

Gross Motor Skills and Activities for Home

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When children are home it is important that they participate in gross motor skills and activities every day. Gross motor skills are larger movement activities such as sitting, rolling, kneeling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping and more! Many times when children are provided with independent, free play outdoors, they automatically participate in these types of skills. Other times when the weather is not cooperating or children have delayed motor skills they may need some guidance and directions to increase gross motor time.



There are plenty of video or apps to encourage physical activity in children BUT it is also important for children to participate in SCREEN FREE gross motor activities.

Gross Motor Milestones

Before we get started on gross motor skill development activities for the large muscles, let's review the basics of gross motor milestones. Every child develops at their own pace, but if you suspect gross motor skill delays reach out to your pediatrician, occupational therapist or physical therapist to get advice.

This is a very general list to describe a child's gross motor development throughout early childhood.

Infants (0-12 months):

1. Lifts head when on tummy
2. Rolls from tummy to back and back to tummy
3. Sits without support
4. Crawls on hands and knees
5. Pulls to stand
6. Cruises around furniture
7. Takes first steps

Toddler (1-3 years):

1. Walks independently
2. Squats to pick up toys
3. Climbs onto and down from furniture without help
4. Runs
5. Kicks a large ball
6. Begins to jump with both feet off the ground

Preschool (3-5 years):

1. Climbs well
2. Walks up and down stairs, alternating feet
3. Stands on one foot for a few seconds
4. Pedals a tricycle
5. Hops on one foot
6. Throws a ball overhand

Check out these [Gross Motor Skill Activities for Preschoolers](#) and [Outdoor Activities](#) too.

Early Elementary School (5-8 years):

1. Masters skipping
2. Rides a bicycle with training wheels, progresses to without
3. Performs somersaults
4. Swims with assistance
5. Climbs on playground equipment with ease
6. Engages in team sports like soccer or basketball

These milestones are approximate, and individual children may achieve them at different rates. If there are concerns about a child's development, it is important to consult with a healthcare provider or a pediatric physical therapist. They can complete an evaluation to determine gross motor skill level or if developmental delays are present. Refer to the [CDC's developmental milestones for more information](#).

You can learn more about the [differences between fine motor and gross motor skills here](#).

Why are Gross Motor Skills Important?

Gross motor skills are essential for many aspects of daily life beyond the basic actions of walking and playing. These skills involve the coordination and movement of large muscle groups and are vital for performing a wide range of activities. For example, getting dressed requires the ability to balance on one foot while slipping the other through a pant leg. Handwriting depends on the stability provided by the shoulder muscles and the control of the arm muscles to guide the pencil. Bathing involves safely maneuvering in and out of a slippery tub, which is a complex task requiring coordination and strength. Additionally, gross motor skills are necessary for navigating the community, such as crossing the street, which requires the ability to judge distance and speed while walking. Understanding the role these skills play in such daily tasks underscores their importance in fostering independence and confidence in children as they grow.

To illustrate the importance of gross motor skills in various activities, here are some specific examples:

- Bathing children involves a series of movements and balance, highlighting the role of gross motor skills in personal care. [Task Analysis of Bathing Children](#)
- The connection between gross motor abilities and handwriting is critical, as good core stability and shoulder strength can enhance writing skills. [Gross Motor Skills and Handwriting](#)
- Gross motor skills play a significant part in dressing, where coordination and balance are key to putting on and taking off clothing. [Gross Motor Skills and Getting Dressed](#)
- Toilet training is closely linked to gross motor development, as sitting and transferring require adequate muscle control. [Toilet Training and Gross Motor Skills](#)
- Using scissors effectively is another activity that relies on gross motor skill development, particularly in the coordination of arm and hand muscles. [Gross Motor Skills and Scissor Use](#)
- Play is a fundamental part of child development, with gross motor skills being integral to engaging in various forms of play by themselves and with peers. [Gross Motor Skills and the Development of Play in Children](#)
- Navigating community spaces, like crossing the street, demands a set of gross motor skills for safety and efficiency. [Crossing the Street and More](#)
- Managing clothing fasteners is another everyday task that requires gross motor skills, as it involves movements of the arms and hands. [Clothing Fasteners and Gross Motor Skills](#)

50 Screen-Free Gross Motor Skills Examples and Activities for Home

Indoor Gross Motor Skills and Activities

- Crawling or walking over different pillows or blankets.

