

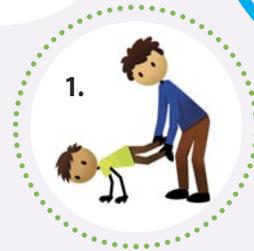
# GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

**What are Gross motor skills?** Gross Motor Skills are skills that develop using the large muscles of the body in a coordinated and controlled way. Core strength, balance, coordination of both sides of the body and body awareness are all important skills necessary for gross motor movements including running, jumping, skipping, hopping and ball games. Gross motor skills develop through practice and repetition.

**The following strategies are commonly used in Occupational Therapy and are recommended to develop your child's gross motor skills;**

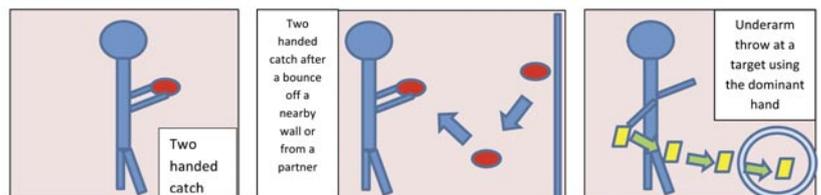
## STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE:

- Wheelbarrow Walks. This involves holding your child's legs at their knees, calves or ankles and they walk forward on their hands.
- Pushing and Pulling games: pushing each other's hands, pushing each other's feet, tug-of-war, pulling a cart.
- Animal walks: Bunny hop, duck waddle, seal, crab walk. Race and walk following simple routes around furniture, play Crab football (kick the ball with feet).
- Obstacle courses; climbing up and over, crawling through, sliding down, spinning around, running around cones and ball games.
- Playground equipment including monkey bars, climbing up ladders, pushing someone on a swing.



## BALL SKILLS:

- Younger children of 3-6 years of age can start developing ball skills by practising to throw and catch a balloon with two hands. Reducing the size of the balloon overtime increases the challenge.
- Stand closer together until a two handed catch is mastered. Then increase the distance between you and your child to increase the challenge.
- A child of five or six years of age should be able to catch a balloon/bean bag/large ball with two hands without trapping it against their body.
- Catch and throw a large ball, medium sized ball, small ball.
- Develop an underarm throw with the doing/dominant hand. An underarm throw is the movement /throw used when bowling.
- Throw a bean bag or ball at, or into a target, e.g. skittles, wall target.
- Practise bowling.
- Practise catching a ball with two hands after a bounce.
- Practise throwing a large, medium, small ball off the wall and catching it with two hands after one bounce or before it bounces for an increased challenge.
- At the age of ten or eleven practise developing a one handed catch with a tennis ball.
- Tips and strategies to develop your child's ball skills can also be found online. This includes 'The Fizzy and Clever Hands programme' developed by Therapists in Kent Community NHS trust, United Kingdom.  
<https://www.ekhft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/patient-information-leaflets/fizzy-leaflets/>



## CO-ORDINATION OF BODY PARTS/BOTH SIDES OF THE BODY:

- Practise star jumps. If this is tricky remind your child that the arms and legs must work together. Arms out, legs out then arms in, legs in.
- Robot jumps/Stride jumps-Arm and leg on one side in front and then swap.
- Bring the elbow to knee on the same side and then try the opposite side.
- Bring the hand to foot in front and behind then try opposite hand to opposite foot in front and behind.
- Practise Galloping like a horse. Lead with one leg in front. Then swap and lead with the other leg.
- Practise sequencing skipping. Practise skipping with a rope. If this is difficult your child could start skipping using a hoola hoop. Remind your child to 'Swing, drop and then hop'. Practise hopping over the rope with two feet together. This is called a bunny hop.



Bilateral Co-ordination Exercises.  
[www.yourtherapysource.com](http://www.yourtherapysource.com)

## BODY AWARENESS:

- Point to your nose. Point to your ears.
- Close your eyes and find your nose, close your eyes and find your elbow.
- Simon says games with body parts.
- Draw a picture of self with body parts.



## BALANCE:

- Again core strength and trunk control is an essential component of balance.

## Exercises that will develop your child's core strength include;

- a. Crab Hold:** Hands are placed under the shoulders. Feet are placed under the knees. Holding the crab position for up to 30 seconds.
- b. Hedgehog:** Arms are placed across the chest, bend knees, lift head, bring chin to chest. Holding for up to 30 seconds. This is called supine flexion.
- c. Superman:** Lie on tummy with both arms and legs out straight. Holding for up to 30 seconds. Counting out loud is important to ensure your child is not holding their breath.



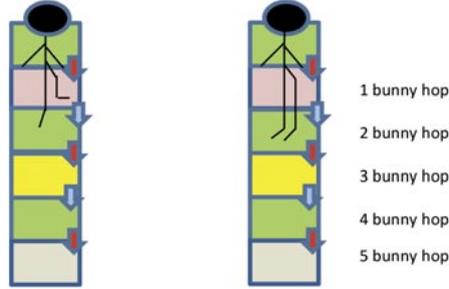
- Practise balancing on one leg for ten to thirty seconds.
- Remind your child how to balance. Tips include not lifting the leg too high, using the arms to help maintain balance, looking at a point that is not moving. Take time to practise stair climbing and stairs descent with your child. One foot can be placed on each step as they grow and as balance improves.
- If this is difficult start with one foot on a box whilst balancing on the other leg.
- Place one foot on top of a ball. Tap the ball ten times. Roll it forward and backward under the foot ten times. Circle the ball ten times. This activity is helping your child to balance on the other leg for up to thirty seconds.
- Tape masking tape to the ground up to two metres in length. Practise walking forward on a line on tip toes or with one foot in front of the other. Pretend it is a tight rope in the circus.
- Practise moving from kneeling on the ground to half kneeling to standing without use of their hands.

- Balance on one leg whilst moving cones from the table to the floor. Stack the cones.
- Walk across stepping stones. Use a balance board.
- When learning to balance on a bicycle some children might benefit from removing the pedals and stabilisers to create a balance bike. Pedals can be replaced when your child is free wheeling easily. Alternatively raise the stabilisers as confidence grows, challenging your child's balance skills.



**HOPPING:**

- Develop a bunny hop/two feet together. Hop into hoops, or onto mats. Play hopscotch. Try to develop a consecutive hop, which involves up to five hops in a row without pausing to rest.



Bunny hop: Two feet hop together

- Develop a one legged hop. Hop forward over a line and back. Repeat up to five times.

**OUTDOOR GROSS MOTOR MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES:**

- Visit the playground. See-saws, swings, slides, climbing frames, monkey bars.
- Keep active!! Join in with sports activities in your area. [www.healthyireland.ie](http://www.healthyireland.ie)
- If your child does not like ball games, try other extracurricular activities such as martial arts, athletics, swimming, cycling, hiking etc.



Cork & Kerry Primary Care Paediatric Occupational Therapy Departments

