

Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are those which require whole body movement and which involve the large muscles of the body to perform everyday tasks.

Suggested activities for:

- Balance
- Core strength
- Aiming and catching

Balance

This refers to body movements which maintain or regain balance. A good sense of balance is most important in physical activities. It is essential to achieve good static balance before moving on to activities involving dynamic balance. Good pelvic and shoulder stability are also essential for successful balance

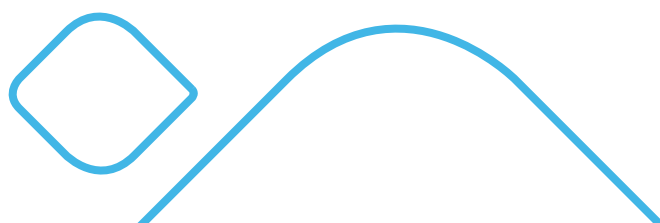
Advice and Strategies

Body Position - A child needs to be able to adjust their balance in many positions, so introduce activities that require the child to balance on all fours, then on their knees, then sitting and then standing. The closer the child is to the ground the easier it is to balance.

Width of the Base - The wider the base, the easier it is to balance.

Stability of the Surface - A solid surface is easier to balance on than a wobbly surface. Begin an activity on solid ground then gradually begin to use moving surfaces like standing on a small pile of cushions or pillows or a tyre.

Allow child to tell you when they lack confidence and work at that level before attempting improvement.



Activities to Improve Balance

- Tug of War
- Walking on rough ground, sand or cushions from the couch.
- Obstacle courses with stepping stones, hopping, jumping activities.
- Pretend tight rope walking by placing a piece of string or wool taut across the floor.
- Twister
- Hopscotch
- Using the trampoline and jumping upon it in different directions and in different ways.
- Yoga poses
- Riding a scooter or bike.
- Animal walking such as crab walk, bunny hops, frog jumps, caterpillar crawls, duck waddle, kangaroo jump.
- Egg and spoon race.
- Quick Sand - Pull a rug from side to side (with two people) while child sits in the middle and tries to maintain balance
- Climbing on ropes and climbing frames, swinging on adventure playground equipment.
- Balance on one leg, as this gets easier you can add activities e.g. practice ball skills throwing and catching a ball against a wall or in the air, stand with your eyes closed, turn around while balancing on one foot without your foot leaving the ground, bend down to pick up objects
- Kneeling with one leg in front practice throwing and catch a ball, throwing a ball towards skittles, throwing bean bags into a bucket or playing tug of war in this position. Repeat this in alternate kneeling position
- Simon Says type games requiring the child to copy movements or follow instructions e.g. hop, stand on one leg.
- Jumping or hopping from side to side over a rope.
- Balance beam walk along a narrow beam or plank, progress to: backwards, sideways, small steps, hand behind back, with beanbag balanced on head.
- Horse riding
- Karate or Tae Kwando
- Dancing



- Using a skateboard, roller skates or roller blades

Core strength

Good core strength is necessary to help maintain a good posture and give a stable base to allow the arms, legs and head to move in a coordinated manner. It involves the muscles in the trunk, shoulders and hips. The following activities are recommended to facilitate improvements in flexion/extension of the body against gravity and pelvic/shoulder control.



Exercises to Strengthen core (Postural Stability)

- Pretending to be “superman or superwoman”
 - Lift upper body/arms and legs off the ground whilst lying on stomach. Hold for 10 seconds
 - Work towards keeping legs straight and thighs slightly off the floor.
 - Work towards keeping arms straight and palms facing forwards.
 - Chest is slightly off the floor but avoid bottoms being in the air.
 - If it is difficult for to sustain both arms and legs, try doing each arm/leg separately
 - Doing activities lying on the stomach and propping on arms also helps develop this skill (e.g. while reading, drawing or watching TV).
- Four point kneeling
 - Weight bearing through all limbs in a crawling position.
 - Lift up right arm up and hold this position for a count of 5 and work up to 10.
 - Do the same with other arm.
 - Repeat this with lifting one leg and counting and then the other leg.
 - When strong enough encourage to lift alternate leg and arm together.
 - Play games in this position e.g. reaching out to place or throw bean bags into a bucket.
- Tall kneeling
 - On both knees (do not sit back on bottom) play ball games between partners or in a circle group. Like catch, throw into bucket/box in middle (ball or beanbag).
 - Statues game; with partner using straight arms, palm to palm, push each other to see who falls over first.
 - Get up/down from floor via a ½ kneel without using hands or knees. Do it on each leg 10 times.

