

## A11 - Bilateral integration

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The ability to coordinate the right and left side of the body and to cross the midline of the body is an indication that both sides of the brain are working well together and sharing information.

**Bilateral integration** is an important foundation skill for **motor planning, sequencing and organisation skills** and provides the basis for the development of many motor skills, and is essential for the development of hand dominance.

You can observe this in how children negotiate themselves through obstacle courses or organise their actions through daily activities like dressing and self-feeding. They can appear clumsy, uncoordinated and often fall over. Children can become frustrated due to their difficulties.

Children with poor coordination of the two sides of the body together may present with:

- difficulties in motor activities that involve two sides of the body (jumping or catching)
- tend to avoid crossing their midline (will work to the side an item is placed)
- difficulty in coordinating the action of both hands in a coordinated way eg, one hand action while the other stabilises work or use of scissors to cut and hold
- swaps hands during fine motor activities
- have difficulty in reading left to right across the page
- have difficulty in self-care skills (fastenings or cutlery use)

Additional adult support will be required to assist with increasing tolerance and acceptance of unfamiliar or new activities for sensory skill development, to facilitate **bilateral integration skills** to teach the coordinated use of both sides of the body together.

Additional time will be required to think and organise their body more efficiently. Lots of practice to consolidate skills will be required until mastery of skills is achieved.

### Activities

Introduce the activities at a graded level, within the child's individual level of tolerance and achievement.

#### Action songs and rhymes – involving two arms and legs

'Wind the Bobbin Up', 'The Hokey Cokey', 'Heads & Shoulders, Knees & Toes' but be prepared to slow the pace until they are more familiar with integrating the actions with rhyme.

#### Clapping games

For activities that require the use of two hands doing the same action and different actions, with assistance to copy or follow a partners lead.

**Use big movements** initially, drawing on a large piece of paper on the floor, attached vertically on the wall or at an easel. Grade Lazy 8's from larger to smaller sizes, drawn first on a large surface parallel to the face and later at a desk so the movement can be connected to pre-writing skills.

- **Lateral cross marching**

Start cross crawl in sitting or standing and alternating touch of each arm to the opposite leg

Do cross crawl - touching alternative hand with the opposite knee

Cross crawl as you sit, moving opposite arm and leg together

Reach behind the body to touch the opposite foot

Do a slow-motion cross crawl, reaching opposite arm and leg to their full extension  
You can use colour-coded stickers or ribbons on opposite hands and feet for children who may need additional cues  
Do cross crawl to a variety of music and rhythms

**Frequency of use:** Complete 10-15 minutes sessions every day or at least three times a week.

**Monitor the child's level of response**

**Also see ball skills** (A6 obstacle courses, jumping, animal walks etc....)