








Table 1.1

Location and Functions of the Sensory Systems

System	Location	Function
Tactile (touch) 	Skin – density of cell distribution varies throughout the body. Areas of greatest density include mouth, hands, and genitals.	Provides information about the environment and object qualities (touch, pressure, texture, hard, soft, sharp, dull, heat, cold, pain).
Vestibular (balance) 	Inner ear – stimulated by head movements and input from other senses, especially visual.	Provides information about where our body is in space, and whether or not we or our surroundings are moving. Tells about speed and direction of movement.
Proprioception (body awareness) 	Muscles and joints – activated by muscle contractions and movement.	Provides information about where a certain body part is and how it is moving.
Visual (sight) 	Retina of the eye – stimulated by light.	Provides information about objects and persons. Helps us define boundaries as we move through time and space.
Auditory (hearing) 	Inner ear – stimulated by air/sound waves.	Provides information about sounds in the environment (loud, soft, high, low, near, far).
Gustatory (taste) 	Chemical receptors in the tongue – closely entwined with the olfactory (smell) system.	Provides information about different types of taste (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy).
Olfactory (smell) 	Chemical receptors in the nasal structure – closely associated with the gustatory system.	Provides information about different types of smell (musty, acrid, putrid, flowery, pungent).