

TIP SHEET

Fun Ways to Encourage Motor Development

Springtime is just around the corner and that means more time outdoors and more time for gross motor (large muscle) play. Preschool children love to run and play outdoors and this is a perfect time to encourage their gross motor development. Listed below are some fun activities to do with preschool children to help encourage different areas of motor development.

Strength:

- Help your child explore by climbing, crawling, and moving their body in patterns which are not typically used, such as crab walk, wheelbarrow walking, combat crawling, bear walking in all fours, or frog/bunny hopping. The use of tunnels, tables or empty boxes are also a fun addition to the movements.
- A wagon can be filled with weighted object, or friends to be pulled around. You could also have your child help bring the groceries in using a wagon.
- Have your child jump on a mini trampoline, inner tube, or old mattress.
- Encourage large, free-flowing movements with the shoulders and elbows: scribble on newspaper, or paper bags; “paint” the house with a large brush and a bucket of water; wash the car together; draw on a large chalkboard (you can make one with a sheet of plywood and blackboard paint).
- Pull a rope in “tug of war” or pull self along on a scooter board or wide skateboard or pull your child in this way using a hula hoop.
- Have your child tow a friend in a wagon with their bike/trike.

Motor Coordination:

- Encourage games which require jumping skipping, hopping, and running such as Simon Says, tag, Mother May I, follow the leader, hopscotch, jump rope, leap frog, kickball, or obstacle courses.
- Set up an obstacle course and have your child steer their bike/trike through the course. For added difficulty time your child and have them try to beat their own times.
- Knock down objects that have been stacked or set up such as boxes, plastic bowling pins or two liter bottles.
- Make a hop-scotch board on the driveway with sidewalk chalk and take turns with your child.

Sensory:

- Rolling up and down hills – on snow or grass, etc.
- Swimming is an excellent overall sensorimotor activity.
- Swings are one of the most popular and effective forms of vestibular input. Listed below are some activities to play with your child while on the swing.
- While swinging, have your child push off your hands with their hands or feet to give extra proprioceptive input to the limbs and body.
- While your child is swinging, sing their favorite songs, read a book to him or her or make up a silly story with their help.
- Rocking chairs, gliders, porch swings, and rocking horses all provide calming linear input.
- Set up an obstacle course on the lawn and have your child run through it with the sprinkler on.
- Wagon or stroller rides

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Hand/eye and Foot/eye Coordination:

- Play catch with a large heavy ball or water balloon.
- Play target games by throwing balls or bean bags to knock down targets (old 2 liter pop bottles work well), or into buckets or trash cans. This is also a great game on the swing.
- Have your child pop bubbles with her hands and feet while swinging.

Balance:

- Encourage balance activities such as standing on one foot or walking heel to toe — these can be easily incorporated into Simon Says, Follow the Leader or Mother May I.
- Walking on a balance beam. For added difficulty have your child try to step over objects placed on the beam.
- Have your child jump over objects and try to land on one or two feet without falling over.

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