

Zoo-robics and Crawl-asthenics



see videos on youtube

How much creeping and crawling does it take to prepare a child for school and life? Many child development specialists believe that tens of thousands (perhaps as many as 50,000) crawling type steps are needed to properly myelinate the brain for academic readiness. Given

today's popularity of strollers, walkers, baby bouncers, backpacks, etc. it is unlikely a modern infant/toddler will take that many crawling steps.

Audrey McAllen, a Waldorf school remedial teacher for many years, has suggested many creeping and crawling exercises, based on her deep experience with the early movement patterns and primitive reflexes of children from birth to age 3. She describes these in her book *The Extra Lesson* and other publications on child development.

As the Association for a Healing Education has written, these early movement patterns are imprinted in the child in utero to assist the infant during the birth process and infancy, for safety, protection and development. Many of these patterns are meant to become inhibited during the first year, to be replaced by new, more developed abilities, which will gradually progress through imitation of gesture into independent movement by age seven. When the early movement patterns are not resolved or inhibited in the appropriate manner and time, then the movements of an earlier stage need to be recapitulated and practiced.

The imagination of a "zoo" is suggested to enliven the exercises. Best results are obtained when the child "exercises the animals" for 15 minutes daily, or

even better, before breakfast and before dinner. Alternating between the animals each day gives some variety. You cannot do these games too often!

In her book *If Kids Just Came with Instruction Sheets!*, award-winning author and lecturer Svea J. Gold documents cases where a program of crawling for children beyond normal crawling age has alleviated learning barriers including attention deficit problems. 'Mainstream' testimony to the wisdom of these developmental movements for school age children can also be found in many elementary school gym teaching textbooks from the first half of the 20th century, where they appear as tumbling agility drills, relay races and game activities. The best of these books I have found is *Stunts and Tumbling for Girls* by Virginia Lee Horne, the source of many exercises with pictures below.

When does a child who still has reflexes or behaviors that show a need to continue developmental movement, grow "too old" to do these activities? Certainly not before

9 or 10, and you might be surprised how older children will react pleasantly when an adult gives 'permission' for a period of childishness, in a play setting. Beyond this, many of the same movement patterns are called forth in swimming, including the wisely named "crawl stroke."

"Baby Crawling" Activities

To enliven the continuation of 'just plain crawling', the following games are just some of the possibilities. See what you can add! They are appropriate for toddler to age 9 (sometimes older and heavier children experience knee pain when creeping). Most require padded space (carpet, grass, mats); some use common materials such as blocks, balls, marbles, dried fruits, cards, etc. All games are done in a creeping



position on hands and knees. Do not correct the child's movement, but you may wish to silently observe. Smoothness of movement: do you see chaos or lethargy? Position of hands, knees and feet: turned in or out? Does head move? Are hands clenched or is the child up on fingers? Are feet off the ground? How high? Does the child talk, laugh, make noises? Fatigue level: can the child participate fully for 5 minutes or is it less? Afterward does the child exhibit exaggerated emotion: silliness, anger, or withdraws into himself?

1. Block Building: Blocks are placed at one end of the room, parent and child at the other. Child goes back and forth to get blocks. This can be a race or with the goal to build a structure.
2. Ball into the box: (Need box and balls or marbles) Parent and child try to roll ball into box for prize and then creep to retrieve them. May have to give prizes for successful rolling.
3. Race for objects: (Need a group of 3-5 small unbreakable objects) one person throws them to the other end of the room and parent and child race after them to see who can get the most first. Prizes may be necessary for the winners.
4. Treasure Hunt: (Perhaps food such as apricots, slices of carrot, etc.) Food is hidden in various places around the room and the child creeps around to find them. Parent reclines on the couch for a much needed rest and occasionally says "getting warm" or "getting cold".
5. Free play with moving objects: (Need car, train or other toys that move by friction.) One person gets it moving and both race after it or child plays with it by himself.
6. Go fish: (Need cards, number cards or picture Lotto) The cards are spread around the room in a big circle and the child is asked to match pairs. Find all the cows, find all the 10's, etc.
7. Commercial games: There are several which many facilitate crawling. These include darts, Pop-a-Ball, Dominoes. Play like #1 above.
8. Drag-a-bag: (Need paper bag, long piece of string and small objects, food or toys) Parents put objects in the bag, wrap the string around the head of the bag and pull it around the room as the child tries to catch it. He can keep the objects when he catches the bag.
9. Walk the dog: (I guess for symbolic reasons, we like this one less, but it worked very well) Tie a leash to the child's back and pretend that you are taking the dog for a walk to the bone store, the hairdresser, clothes store, etc.
10. Tag and hide and seek.

