



**T**he development of motor skills is a vital aspect of your child’s overall development. Therefore, it is important that not only your child’s occupational therapists help foster the advancement of motor skills, but you as well. In order to do that you must understand what motor skills are and how to best encourage their progress.

**FINE MOTOR SKILLS**

There are two types of motor skills: fine and gross. Fine motor skills are smaller movements. The term generally refers to actions performed by the fingers, wrists, hands, feet, toes, lips, and tongue. Examples of fine motor skills include:

- Grasping
- Tasting
- Buttoning
- Cutting
- Pasting
- Zipping
- Writing
- Building with blocks
- Placing objects and
- Tracing

Children may have difficulty mastering fine motor skills for a variety of reasons, such as sensory processing disorder or simply a naturally slower progression of development. Often, the problem manifests in a fine motor developmental delay. For example, your child may not be able to hold small objects at three months old or string large beads at age three, as is typical of a child performing on target. If the delay is

# Motor Skills

## Fostering their Development Through Understanding What They Are

severe, an occupational therapy referral and subsequent therapy may be necessary. However, you can also help your child develop his/her fine motor skills at home through the use and practice of some basic activities. These include:

- Cutting along a large line on a piece of paper
- Buttoning and unbuttoning clothing
- Matching shapes or colors, and pasting the pairs together
- Tracing shapes, outlined with a thick, dark line.
- Locking and unlocking the door
- Rolling out cookie dough and
- Writing in the air

It is important to remember that not every activity will help your child. You must first understand his/her current developmental level and choose activities that are neither too easy nor too difficult for him/her. For the most accurate guidance, consult your child’s doctor and/or occupational therapist.

**GROSS MOTOR SKILLS**

In addition to fine motor skills, gross motor skills are also an important part of development. Gross motor skills refer to whole-body movements such as jumping, walking and running. As your child develops he/she should develop the muscles required to achieve these skills, in a logical developmental order. For example, your child should sit then stand; crawl then walk; and walk then run.

You can help your child develop his/her gross motor skills through a variety of activities that start as early as possible in your child’s life. Here are a few examples:

- Encourage kicking, throwing and catching a ball. The ball can and should be large to begin.
- Play games that require your child to mimic your actions or simply perform gross-motor actions on his/her own, such as Simon Says or Mother May I.
- Sing songs that require action.
- Have your child act like different animals, slithering like a snake, creeping like a tiger, etc.
- Dance
- Swim
- Ride age-appropriate ride-on toys, such as scooters, tricycles and bicycles
- Build an obstacle course for and with (will help with fine motor skills!) with you; then complete the course.
- BE ACTIVE. Above all, it is vital that you keep your child active!

While the above activities can help foster the development of gross motor skills, they are not capable of instantly making your child capable of achieving a skill. That must be accomplished naturally. If there is a significant delay, speak with your child’s pediatrician and/or occupational therapist. You may find that your child is a late bloomer or that there is a serious concern. Either way, you’ll know what’s happening. ■

**Information for this handout obtained from:**

*Special Needs, Special Kids (Disability Awareness):* Imaware.tripod.com  
*Sensory Processing Disorder:* www.sensory-processing-disorder.com  
 “Physical Activities to Build Your Preschooler’s Gross Motor Skills,” *About.com:* http://familyfitness.about.com/od/preschoolers/a/grossmotorskill.htm  
 “Activities for Gross Motor Skills,” *Shirley’s Preschool Activities:* http://www.shirleys-preschool-activities.com/gross-motor-skills.html

**NOTES:**

---



---



---



---



---



---