

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Fidgets—Tools that Take Away Stress!

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Fidgets are objects we touch or “play with” when we experience good or bad stress. We also fidget with different items when we have restless or nervous energy. Fidgets can be toys, games, or everyday things such as pens, jewelry, or pocket

change. Moving, or manipulating, these objects helps us manage stress from different situations because the movement helps regulate, or balance out, our sensory systems. While it might seem like fidgets are distracting, they actually take care of “antsy” behavior—making us more relaxed and evening out our energy levels.

Fidgeting is a normal behavior for children and adults, and most everyone fidgets to some degree. We often fidget when we are trying to concentrate or pass time, and we may switch from one fidget to another depending on the stress level.

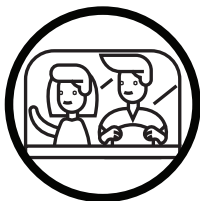
Some common examples of fidgeting include:

- biting nails
- tapping a foot
- twirling hair
- chewing on a pencil



Some common situations for fidgeting include:

- talking on the phone
- listening to a presentation
- riding in the car



In school, students may feel stress and fidget when struggling to come up with an answer, when getting ready to accept an award, or after sitting for a long period of time.

Sometimes, individuals show inappropriate or socially unacceptable fidgeting. These behaviors include:

- biting hands
- picking the nose
- chewing on clothes



In the school setting, educators may work with students to find more socially-acceptable fidgeting behaviors or *replacement behaviors*. Replacement behaviors often include using objects that are common, less distracting (no lights or noises), and more hygienic. Educators may also use fidgets to help students regulate their sensory systems