11. Tent making: Much creeping results from free play revolving around a tent made in the living room with chairs and a blanket.
12. Puzzle matching: This is a little like the card games. Pieces of a puzzle are spread in a circle around the room and the child gets each piece separately and builds the puzzle.
13. Simple Simon.
14. Egg-hide: (Need a toy, which consists of 6 hollow plastic eggs which come apart in the middle, could be played as well with cups). Egg halves are spread in a circle around the room and an object or food is hidden under one.
15. Red light, green light.
16. Potato or peanut race: Roll the potato or peanut with nose.
17. Going shopping: (Need coins and small pieces of toy food.) Coins are at one end of the room, toy food at the other. Child gets coins, one at a time and shops from parent-storekeeper at the other end of the room.
18. Blow bubbles: Parent blows bubbles at one end of the room, child creeps to pop them.
19. Pan and spoons: Parent puts a pan and 6 spoons all round the room. The whole family races (creeps) to put all the spoons in the pan before a timer goes off.
20. Mail delivery: Letter box for each family member. Child gets letter from the "post office" and makes the delivery.

A TRIP TO THE ZOO

Many of the following exercises and agilities may be introduced, as noted, with the imagination of a trip to the zoo, or through the woods, to the beach, etc.

M = tumbling mat required; outdoors on grass also possible. Otherwise, may be done on a carpeted space.

R = recommended also as a relay race

Baby Frog Hops **R** **M**

Take a squat position, feet pointing slightly outward. Place hands on floor with elbows slightly bent, arms between knees. Take short hops by putting hands just ahead of feet and then bringing feet up to hands.

Backwards Inchworm **R**

Same starting position as Creepy-Crawly Caterpillar, but pulling with the feet (moving in direction of feet).



Bear Dance

Start in squat position an rhythmically hop and extend alternating legs to front.

Beautiful Butterfly

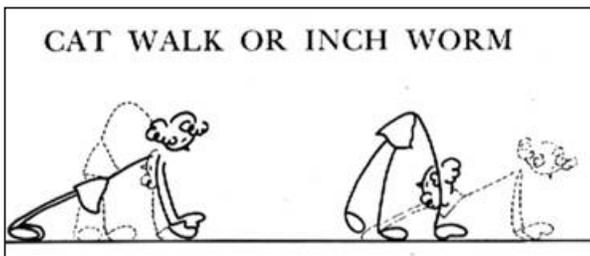
Begin on hands and knees; with the eyes carefully following the active hand, bring the right hand slowly backwards, upwards in a high arc and far forward, placing the hand on the floor. The right knee is then brought forward and placed next to the hand. Repeat with the left hand and knee, keeping the hips centered (i.e. without sitting onto opposite ankle). This exercise can be enhanced by tying a piece of red yarn in a bow knot on the child’s right index finger and a blue one on the left.

Big Frog Hops  

As above for Baby Frog Hops, but for each step forward, leap high, fully extending. Be sure to go all the way back to squat position at end of each step.

Books Open, Books Closed (V-sit)

Students lie supine with arms stretched parallel to mat. On signal, they slowly ‘jackknife’ up, legs straight and arms/torso in a straight line.



Cat Walk 

Take a front leaning rest position. Keep hands stationary, flex hips and walk or hop the feet up to the hands; then keep the feet stationary and walk hands forward. Keep knees and elbows straight throughout.

