**Developing motor skills – Gross Motor Skills**

**How to help your child with Balancing**

**Why?**

Balance is important for every activity we do from walking and running around to sitting at a table using our hands.  Every child’s balance skills vary so start with simple activities that your child can manage and build up to harder activities as their confidence grows.

**Balancing whilst staying still**

* this encourages children to maintain any position
* allow your child to sit on a space hopper or gym ball whilst watching TV or playing a game at a table
* stand on one foot – encourage child to use arms to help or use the back of a chair to start
* stop a rolling ball by placing a foot on top of it
* throw and catch a ball whilst standing with one foot on a box
* work above shoulder level, painting on an easel, chalkboard or cleaning windows
* provide a rocking chair to help get used to moving if a bit wary

**Balance when moving**

* this encourages children to maintain balance when moving
* walking in a straight line, along a curved or wavy line progressing to heel toe walking and walking backwards
* you could try this walking on different parts of the feet eg heels / tip toes or with eyes closed
* walking with bean bag balanced on head
* walking along stepping stones eg using carpet squares, coloured paper shapes or hoops.  Vary the distance and direction of the stepping stones as confidence grows
* jumping on a bed or trampoline
* encourage walking up / down stairs one foot per step
* practice hopping with 2 hands held, then on back of a chair, then one hand, one finger until help is not needed for support
* try hopping along a marked line or row of chalked feet
* try the walking activities using jumping and hopping instead

**Outside activities**

* rolling down a slope
* skipping  along
* spinning and twirling around in circles
* push a bike along with your feet
* skipping with a rope

**Playpark activities**

* swings
* roundabout
* climbing frames and adventure equipment
* see saws
* sliding down slide on tummy, back or sitting

**Games**

* musical statues/bumps
* twister
* bunny hops
* crawling races
* wheelbarrow races
* mini stilts
* playing with moon boots or wobble boards
* bouncy castles

**How to help your child with Body Awareness**

**Why?**

Body Awareness is necessary to know where our bodies are in relation to the world around us.  It also helps us to know how much pressure to apply to objects and how to manipulate and hold objects.  The following activities may help to encourage and develop body awareness:

* Encourage your child to identify body parts by naming, touching and moving
* Drawing around body parts ie hands, feet and whole body and filling in details
* Cutting out different body parts from magazines etc
* Making bodies out of play dough, clay, papier-mache, pipe cleaners etc
* Encourage play with jigsaw puzzles of bodies and clothes and paper dolls
* Play games like twister, hokey cokey, simon says, head shoulders knees and toes, globetrotter
* Roley poley games
* Musical statues, running and walking making the child stop in different positions eg stop and touch the floor with different parts of the body – hand bottom feet
* Animal ‘walks’ ie jump like a kangaroo, slither like a snake, crawl like a spider, stomp like an elephant
* Positions – assuming different positions ie be as small, big, thin or wide as you can
* Make an obstacle course encouraging child to go over, through or under objects. General household objects can be easily adapted..
* Rough and tumble games
* Pushing and pulling games
* Move around with objects balanced on different parts of the body eg crawl/walk/run with beanbag balanced on head, hand or arm
* Visit play parks/centers to encourage children to move around different pieces of equipment

**How to help your child with planning and organising their movements**

## Why?

**Being able to plan and organise movements is important for learning all sorts of new movements like riding a bike, learning a sport like swimming, football or learning a new dance routine or your favourite pop song. To be good at planning we need to be able to think through an idea, plan how to do it and then actually do it. Although this sounds like a complicated process, this happens automatically for most of us.**

**Planning and organising relies on good body awareness so it may be helpful to look at these ideas first then try the ideas below.**

