

Extension: Introduce pupils to the science of scent molecules, even using magnifying glasses to 'inspect' their scented jars.

### **Cooking and Scents Around the World**

Objective: Combine cooking skills with cultural and sensory learning.

Materials: Ingredients for simple recipes with distinct scents (e.g., cinnamon for spiced cider, mint for iced tea).

Activity: Create a simple recipe together, focusing on the smell of each ingredient. Discuss how each smell relates to the region or culture it's from, encouraging pupils to guess where each ingredient comes from.

Extension: Prepare a class recipe book with each pupil's favorite ingredients or recipes.

### **Math and Scent Patterns**

Objective: Practice pattern recognition and math sequencing.

Materials: Scented playdough or scented markers in different colors and scents.

Activity: Create simple patterns with colors and scents (e.g., lavender, lemon, lavender, lemon). Ask pupils to replicate and then extend the pattern using their own ideas.

Extension: Introduce more complex sequences or 'scent equations' for advanced pupils, like combinations or adding new scents to their patterns.

### **Scent Stations for Creative Writing**

Objective: Spark creativity and descriptive language through scent.

Materials: Stations with a variety of scents (e.g., coffee, vanilla, pine, mint).

Activity: At each station, pupils experience a new scent and write a few sentences describing an imagined scene or character associated with it. Each scent offers a new scene to write about, helping them build descriptive language.

Extension: Combine their writing into a class book of 'scent-inspired stories' to share with peers and parents.

## Scent-Based Activity Template

Activity Element	Description
Activity Name	(Name the activity)
Objective	(Define the intended goal: e.g., promote calm, enhance focus, energize the group, improve memory)
Target Age Group	(Specify the appropriate age group, such as Early Years, Elementary, Middle School)
Duration	(List the estimated duration in minutes; generally, 5–15 minutes for classroom settings)
Scent Type	(Select an appropriate scent based on the objective, such as lavender for calm or lemon for alertness)
Materials Needed	- Essential oil or sachet- Diffuser or cotton balls (to hold scents)- Timer (optional)
Activity Setup	- Choose the method for diffusing scent (e.g., diffuser, spray, cotton ball, sachet).- Ensure adequate ventilation.
Instructions	1. <b>Introduce</b> the activity by explaining the scent and its purpose (e.g., “Lavender helps us feel calm.”).2. <b>Scent Application:</b> Begin diffusing the scent or pass around a sachet/cotton ball.3. <b>Engagement Prompt:</b> Encourage students to focus on the scent while performing an activity, like deep breathing, journaling, or a short discussion.4. <b>Activity Execution:</b> Carry out the main task (e.g., reading, test prep, group work).5. <b>Reflection:</b> After completing, briefly discuss or journal how the scent affected their focus or mood.
Considerations	- Check for any allergies or scent sensitivities beforehand.- Keep the scent subtle to avoid distraction.- For younger students, encourage them to use “sniff zones” (holding a sachet briefly) rather than constant diffusion.
Follow-Up	(Note any observations about behavior, focus, or mood for future sessions. Adjust scent duration or type as needed.)

## Example Activity Using the Template

Activity Name	"Calm & Focus Time"
Objective	To promote calm and focus during individual reading time.
Target Age Group	Elementary (Ages 6–10)
Duration	10 minutes
Scent Type	Lavender
Materials Needed	- Lavender essential oil- Cotton balls (one per student, if appropriate)
Setup	Lightly dab a small amount of lavender oil onto cotton balls; place around the room.
Instructions	1. Explain that lavender can help create a calm environment.2. Ask students to take a few deep breaths while holding the cotton ball briefly near their nose.3. Begin silent reading for 10 minutes.4. Optional reflection: Ask students how the scent made them feel afterward.
Considerations	Ensure students only hold the cotton ball briefly to prevent overwhelming exposure.
Follow-Up	Observe if lavender helped students settle into reading more easily.