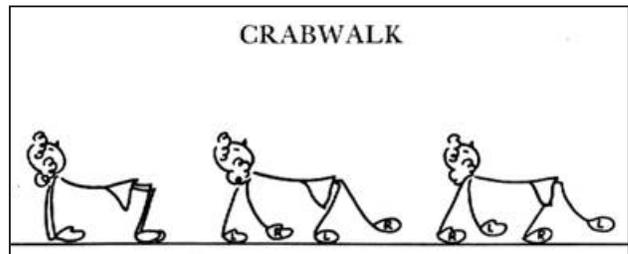


Caterpillar with 3 partners

Three children sit close together tobaggan style and then roll over to hands and knees. They stay joined and crawl forward. Note that when sitting they should be facing in the direction opposite the crawl.

Circus Seal - rolling or wriggling

Lying on the floor and holding a ball or balls as follows, roll several turns along the floor in one direction and then in the other direction. Possibilities include: ball held by the hands above the head; ball held between the knees; ball held between the ankles; ball held between the feet; or a combination of these. Also, the seal can wriggle along forward.

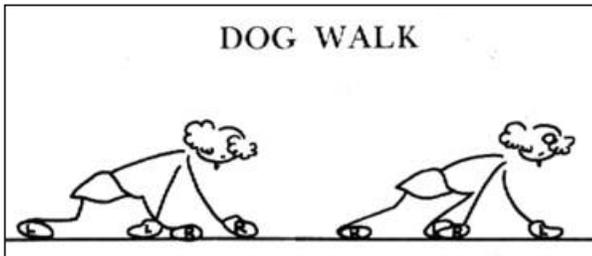


Crab Walk 

Take a squat position. Reach back and put both hands flat on the floor without sitting down. Support weight equally with arms and legs. Walk sideways with face up; don’t allow hips to sag.

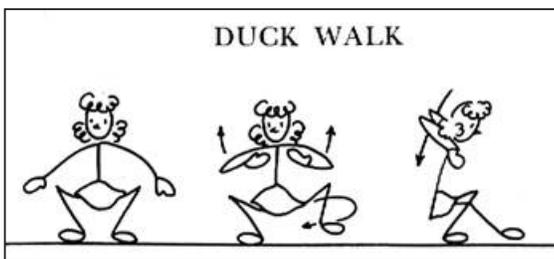
Creepy-Crawly Caterpillar

Lie on the back with arms across the chest, legs bent, feet on the floor, have the child carefully ‘inchworm’ his/her way along, pushing with both feet together (moving in direction of head), allowing the back to arch and flatten, then back, pushing with the heels.



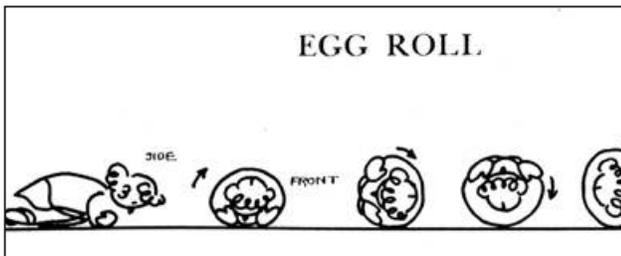
Dog Walk ☒

Place hands on floor in front of body, knees and arms slightly bent. Imitate a dog walking and running on all fours. Don't let feet get ahead of hands.



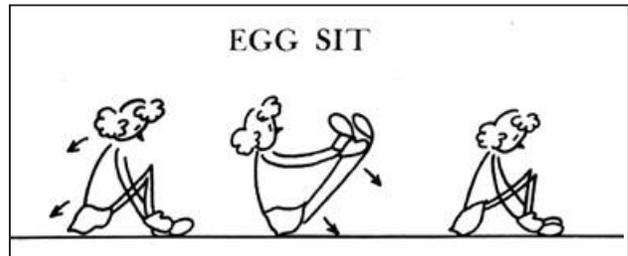
Duck Walk

Take squat position with feet separated and knees apart. Bend elbows and place hands under armpits for wings; flap wings as steps are taken by swinging leg out to the side without raising hips.



Egg Roll ☒ M

Kneel crosswise on mats, legs slightly apart, back rounded. Fold arms, rest elbows on mat in front of knees. Push to the side with arms and knees to start momentum. Roll to the side, on to back, to other side and up to original position. This makes a complete turn. Keep body tightly curled while rolling. Get an equal push from knees and arms. At last moment of contact, push hard from the mat with arms and legs.

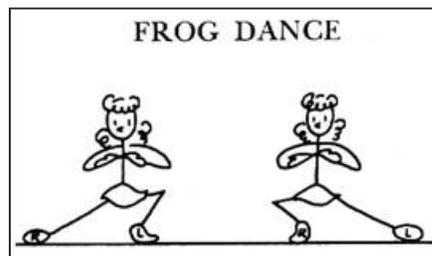


Egg Sit

Sit on the floor, knees bent close to the chest. Grasp right toe with right hand and left toe with left hand. Rock back on buttocks. Extend both legs. Keep firm grasp with hands; hold extended legs in air. Balance in this position. To descend, rock forward, bend knees and drop feet to floor. Those with tight ham string muscles, or relatively short arms, may find this stunt difficult.

Elephant Walk

Standing with feet slightly apart, bend forward at waist, let knees bend slightly. Clasp hands and let arms hang down in imitation of an elephant's trunk. Walk with knees slightly bent, back rounded and arms swinging; try to touch floor with hands.



Frog Dance (Russian Dance)

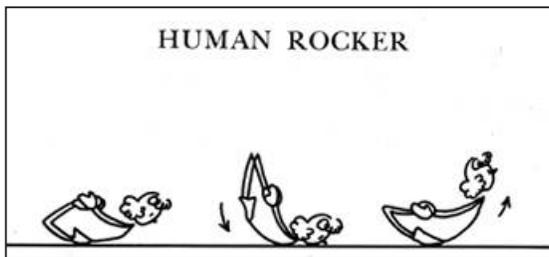
Start in squat position and rhythmically hop and extend alternating legs to side.

Frozen Frog

This is primarily meant to be a stationary exercise with great remedial potential and, if used remedially, should be done quietly and carefully (i.e., not as playfully as other material here). Lie in a prone position, head to the right, right arm and leg bent forward; very slowly, one movement at a time: turn the head to the left, straighten the right arm down along the side, straighten the right leg (now flat on the stomach), bend the left leg forward, bend the left arm forward (now mirror of original position). Slowly repeat the same sequence back to the other side. Three times each side. **Note:** The above "frog" movements also appear in many Occupational Therapy manuals under the heading of "lizard" crawls.

Funny Fish

Lie in a prone position (on stomach), with chin on floor, arms relaxed beside the body, straight legs together; the child slowly bends sideways at the waist, lifting and turning the head to look at the feet with. slide to the same side; first to one side, then to the other. Repeat this movement three times each side.



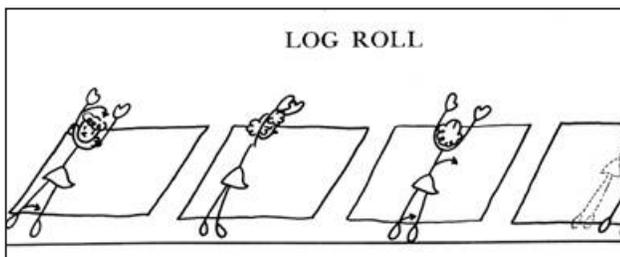
Human Rocker

(Similar to Soaring Eagle) Lie face down on mat or rug. Bend knees, arch back, reach back to grasp feet. Pull hard on the feet to lift the head and shoulders off floor. Rock forward onto chest and back onto thighs. Adult may need to gently help child begin rocking motion.



