

Areas of Learning

Physical development - Gross motor skills



What are gross motor skills?

Gross motor skill is the term used to describe the control of large muscle groups enabling us to move our arms, legs and torso with confidence and co-ordination. This includes learning to roll, sit, crawl, stand, walk, run, hop, jump, squat, pull, push, kick, climb, throw, balance etc.

Whilst these gross motor skills differ from fine motor (small muscle group, controlled movements), they are not to be considered in isolation. For example, if we want a child to be able thread with string and spools, they must first be able to support their own head, sit up with a strong core, have control over their shoulders and arms alongside the fine motor skills needed for threading. A skilled practitioner will use their knowledge of the child's physical skills holistically to ensure that their curriculum meets the children's needs.

Task 1

Spend some time evaluating the opportunities within your curriculum for children to develop their gross motor skills. Does your current provision consider the ages and stages of the children? Reflect on how well children engage in these opportunities. Be sure to note any areas for improvement identified.

Task 2

Discuss with a partner how the following activities support gross motor development

- Throwing and catching scarves or balloons
- Bubble play
- Dancing
- Cardboard box or material play
- Gardening
- Playing a game of the floor is lava
- Playing Simon says
- Parachute play
- Pulleys and buckets

Task 3

Encourage staff to take turns creating an obstacle course for the children. Ask them to explain their intent and how it will support the children's gross motor development. Encourage them to be specific in their thinking – what movements are they supporting the children to develop in the course they create? Are they encouraging the child to use their core, their legs, their arms, their vestibular system etc (see Vestibular Q card). Why do you think it is important to think about this level of detail? How does it support your intent, how you will implement and the impact?

To find more about gross motor development, see the following links.

[EYFS – Physical development – Gross motor skills - YouTube](#)

[Gross motor skills - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

[Early Movers — Core skills](#)