

Sensory Processing

An Introduction

Whether we're listening to a favourite song, taking in the sights and smells of nature, or just moving about in our daily lives, none of this would be possible without the ability to gather and interpret sensory input from our surroundings.

Our Senses and Sensory Systems

In humans, this task is carried out by five senses and three sensory systems. Our five senses include sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste, while our sensory systems include the vestibular and proprioceptive systems, which provide sensations regarding our body's movement and location. Emerging research has also suggested the presence of the interoceptive sensory system, which provides sensation from inside the body and is responsible for feelings such as hunger or thirst.



Visual Sense
responsible for our sense of sight



Gustatory Sense
responsible for our sense of taste and texture



Auditory Sense
responsible for our sense of hearing



Vestibular System
responsible for our sense of balance and movement



Olfactory Sense
responsible for our sense of smell



Proprioceptive System
responsible for our sense of pressure and body location



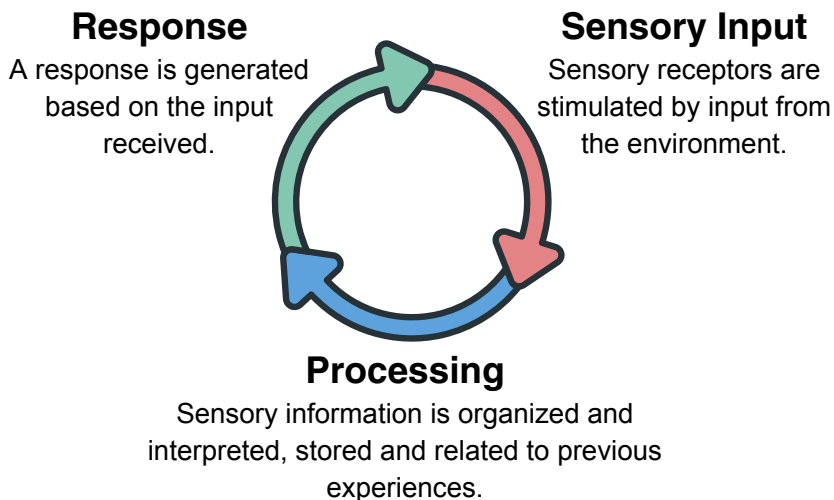
Tactile Sense
responsible for our sense of touch



Interoceptive System
responsible for our sense of internal sensations

Sensory Processing

When our senses and sensory systems work in harmony, they form our perception of the world around us by integrating the various sensory inputs received from the environment into a cohesive, yet subjective, experience. This integration is sometimes known as sensory processing, and consists of **receiving**, **interpreting**, and **responding** to sensory stimuli.



Importantly, this process is both cyclical and continuous. Input **received** by our senses (e.g., a loud noise) is **interpreted** by the brain, which then leads us to **respond** (e.g., covering our ears or distancing ourselves from the source of the noise). For the majority, this response occurs automatically, without the need for conscious thought or effort. This response then leads to new sensory input being received, allowing the cycle to begin again.

By seeking out the right balance of sensory input and stimuli, we are all constantly trying to regulate our sensory experience.

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