



Movement Activities to Encourage Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are movements that involve a child using the large muscles of the body. The development of gross motor skills start as soon as a child is born. As children age, their gross motor abilities continue to develop and improve.

Children rely on gross motor skills for everyday functions, such as sitting up and walking. These skills will help a child to engage in physical play such as skipping, running and jumping.

Learned skills allow a child to control the body movements that require the use of large muscles in the legs, arms, and torso. Movement activities can help with a child's gross motor skills.

Gross motor skills include:

- Locomotion - moving from place to place
- Balance - an even distribution of weight enabling a child to remain upright and steady
- Coordination – the ability to use different parts of the body together smoothly and efficiently. eg changing from one foot position to another requires coordination and balance
- Strength - Strong and well developed gross motor skills gives the body a stable base (core strength)
- Endurance – keeping the muscle strength going for multiple attempts of movements
- Body awareness- (the sense that we have of our own bodies, an understanding of the parts that make up our body, where they are located, how they feel, and what they can do)

If your child's gross motor skills need a little extra help, try these fun movements

Indoor activities:

- Dancing: actions songs e.g. dingle dangle scarecrow, okey cokey
- Obstacle course: using pillows and household items to create
- Hide and seek
- Treasure hunts

- Art work: Shake it, throw it, stomp it, roll it, bounce it, chase it
- Balloons: balloon badminton, pop the balloons, bounce them
- Hula hoops: hula, jump in and out, over and under
- Karate
- Indoor/outdoor swimming
- While lying on his/her back, have your child kick their legs up in the air
- Wall kicks - have your child lie on their back with their head up against the wall, have them bring their legs up to the wall and touch it
- Sit-ups with knees bent, have your child pull-to-sit
- Planks
- Push-ups - either on the knees or their toes
- Play in tall kneel – throw balls beanbags into targets
- Crawling - on all fours, reaching for objects, throwing object

Outdoor activities:

- Hopscotch: hopping and jumping in and out of the squares
- Skipping ropes: jumping in and out, turning around, tight rope walking
- Bike riding: obstacle course in and out of cones
- Balls: kicking, catching, bouncing and throwing into hoops
- Trampoline: knee drops, holding hands
- Play park: Swings, slides, climbing frames, monkey bars
- Nature walks: jumping in leaves, going on a bear hunt
- Running

Animal walks can be fun, they will encourage creativity whilst developing the important gross motor skills and providing sensory input. Many of these movements require core strength, balance, and agility.

Benefits of animal walks include:

- Improvement of body and hand strength
- Allows for weight bearing
- Improves bilateral coordination
- Following of directions and motor planning
- Improves fine and gross motor skills
- Improves spatial awareness

Animal walks are a fun activity to do indoors and out:



