

KINETIC LIGHT

Getting Started with Sensory Kits

Why offer sensory kits?

The art of Front of House is the practice of hospitality: ensuring each audience member has the best possible experience. Or from another perspective, we might say that you are creating the best possible environment in which people can experience art. An important element of this hospitality is providing graceful and versatile access.

Access is inherently multiplicitous; there is no one solution. Creating access for your audiences is a set of practices, relationships, and conversations. Flexibility is important because you will never be able to predict what is best for any single guest; therefore, we focus on strategies that offer each individual agency in determining their own experience and access. We offer this particular set of practices around sensory kits as something that has grown from our own practices and our relationships and research with neurodivergent artists and audience members.

Loosely and informally named by Kinetic Light as sensory kits, these are designed to offer multiple ways for an individual to customize their experience of an event. You might also encounter people calling these stim kits or some other name. These are toolkits which contain two primary categories of item: filters, which can modify the sensory environment of the venue (such as earplugs), and stims, which can provide helpful ways to process or interact with the environment.

Who uses sensory kits?

This set of items is structured to be useful for many kinds of access and sensory needs and desires. Having kits available for audience use is a relatively new practice for many arts venues. Kinetic Light has found that many people, of all ages and disability or nondisabled identification, are excited about the option and make use of these kits during performances. We suggest beginning with enough kits for at least 5% of your audience and collecting feedback in order to learn how best to evolve this practice to suit your community. Some venues experience kit use of over 20% of their audiences on a regular basis; each venue and audience community will have different needs and desires.

Planning your kits

You don't necessarily require a big spend to get started with your own kits. The absolute basics can be assembled with as little investment as \$10 per kit. \$25-50 per kit is a good starting point, and if your budget permits you can easily go up to \$60-100 for a comprehensive and high-quality kit.

These should and will evolve and be augmented over time; for example, inexpensive ear defenders and sunglasses can be replaced with better quality items; additional sensory items can be added or replaced. Any accompanying text or scripts should be periodically reviewed and updated with community input. This is a great opportunity to build ongoing relationships with your communities. We actively encourage taking recommendations from audience members who are using these kits for ongoing improvement.

For ease of distribution, management, and tracking, we suggest assembling these as cohesive kits. A tote or string bag is a good starting point – you may already have branded bags available for your venue. In general, gentle solid colors are preferred, although that will not be possible for all items. **It is important that these not be openly labeled or identifiable as an access mechanism;** audience members should be able to be comfortable carrying and using kits without regard to openly identifying their access desires or identifications.

Offering and Managing Kits

For most venues, these will live with front of house management; often these kits and associated practices become part of the box office's workflow. All FoH personnel and ushers or volunteers should be acquainted with the purpose and contents of the kit. Scripts should be provided for offering bags as an option, which may happen both at the point of ticket verification and at various points in the lobby or house. If you are offering a quiet space, several kits can be placed there. It is important not to place additional barriers, labor, or restrictions around who can access or use these kits: requiring advance reservation, additional cost, or disability verification is not acceptable practice.

As with all types of access, your language around this deserves consideration: construct your scripts – in pre-performance and day-of copy (website, social media, email), when offering or handing out bags, and at the point of return (at house exit, box office, quiet space, venue exit) – with openness and care. Kinetic Light is happy to assist with language and script review, and this is a significant part of our ALLways curriculum and community of practice.

Tracking and Sanitizing

We recommend one or more people be assigned specific responsibility for regathering, sanitizing, and resetting kits between uses, understanding that as a post-show work need.

There are a variety of tracking solutions available to help find kits, which may be for example left behind in the house or quiet space, and each venue should select their preferred solution. With use, you may find alternatives which work better for your specific audiences and communities.

As kits are cleaned and reset, any single-use, consumable, or missing items should be replaced, along with any items which appear damaged, and all contents should be washed or sanitized including the

containing bag. You may wish to have enough kits for multiple shows if it's easier to clean and reset kits per run rather than per show.

The items on this list have been selected with some care to be single-use, sanitizable by wiping or dipping in alcohol, or washable. It is critical that each item and the kit container itself be sanitized between EACH usage. Please consider the best sanitization workflow that will work for your team and facility requirements and choose items and quantities accordingly. If machine washed, UNSCENTED detergent only should be used; all sanitizing products should be unscented and with no residue, such as plain 70-85% isopropyl alcohol. We also encourage including a few packaged sanitizing wipe singles in the kits for good measure.

Purchasing and Assembling your Kits

Part 1: Keeping it together

- A container
 - A small tote, string bag, or backpack; consider something with your venue logo, and a different color from your seating or floor color for ease of spotting after performances. These should not be openly labeled or obviously identifiable as access kits in order to not out or other users.
 - Sample option: [Generic string bag](#)
 - Sanitizing: machine washable or thoroughly (damp) sprayed with alcohol
- A tracking or inventory method
 - Inexpensive tracking tag or finder which will work with your workflow -- consider if it syncs to phone, to browser, or to an external device. This example uses an external device that lives with FOH and the tags make noise -- consider being able to find bags left in house seats, restrooms, quiet spaces, etc (but be certain it won't make noise when you don't want it to!). We recommend attaching it to the containing bag.
 - Sample option: [Thin receiver](#)
 - Sanitizing: alcohol wipe
- Sanitizing
 - Unscented sanitizer wipe singles AND/OR small hand sanitizer in kits.
 - Bulk sanitizer wipes & alcohol spray for cleaning/reset between performances.

