

Occupational Therapy Tip Sheet

WEIGHTED ANIMALS & LAP PADS



What is a weighted animal or lap pad?

- It is a stuffed animal or pad that has added weight to it.
- It is available in various styles, sizes, shapes and weights.
- It is most frequently used on a student's lap when sitting but can also be placed on the shoulders or chest.



What type of student would benefit from a weighted animal or lap pad?

- Students who would benefit from the use of a 'calm down' tool
- Students who have difficulty with self-regulation (which means the ability to control their behaviour, emotions, and energy)
- Students who have difficulty maintaining attention and sitting still
- Students who demonstrate a need for deep pressure (e.g. difficulty with personal boundaries, frequently falling or crashing on purpose, seeking things to push, pull or climb)

What are the benefits of using a weighted animal or lap pad?

- Promotes calmness
- Reduces restlessness
- Increases concentration and sustained attention
- Promotes body awareness (feeling where your body is in space)

Why do weighted animals and lap pads work?

- The weight provides deep pressure input, similar to that of a hug.
- This deep pressure input called "proprioception" can have a soothing effect on a student's nervous system due to changes in the body's biochemistry that this sensation provides.

How and when can weighted animals and lap pads be used?

- Use for short periods of time throughout the day (approximately 10-20 minutes each).
- Use during times when the student might experience the most challenges such as sitting for circle time, while writing a test, or after a transition (e.g. settling after recess).



Other tips:

- The weight should be light enough that the student can pick it up on their own (usually 2-5 pounds, never to exceed 10% of body weight).
- Weighted tools should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure they are not ripped or ruined and purchasing a protective cover can help keep the tools in proper shape.

Where can you buy weighted animals and lap pads?

- There are several Canadian companies that sell these tools.

- Ask your therapist for details or to try one out.
- Check the resources available at your school.