- Bridging
 - Lifting bottom up from floor whilst lying on back with hands placed at sides or at 45° or above head. Lift and hold do this 10 times
 - You can then roll a ball under and count how many times it goes back and forth.
- Heel – toe walking
 - Walk along a line, placing foot in front with heel of foot touching the tip of the foot behind (like dolly steps). This could be done as part of a group game/obstacle course.
 - Foot should be straight not turned out.
- Push ups from the wall
 - Stand an arm distance away from a wall. Lean on the wall, with the hands flat on it. Keeping the arms straight, use fingers to push away from the wall to get to an upright position. As the child becomes more proficient, move the feet backwards so that there is a greater angle of lean against the wall.
 - Push ups from the floor.
 - Modified press ups, first on the hands, then on finger tips.



Activities to Strengthen Postural Stability

- Hanging up washing or unloading dishwasher.
- Hitting a balloon to make sure it does not land on the floor. Hitting a suspended balloon or ball with hands or with cardboard roll.
- Pillow fights.
- Lying on tummy propping on elbows to read, watch television etc.
- Throwing large ball backwards over head.
- Use large cardboard boxes to build towers and also with flap lids or jack in the box.
- In standing or sitting, practice growing tall and then relaxing without sinking into the chair.
- In standing bend over to touch toes, if necessary let knees bend, uncurl slowly from base of the spine to standing, head uncurls last.
- Throwing ball into basket ball net or over a net as a volley ball.
- Wheelbarrows. The "barrow" keeps fingers spread wide as he or she is guided along. This should be done for only short distances.
- Backward skipping.
- Painting or drawing on a chalk board in high kneeling.

- Playing goalie to move body of base of support.
- Sitting upon a gym ball to watch TV
- Tug of war

Throwing and catching

Ball games help in the development of motor co-ordination. To effectively catch a ball it requires a child to be able to move their body and limbs to enable themselves to respond to a moving object. Throwing requires a child to judge the distance and force required when throwing a ball.

Rolling Activities

- Kneel on floor, roll a ball along the floor into a goal straight ahead, then change the goal to the side and twist around to roll to this goal.
- High kneel upon the floor, roll a ball along floor into a goal straight ahead and then to the side, twisting around to roll to this goal.
- Using a large ball, ask the child to kneel in the middle of an individual mat. Using the right hand and fingers only move the ball to half way round the outside of the mat, changing to the left hand as the ball passes the centre of the body.
- In standing – Roll a ball between 2 markers in a straight line - increase distance and vary direction
- Using skittles play bowling games with the children - stand 8 - 10 feet away and use a ball of a size that decreases as the child improves. Another way of making the game more difficult is to spread the skittles over a larger area.
- Another variation is to split the skittles in to two groups of e.g. 4 or 5. Separate them by about 2 feet. Give the child 2 balls, one in each hand. Have him roll them simultaneously to try to knock over both groups.
- As the child has played for ten minutes or so and has the "feel" of where the skittles are, from exactly the same position, try blindfolding them and see if they are able to hit the skittles by remembering how hard to throw the ball by feel rather than sight. Do this using a large ball immediately following trials with the same ball with vision.



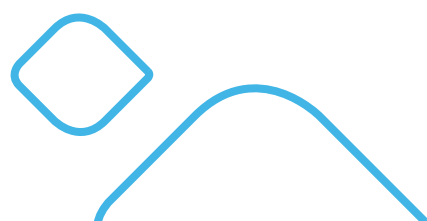
Catching Activities


- Kneel on the floor and throw a ball to the child, repeat in high kneeling, whilst sitting and then standing.

-
- Kneel on the floor and throw a ball to the child allowing it to bounce on the floor first, repeat whilst sitting and then standing
 - Grade Distance - Start by dropping the ball into child's hands, increase distance very slowly, taking one step backwards after successful catching.
 - Grade Ball Size - Start with bean bag or soft foam cube and progress to a large light ball, then slowly reduce the size of the ball.
 - Change Direction – Change the direction at which the ball is thrown to the child as they're catching skills improve so that they have to move to right or left to catch.
 - Throw a small ball against wall and vary difficulty by reducing number of bounces, throw, clap, catch, throw - spin around – catch etc.

Throwing Activities

- Practice swinging arms for underarm throw, using beanbags and soft foam balls.
- Start throwing beanbags into a large box, laundry basket or hoops using two hands and then progressing to one handed throwing.
- Grade Target Size – Start with a large target for the child to throw towards and gradually decrease this.
- Change Distance – Start with very short distances, then increase and decrease the distance required to throw each time to help the child judge how much force to apply when throwing.
- Throw to a partner and catch while standing still, increasing the distance between partners, vary direction of the throw and move from static to dynamic postures e.g. run and catch, Frisbee, netball, rugby, scratch bats.
- Throw in air and catch.
- Piggy in the middle games.





Children's Therapies Department, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG

01225 824220 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.

Date of publication: 03 April 2023| Ref: RUH ABC/567
© Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust