

Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills involve the coordination and control of the large muscles of the body that are used for activities such as sitting, standing, walking, running, jumping, and more!

They are different to fine motor skills, which involve small muscle movements.

Gross motor skills can be tricky for some children. You can often tell if a child is struggling with their gross motor skills by how they move, play, or have difficulty with age-appropriate tasks, like sitting upright without slouching, struggling with balance, or throwing, catching, or kicking a ball.

Some children with disability or developmental delay may struggle a bit more with gross motor activities due to a variety of physical, neurological, or cognitive factors that affect how their bodies move, coordinate and process information, and it can take longer for them to develop these skills, movements and control.

Why is gross motor development important?

- **Physical health and wellness:** developing gross motor skills helps children become physically active and build strength, endurance and coordination
- **Brain development:** Movement supports brain development by enhancing neural connections, especially in areas linked to coordination, planning and problem solving.
- **Independence:** skills like walking, climbing stairs, and dressing require gross motor control. Mastering these helps children become more independent in daily tasks
- **Confidence and self-esteem:** successfully running, jumping, or riding a bike builds a child's confidence and encourages them to try new physical challenges.
- **Social development:** many gross motor activities are social, such as playing games or a sport. These experiences help children learn cooperation, sharing, and turn-taking.



How can we support gross motor development at playgroup?

Young children learn best through play and movement, so providing intentional opportunities and activities to move, explore, and practice large body movements can make a big difference in their development. Check out some fun gross motor activities below:

- **Music and movement** - Music can make movement fun! Incorporate songs with actions, movement games, or rhythm-based activities like *"Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes"* or *"Simon Says"* to support coordination
- **Construction play with large building blocks or boxes** - lifting, carrying, pushing and stacking bigger and heavier objects helps build strength, coordination, balance and body awareness, whilst also supporting creativity and problem-solving!
- **Ride-on toys** - toys like tricycles, scooters or push cars help children develop gross motor skills by building strength in their legs, arms, and core as they push, pedal, or steer. They also improve balance, coordination, and spatial awareness while encouraging active movement.
- **Ball games** - ball play builds strength, coordination, and balance by encouraging children to throw, roll, or kick. It also supports motor planning and spatial awareness in a fun, engaging way and can be easily adapted to meet each child's individual needs. Ball games can also support children to learn group game rules by offering clear repetitive actions like taking turns, following simple instructions and waiting for their turn.

