

Motor planning activities

Home program

What is motor planning?

Do you remember when you first learned to tie your shoes? At first it seemed impossible. But the more you practiced the easier it got. While you were learning this skill you were “motor planning,” organizing and sequencing a series of movements. Your hands learned how to cross the laces, make the loop, and pull it through. Maybe you even learned to make a double knot. At first you had to think really hard and watch every move, but now you could probably do this in the dark.

How can I help my child?

This sheet suggests activities that will help your child succeed with new motor activities. **This home program should be used only under the guidance of an occupational therapist.**

It is helpful to:

- Give one direction at a time.
- Use visual as well as spoken cues. (Show, don't just tell!)
- Help the child physically move through the action.
- Expect imperfection.
- Reduce distractions and clutter so your child can focus.
- Provide many opportunities to practice a task in a variety of ways.
- Adjust the activity so that your child can feel successful. That is, find the

challenge that is “just right”: a little difficult, but still within the child's abilities. For example, if catching a ball is hard at first, stand close and simply drop the ball into your child's arms. You can use a beach ball, or even a bag filled with small stuffed animals or a pillow, which may be easier to grab with the arms and hands. Help position the child's arms if needed; gradually move farther away and toss the ball; progress to smaller balls.

Home activities

- Play “Simon Says.” Include a variety of movements such as hopping, jumping, crawling, and galloping. Suggest ways of moving: fast, slow, graceful, jerky.
- Animal walks
 - Elephant walk: Bend over, hang down arms as trunk, swing arms, and walk forward.
 - Crabwalk: Sit down on the floor, put feet flat on the floor and place your hands (arms outstretched) behind you, fingertips facing backwards; lift your bottom off the floor and walk forwards and backwards.
 - Invent your own! Imitate how other animals walk (bear, duck, horse galloping, seal, monkey, kangaroo, bird, bunny, frog).
- Make angels: Lie flat on your back and move your arms and legs in and out on snow or the carpet.
- Jump rope

- Wiffle® ball
- Roll down a hill or across a floor.
- Hopscotch
- Jump over objects.
- Keep a balloon in the air - use only hands, only feet, only head, or any combination.
- Three-legged race
- Tell stories or sing songs that use lots of hand gestures, and have child imitate your gestures (patty-cake games).
- Charades
- Follow the leader
- Teach your child simple dance steps (the bunny hop, hokey pokey, YMCA).
- Have child imitate clapping patterns or rhythms.
- Play catch using a large ball, small ball, beanbag, or Frisbee®. Try objects of several sizes and weights that require slightly different responses. Have your child catch a ball that is bounced to him or her. Then have your child bounce the ball back to you.
- Kick a ball, aiming at a goal.
- Throw balls into boxes or baskets.
- Throw a ball to knock over a target.
- Roll a ball between two objects.
- Have child and at least one other person hold onto a sheet and use up and down motions of their arms to propel a ball or balloon around on top of sheet.
- “Wheelbarrow walk”: Hold onto child’s legs at thighs, knees, or shins, and have child walk on the hands.
- Swim.
- Create obstacle courses to crawl over and through using large boxes, chairs, hula-hoops, inner tubes, or blankets draped over furniture to create tunnels.

- Playground swings
- Bike or tricycle rides
- Create a footprint course - lay footprints (left and right) on the floor in different patterns.
- Ring toss
- Tug-of-war
- Twister®
- Climbing (steps, slide ladder, trees, jungle-gym, playland)

Community activities

- Gymnastics
- Karate or martial arts
- Kids’ aerobics
- Dance and kids’ movement class
- Soccer
- Swimming

Special instructions:

Questions?

This home program is to be used only under the guidance of an occupational therapist. If you have any problems with this home program, or any questions, please call your occupational therapist in the Developmental and Rehabilitation Services Department.

Therapist signature

Date

Phone

Children’s Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota
 Patient/Family Education
 2525 Chicago Avenue South
 Minneapolis, MN 55404
 10/09 ©Copyright

