











Fidgets are Tools ~ “GOs” and “NOs” for Partners of Neurodivergent Individuals

 Use this framework to explore how your neurodivergent loved one or learner uses fidgets to engage and participate.	 Do NOT assume sitting quietly equates to engaging and participating.
 Actively teach your neurodivergent loved one or learner WHY and HOW to use fidgets as TOOLS.	 Do NOT assume that your neurodivergent loved one or learner Knows WHY or HOW to use a fidget as a tool rather than a toy.
 Respect difference. Different people will use tools differently.	 Do NOT assume the same fidget will always be the right tool.
 Offer fidget choices. Use multimodal communication; objects, pictures, words to support processing in a busy environment.	 Do NOT assume that if your learner or loved one is visually focused on the fidget that they are not attending.
 Watch for signs of changes in energy and provide support. Fidgets are just one regulation tool to be considered.	 Do NOT assume your loved one is processing your spoken words easily in a sensory rich environment.



Fidgets are Tools

Why use a Fidget:

Fidgets can be used to help you to focus on and more easily participate in activities.

What are Fidgets:

Fidgets can be almost anything. Often they are objects, but they could be your own body/body parts. For example:

- Head/neck - gum, straws, bottles, lips, throat/noises, tongue flicking, chewlery, hair, scalp
- Arm/hand/finger fidgets - spinners, putty, tags, elastics, pens, stroking arms, flick fingers
- Leg/foot/toe fidgets - small ball, toe ring, shoes, textured socks, sand, water, rubbing legs

When to use a Fidget:

Your energy doesn't match the energy you need to participate. For example:

- You are having a hard time paying attention.
- You want to settle or calm your body or mind.
- You want to touch or hold something.
- You feel like you need something interesting to look at.
- You just want to use it.

Where to use a Fidget:

Fidgets are tools used within your personal space. Your personal space is anywhere you can reach without making contact with someone else. You might use a fidget in your hand, on your desk, in your pocket. But, you also might use a fidget under your desk, your mouth, or on the floor.

How to use a Fidget:

Fidgets can be used in many ways. As long as the way you use a fidget does not harm or distract you or anyone else, it is probably okay!

- Head/neck - chew, suck, tongue, rub, scratch
- Arm/hand/fingers - rub, squeeze, stretch, pinch, pull
- Leg/foot/toes - bounce, roll, stretch, squish, rub, shake

How to know if a fidget is the right tool for you and is helping you

YES

- It is helping you to focus on or participate in an activity.
- It is shifting your energy in a helpful way.
- It is helping you process information / understand.
- It is helping you pay attention.
- It is helping you to complete work/activity.

Keep using the Fidget

NO

- All of your attention is focused on the Fidget.
- Using it is increasing your energy mismatch and decreasing your participation.
- You are distracting others.
- You feel like it is not helping / not what you need.

Try a different Fidget / Tool

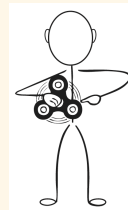
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- You just want to use it.

Where to use a Fidget:

- In your hand
- On the floor
- On or under your desk
- In your pocket
- In your mouth (depending on the fidget)



How to use a Fidget:

Fidgets can be used in many ways. As long as the way you use a fidget does not harm or distract you or anyone else, it is probably okay!

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Try a different Fidget / Tool

Fidgets are Tools	Fidget	How it changes my energy...			Does it help me focus?			Do I like It?
		Soothing	Neutral	Alerting	NO- It's a Toy	I don't know	YES-It's a Tool	Yes / No
Arm / Hand / Finger	Spinners							
	Putty							
	Tags							
	Elastics							
	Jewelry							
	Pens							
	Stroke arms							
	Flick fingers							
Leg / Foot / Toe	Small ball							
	Theraband							
	Toe Ring							
	Shoes (on/off)							
	Shoes (rocking)							
	Textured socks / soles of shoes							
	Sand							
	Water (pool, ocean, tub, tupperware)							
	Rub legs							
Head / Neck	Gum							
	Straws							
	Hard candy							
	Water bottles							
	Chewlery							
	Feel / pull hair							
	Rub / scratch scalp							
	Bite lips							
	Tongue flicks							
	Throat noises							