- Tall kneel walking across the room to complete a puzzle.
 - Practice walking like different animals. Need ideas? Check out Animal Actions A to Z.
 - Try walking at different speeds – super slow, slow, normal, fast and super fast
 - Jog or run in place
 - Jump over a piece of paper
 - Tummy time for babies and kids
 - Freeze dance
 - Jump up and down from a bottom step
 - Rip scrap paper in half and jump from paper to paper.
 - Play with cardboard boxes. Makes tunnels. Step in and out of the boxes. Try the Box Balance Game.
 - Jump side to side over a shoe lace on the floor.
 - Dance party
 - Make your body into the shapes of the letters of the alphabet
 - Move Like Me – strike a pose and the other person mimics it
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- Make an indoor obstacle course traveling over different obstacles like couch cushions and pillows.
 - Create a dance and teach it to someone else
 - Indoor fitness – jumping jacks, mountain climbers, squat thrusts, etc.
 - Yoga poses
 - Jump over paper cups
 - Put a small ball on top of a paper cup. Practice only kicking the ball off the cup without knocking the cup over.
 - March to parade music.
 - Do step ups using a small stool.
 - Keep a balloon up in the air.
 - Put painter's tape on the floor or a rope. Walk forwards, sideways, and backwards on the rope.
 - Climb stairs. Put stuffed animals at the top of the stairs, climb up to rescue them and walk back down to bring them back to you.
 - Play Simon Says and other self control games
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- Take a blanket ride – pull someone on a blanket across the floor
 - Load up laundry baskets with heavy books and push around the room. Pretend to be a traveling library.
 - Use recycled water bottles and set up bowling. Bowl with a ball or roll into the bottles with your body. – One of my favorite gross motor skills activities!
 - Play tug of war with a towel. Try playing in tall kneeling.
 - Pretend to ice skate using paper plates.
 - Sit on the floor and lift feet in the air. Pretend to ride a bicycle.
 - Move like an animal in slow motion.

- Try catching a balloon on a funnel from your kitchen drawer.
- Hang a [balloon from the ceiling and hit it with a cardboard tube](#).
- Kick a balloon against the wall and back again.
- Play with bean bags (make your own with rice inside socks if needed). Check out [Beanbag Alphabet Fun](#).

Outdoor Gross Motor Skills and Activities at Home

- Ride a tricycle.
- Play hopscotch.
- Go on a [nature scavenger hunt](#) or play [outdoor bingo](#).
- Play hide and go seek.
- Explore and find 5 green objects.
- Play with a hula hoop.
- Ride a scooter.
- Play catch.
- Swing
- Go up and down the slide.
- Practice dribbling a ball.
- Kick a soccer ball.
- Make a [sidewalk chalk obstacle course](#).
- Play a [game of oversized memory matching](#) – you have to squat and move around the cards.
- Go to the park.
- Play [Summer Tic Tac Toe](#)

If you need reminders for gross motor skills and activities outdoors, hang this [Play Outdoors Tear Off Sheet by your back door](#).

RELATED RESOURCES

[HOW TO DO THE CROSS CRAWL GROSS MOTOR EXERCISE](#)

[SUPER FUN GROSS MOTOR GAMES THAT REQUIRE NO EQUIPMENT](#)

[LOTS OF BODY AWARENESS ACTIVITIES HERE](#)

[FINE MOTOR SKILLS ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS](#)