* Copying movements like Simon Says, being different animals eg. elephant, kangaroo, crab, snake rabbit or monkey.
* Copying movements whilst outdoors eg. be a monster, be a mouse, walk backwards or sideways.
* Copy sequences like hop, hop, jump, jump, and try hand clapping games or copying rhythms with a drum or on your knees.
* Make an obstacle course indoors or outdoors and include things to go under, over and through eg. coffee table, chair, cushions or outdoor equipment like a trampoline, hoopla, empty boxes garden chair etc.
* Encourage the child to plan out the obstacle course with a variety of objects in a different order. Ask them to tell you how they are going to do it to encourage them to plan ahead. Check afterwards if it went to the plan they made.
* Encourage different ways of moving eg. crawling, going backwards, walking sideways if this seems too easy, try different ways of moving on the obstacle course.
* Play 'Kids Charades' or make up your own cards for miming actions like brushing teeth, driving a car, using the phone for others to guess. Start with simple mimes becoming more complicated as they get better.
* With a new toy or game encourage the child to investigate how it works and experiment with it.
* If this is not working for them, try giving clues or ideas but try not to tell them exactly what to do or do it for them.
* For older school age children who find it difficult to pack their schoolbags, or who forget gym kits or lunchboxes, try to help them by using daily checklists or simple colour-coded timetables as reminders.

**How to help your child to develop their gross motor skills**

**Why?**

Children can be encouraged to develop their abilities and confidence in general co-ordination and movement through everyday play, including visits to parks and play centres.  Other activities to develop movement skills are listed below:

**Moving Games**

* Games where child has to change their position, movements, speed or direction in a controlled manner eg obstacle courses, crawling, walking, jumping, going backwards, walking in high kneeling
* Musical statues/bumps
* Cat and mouse
* Animal walks eg jumping like a kangaroo, sneak like a mouse, slither like a snake
* Leap frog over low objects
* Commando crawling along floor/benches etc

**Jumping and hopping games**

* Hop scotch
* Bouncy castles
* Trampolines
* Space hoppers
* Jumping / hopping in squares or hoops at different speeds

**Obstacle Courses**

* Encourage child to choose equipment and layout the course
* Encourage child to move over, under and through objects.
* Encourage child to try out different ways and speeds of moving
* Use tables, chairs, towels, benches etc and objects that are wobbly are also good

**Ball Games**

* Use a balloon (slow moving) for ball games initially, moving onto a large soft ball as confidence increases
* Teach child to have hands out in front of them ready for catching
* Rolling ball to each other, stopping it with hand and then foot
* Balloon volleyball (passing balloon back and forth over a line or net)
* Throwing at targets or into boxes.  Increasing the distance gradually
* Bouncing and catching games
* Skittles

**Other physical activities**

* Climbing frames
* Swings
* Chutes
* Roundabouts
* Swimming
* ‘Log-rolling’ down a small incline or playing in a toy barrel

**How to help your child to coordinate the two sides of their body together**

**Why?**

Some children have difficulties with activities that use both sides of their body together.  These activities may help this.  They are arranged in a normal developmental sequence.

Start at a level your child can do and move through the activities in order.  Move onto the next section of activities when your child is confident and good at the movements.

You can probably think up new ideas and variations as you try them out.

**Symmetrical** – both arms or legs doing the same movement at the same time

* Jumping on a trampoline, over a line on the floor, on a space hopper, over a rope or in and out of a hoop
* Clapping games /  rhythms, pat-a-cake type games 2 hands together
* Tapping a ball or balloon hanging on a string with a cardboard tube held at either end with both hands
* Trapping a ball rolled to the child between a pair of ‘scatch’ bats or plastic jugs
* Playing a drum with two hands together

**Alternating** – arms or legs moving alternately

* Punching or kicking using a pillow or space hopper
* Tipping balls, water, sand or lentils back and forth from one jug to another
* Playing drum or xylophone
* Clapping games using both hands
* Tapping a ball or balloon hanging from a string with alternate hands – use a cardboard tube in each hand
* Plaiting wool, scoubies or making paper concertinas

**Reciprocal** – 2 hands working together, each doing a different part of the task at the same time

* Paper tearing and folding eg origami, paper mache
* Construction toys like K’nex, meccanno or lego
* Plasticine or playdough modelling
* Keyboard, recorder or other instruments that require 2 hands