Kangaroo Hop

Take a squat position. Fold arms across chest. Spring from the floor as high into the air and as far forward as possible. Land on the feet and immediately let the ankles, knees and hips flex to absorb the landing.



Log Roll

Take a squat position. Fold arms across chest. Spring from the floor as high into the air and as far forward as possible.

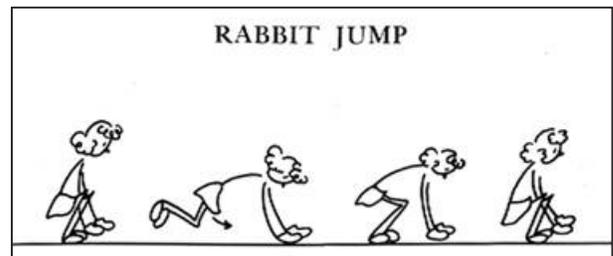
Land on the feet and immediately let the ankles, knees and hips flex to absorb the landing.

Motorboat

Same starting position as Creepy-Crawly Caterpillar, but with feet alternating as flat back slides along floor – wood floor would be best. (Sorry, I couldn't think of an animal name for this one.)

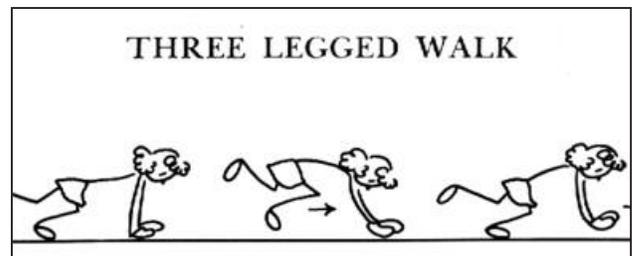
Pop-Up Squirrel

Take a squat position and cross arms in front of body. Spring to an erect position, feet astride and weight on heels. At the same time, fling arms out to the side and up to diagonal position above the shoulders. Jump back to starting position and repeat continuously as able.



Rabbit Jumps

Take a squat position, hands on floor in front of feet. Leap forward by giving strong push with feet, lifting hands off floor. Land with weight on hands, and then bring feet up to hands. Within child's limits, stretch out as far as possible.



Ring Tailed Lemurs/3-Legged Race

Crawling with one leg continually held high behind. Move both hands forward at same time, taking short hops so the body is not overbalanced.

Roly-Poly 1

Sit with feet to buttocks, knees curled up to chest and held with hands clasped around shins (as in picture above for Egg Sit, but in a rounder ball). Begin a rocking forward and back motion, rocking each time all the way from top of back to heels touching and back again. Child could practice counting.

Roly-Poly 2

Lie on the back, rolled up towel under both shoulders, head lower than neck, with legs and arms extended out from the body. Now, slowly curl up into a tight “ball”, right ankle over left ankle, right arm over left arm (around the legs), head tucked in with forehead touching knees. Repeat 5 times.

Sniffing Dog

Sitting on heels, bent forward, head down, arms extended on floor; slowly press forward onto the hands as the head lifts up; slowly push back onto the heels as the head lowers back down.

Soaring Eagle

Lie on the floor face down, then the legs are lifted without bending them, with feet together. The arms are bent at the elbows, hands on the shoulders and the head is raised off the floor so that the child is only resting on his/her abdomen. Child balances or rocks on stomach for the duration of a poem or counting to ten. “Flying eagle in the sky... Holds his tail so straight and high... His pointed wings are strong... And guide him as he flies along.”

Speedy Frog

On the stomach, chest down, head up. Move legs and arms to crawl forward, pushing off with the feet and pulling with the hands and arms, eyes looking at the leading hand. This is done ‘correctly’ when child crawls cross-laterally with full involvement of hands and feet, including pushing off with toes; however, don’t correct or instruct the child.

