

SUPPORTING GROSS MOTOR SKILLS



GROSS MOTOR SKILLS ARE THE 'LARGER' WHOLE-BODY MOVEMENTS CHILDREN LEARN TO MASTER FROM BIRTH: FROM LEARNING TO CONTROL THEIR LIMBS AND HEAD MOVEMENTS AS BABIES, RIGHT UP TO CRAWLING, WALKING, RUNNING, JUMPING, SPINNING AND CLIMBING.

THESE UNDERPIN CHILDREN'S FURTHER DEVELOPMENT IN FINE MOTOR SKILLS, SUCH AS BEING ABLE TO PICK UP SMALL OBJECTS, TO WRITE, TURN PAGES IN BOOKS AND USE TOOLS. WE CAN HELP TO SUPPORT GROSS MOTOR SKILLS BOTH INDOORS AND OUTSIDE.



HOW TO SUPPORT GROSS MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Babies:

- Babies should be allowed space and time on a comfortable floor to move their bodies freely and at will.
- Encourage non-sitting babies to move their arms and reach for objects using a simple baby gym. Singing songs and helping make gentle leg movements, for example 'I want to ride my bicycle', can help to strengthen muscles.
- For babies who can sit independently, offering treasure baskets, large loose parts and simple tools, such as spoons and scoops, encourages them to reach, grasp and lift. By placing these slightly to the side, you are encouraging them to cross their midline. (Crossing the body's mid-line is an important developmental skill needed for many everyday tasks such as writing or reaching towards your foot to put on a shoe).

Toddlers:

- Spend time outside with simple activities such as muddy walks or splashing in puddles
- Simple heuristic play, such as placing curtain hooks onto a mug tree, ping pong balls into tins, or throwing bean bags into hoops, helps support more complex arm movements and crossing the midline.
- Try removing chairs and encouraging children to stand during activities such as painting. This encourages larger, whole-body movements, and stronger core stability.
- Encourage toddlers to climb and balance safely using small play equipment or natural resources such as low logs.
- Chasing bubbles is a brilliant way to encourage toddlers to run and to change direction at speed.
- Resources such as water, sand, soil, playdough and clay encourage scooping, pouring, digging and early mark making.



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Pre-Schoolers:

- Plan time each day for children to be free to move their bodies in a range of movements, including running, jumping and climbing.
- Promote lots of opportunity for more complex climbing opportunities such as at the park, or by climbing trees and logs in natural spaces. Always risk assess beforehand.
- Tyres, milk crates, beams, stepping stones, stumps and hoops offer children the opportunity to create their own obstacle courses and to challenge themselves in a range of movements.
- Offer pre-schoolers opportunities for risky play. This teaches them to challenge themselves in their physical development, and to be risk-aware.
- Large-scale, vertical painting helps children to develop good muscle control and hand-eye coordination ready for writing.

Children who are given time to move their bodies energetically in large movements regularly throughout the day, are often more emotionally regulated, engaged and able to concentrate for longer on other tasks that require them to be still and to focus. Spending time outside every day is the best way to encourage movement and the development of gross motor skills.

‘Focusing on a specific skill, will typically improve competency in that area’ – EEF evidence store [EEF | Physical Development](#)



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