

# TOOLS TO GROW *at home*

WHAT TO KNOW & HOW TO DEVELOP GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

»» PRESCHOOL – SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

## BALANCE, COORDINATION, & STRENGTH

### WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW:

- Balance refers to your child's ability to remain upright and steady.
- Coordination refers to your child's ability to use different parts of their body together in a smooth manner.
- Strength refers to the amount of force your child's muscles can make. This helps them to hold their body in challenging positions and lift heavy objects.
- Today's children spend much more time indoors engaged in sedentary activities. Without regular exercise that promote balance, strength, and coordination, a child is at risk for weight gain and poor endurance. This means he/she may easily tire.

### TRY THIS!

- Help your child monitor time spent on sedentary activities such as watching TV and video games. Spend as much time being active!
- Walk on a "balance beam". Make a pretend beam using a rope, line drawn with chalk on sidewalk/driveway, or tape on the floor
- Take a long walk
- Jump on a trampoline
- Ride a bicycle
- Use a scooter
- Swim
- Yoga
- Play catch & throw with a ball
- Kick a ball back & forth
- Play on swings & a slide
- Run around an athletic field, backyard, or park
- Play in the snow
- Roll in the grass
- Jump rope
- Use a Pogo Stick
- Touch your toes
- Put on music & dance

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## GROSS MOTOR PLANNING

### WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW:

- Motor planning refers to the ability to conceive (think of) and perform unfamiliar and complex body movements in a coordinated manner. Children should be able to see the possibilities in their environment for movement.
- Motor planning also includes the ability to organize and sequence (put in order) the actions correctly.
- One aspect of motor planning involves a child's ability to imitate (copy what you do).

### TRY THIS!

- “Encourage your child to use their words to explain their ideas about how they want to start (initiate) the movement activity and then gently guide them as needed
- Play Simon Says
- Roll like a caterpillar
- Jump like a frog
- Spin like a top
- Fly like a butterfly
- Use a log to “walk the plank”
- Build a fort outdoors
- Play hop-scotch
- Jumping Jacks
- Yoga
- Make an obstacle course in the backyard (jump over a log, walk backwards on a rope, step into/out of a box, etc.)
- Some commercially available games that help with gross motor planning are: Twister, Red Rover, Wiggle & Giggle, I Can Do That (Cat in the Hat), and Hullabaloo

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WHAT TO KNOW & HOW TO DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS

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## UPPER BODY & ARM STRENGTH

### WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW:

- Adequate hand and finger strength is required to exert enough force to match the qualities of the object to be grasped and manipulated.
- Without adequate strength, child will not be able to use tools and/or operate objects as required.
- The child may fatigue before the task is completed.

### TRY THIS!

- Push Ups
- Wall Push Ups - child stands facing the wall about an arm's length away. He/she places both hands on the wall at shoulder height. The child slowly bends elbows to bring his/her upper body toward & then away from the wall. His/her feet remain stationary. Repeat many times.
- Outdoor Painting - provide a large paint brush and bucket of water. Allow your child to "paint" outdoor walls, fences, railing, etc.
- Bounce on a Hippy Hop Ball
- Animal Walk - see your Occupational Therapist
- Playground Equipment - use arms to climb up rope ladders and the jungle gym
- Pull - a wagon or pillow case full of heavy toys or other objects
- Push - box full of heavy toys or other objects
- Household Chores - carry bags of groceries & put objects away on shelves
- Blocks & Cups - try to stack as high as you can
- Ball Play - throw and catch
- Pound a ball toy
- Dig in sand & soil
- Swimming - great exercise to build strength and endurance while having fun!
- On the Wall - use an easel or hang paper on the wall for your child to decorate. Use crayons, pencils, paint, markers, or chalk to color or produce works of art!
- On the Floor - while on his/her belly, child can color, write, watch television, do puzzles, etc.

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## GET OUT OF THAT CHAIR!

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO ASSUME DIFFERENT POSITIONS

[www.ToolsToGrowOT.com](http://www.ToolsToGrowOT.com)  
[www.ToolsToGrowTherapy.com](http://www.ToolsToGrowTherapy.com)



### PRONE ON FOREARMS

Prone on forearms builds strength through a child's neck, back, and shoulders.



### «« 1/2 KNEEL

1/2 Kneel increases core strength and improves hip stability. Also prepares body for single limb stance.



### «« SQUAT

Playing in a squatted position works on balance and stretches a child's heel cord musculature.



### LONG LEG SITTING

Long sit stretches a child's hamstring musculature and works on balance

### SIDE SIT >>>

Side sit encourages rotation through the trunk, weight shifting, and crossing midline.



### «« TALL KNEEL

Tall kneel strengthens hip extensors and works to improve core stability.



### 2-POINT QUADRUPED

Hands and knees or 2-point quadruped works on core strength, hip and shoulder stability, weight shifting, and balance