Swordfish 

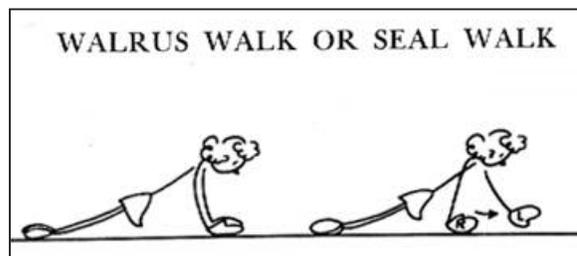
On a good sliding surface such as a wood floor, lie on the side with the bottom side arm held out straight in front (the sword), with the head held to that arm. Use the other arm and the legs for propulsion.

Tadpole

Same position as Funny Fish, but wriggle forward with hands kept by side and feet kept together.

Tadpole Turning into Frog

Lie in a prone position, arms crossed behind the back, now wriggle forward with the help of legs and feet, including toes. (Avoid for girls over 11 years old.)

**Walrus and Seal Walks**  

Take a prone position. For “Seal,” place hands on floor directly under shoulders, fingers to side; for “Walrus,” put hands in armpits and elbows on floor. Keep ankles extended, weight on top of toes. Progress forward walking with legs and toes dragging.

Wheelbarrow  

Child places hands on floor with legs straight; partner stands behind and grasps child’s ankles or knees (depending on weight and ability). The pair moves along forward.

LITTLE WRESTLING MATCHES WITH A CRAWLING ELEMENT**Stubborn Cows**

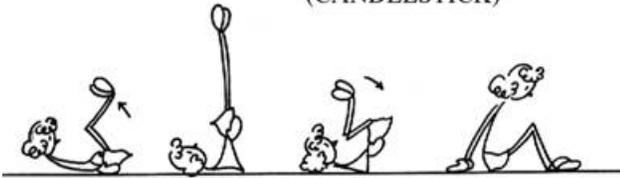
A little wrestling match for two children (or a child and an adult who of course lets the child win). Opponent “A” (the child if an adult is the partner) is on hands and knees on the floor; opponent “B”, on knees, places hands on “A’s” shoulders, providing gentle, firm resistance as “A” pushes forward, creeping on hands and knees. Note that “B’s” thumbs should be held next to the index fingers so they don’t dig into “A’s” shoulder blades.

Sled Dog

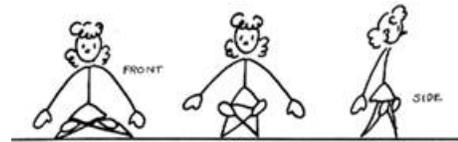
A similar wrestling match. Opponent “B” is on knees behind “A” and holds the “A’s” ankles from behind. The child attempts to crawl forward dragging the weight behind him.

SOME ADDITIONAL AGILITIES FROM "STUNTS AND TUMBLING FOR GIRLS"

SHOULDER REST
(CANDLESTICK)



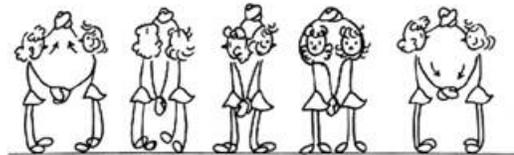
FOLDED LEG WALK



BOUNCING BALL



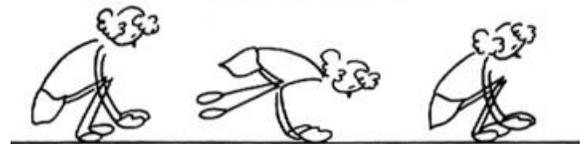
WRING THE DISHCLOTH



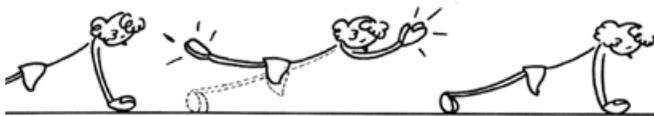
CRICKET WALK



TIP-UP
(FROG STAND)



SEAL SLAP



KNEE WALK



TURK STAND



UPSPRING