Part 2: The basics

Sound: we're going to go into more detail here. We suggest considering two or more options, presented here in priority order, in order to create a more customized experience.

- Ear defenders
 - Available at a wide range of price points, intended to provide significant noise reduction (if possible to full quiet).
 - Options: [~\\$30](#), [~\\$15](#), [~\\$12](#)
 - Sanitizing: alcohol spray and wipe

- Disposable foam earplugs
 - Individually packaged and disposable
 - [Bulk](#)
 - Sanitizing: dispose
- Sound filters
 - Filters are available to cut specific frequencies; for theatrical use, often something that eliminates higher pitches is helpful. Audience members may be less familiar with this option, so accompanying instructions may be helpful. Any industrial supplier of unpowered options should be suitable.
- In-ear banded (disposable)
 - [Option](#)
 - Sanitizing: dispose

Light: We also have lots of different ways to interact with light. Ideally, we should provide several types of filters. At minimum a good darkening filter (like conventional strong sunglasses) is essential;

- then we can enhance the selection first with a blue filter (usually an amber lens),
- then a cool filter (blue or green tinted),
- and then a warm filter (red or violet tinted).

Start here:

- Darkening filter
- Blue light filter
 - Option: if you purchase a [bulk novelty set](#) you may be able to assemble multiple filters.
 - This is the most widely available item at price points ranging from \$2 - \$60/unit, so this is a place where you can make decisions about quality, value, and economy.
 - Sanitizing: alcohol spray and/or wipe

Blanket

- Soft warm small blanket, minimum 2'x3'
 - This can be purchased from your preferred fabric store, any thick soft fleece (pro tip: no-sew blanket kits) and cut to size; usually ~\$2/ea
 - I like to include a small option within the kits; you may also choose to offer full size blankets separately from the kits at your venue. This is obviously a larger item than may easily fit in a small bag.
 - Sanitize: machine wash, unscented detergent only, white vinegar optional

Part 3: Sensory tools

- Soft brush

- There are a wide range of brushes available; feel free to explore possibilities which include more expensive and durable options as well as consumable options.
 - [An inexpensive and disposable brush](#) ~\$1.30/ea
 - Sanitizing: alcohol immersion
- Weighted object
- The ideal item in this category is a weighted blanket, which is impractical in this case for both size and cost.
 - Best option but more expensive: [weighted lap pad](#), ~\$23/ea, or similar
 - Less expensive but smaller: [large beanbag style](#) ~\$5/ea
 - Alternatively, you can make these in-house with heavy fabric and hardware or craft weights; venues with costume/prop/scenic shops should have equipment and materials to easily produce weighted bags, strips, or pads.

Part 4: Manipulable objects

- These items should ideally be considered consumable over time; these suggestions are all sanitizable and reusable, and they are also the most likely components to be lost or damaged. They may vary between kits, be changed over time, be recommended by or sourced from local community members, etc. These links are examples only. There are many other kinds of fidget styles -- other options to consider here are things that can be spun or rotated, sprung, etc. I have not included in this list the very popular category of chewables (huge!) for sanitary reasons; should you want to include this I suggest individually packaged items which are explicitly designated to be single use only or retained by the user. Likewise, these are selected to be quiet and self-contained in use.
 - The more choices the better! Ideally each bag will have a range of three to eight small items; these commonly used styles are a starting point. You might find yourself with an odd number of items; while consistency among kits is generally the best practice, it is not absolutely necessary that they all be identical.
- Squishy foam
- If squishy ball, firm squish adult size preferred; this may be a good use for leftover promo items.
 - [Generic stress ball](#), ~\$1-1.50/ea
 - Sanitizing: alcohol immersion
- Kooshalike
- [Generic option](#), ~\$1.50/ea
 - Sanitizing: alcohol immersion
- Poppy-pushy
- [Generic option](#), < \$1/ea
 - Sanitizing: alcohol immersion
- Stretchy-string
- [Generic option](#), < \$1/ea
 - Sanitizing: alcohol immersion

If you have questions regarding this material, suggestions based on your lived experience, or want to engage with us around this work, we encourage you to reach out. This is just one component of Kinetic Light's access practices. You can contact Laurel Lawson (Lead, Access & Technology; ALLways curriculum & facilitation lead) or access@kineticlight.org at any time. If you're interested in learning more about accessibility and equity, and how to build access practices at your organization, our ALLways workshops might be right for you:

What is Access ALLways?

ALLways is the distillation of our understanding and creation of access that we share with the broader arts community. This curriculum is grounded in transformative personal and organizational work: exploration and development of principles and techniques to create equity and hospitality across your art, events, programs, and organizations.

Kinetic Light is constantly engaged in active research and development of new tools and techniques for creating access, community, and equity. After we've proven those tools and practices in our own work and events, we share them out to the field.

The ALLways curriculum consists of multiple practice levels and focus areas, and students are invited into a community of support and practice. We invite organizations who are interested in engaging deeply with this work to contact us. This work ranges from introductory workshops for people new to access and equity to custom and advanced curricula which requires commitment to both personal investigation and organizational and culturally transformative exploration.

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For upcoming public ALLways workshops and registration: workshops@kineticlight.org