

Barnet Specialist Inclusion Service

20 Gross Motor Activities

These activities feel more like play than work, they offer a stress-free way to support your child at home while simultaneously setting them up for long-term success.

If you suspect your child has delayed gross motor skills, it's important to seek the help of a professional to identify the issues and ensure a proper plan is put into place to help develop the skills they need to excel, but there are also tons of ways you can support your child at home.

Finding fun and engaging gross motor activities for children is a great option as they offer a sneaky way to help your child work through their challenges without them even realising it! Here are 20 of our favourite gross motor activities for children.

1. Tightrope Walking. All you need is a bit of masking tape and a little imagination, and you can make all kinds of tightrope obstacle courses using your child's favorite toys. A simple example is to have him walk from one end of the room to another with an object in each of his hands, and then have him stand on a step stool at the end of the 'tightrope' and bend over to place each object into a bucket. Simple, easy, and effective! This can also be adapted for wheelchair users.

2. Balance Boarding. Perfect for little feet and ideal for both indoor and outdoor play, this is a fun way to help improve your child's balance and coordination while also getting the wiggles out. A Monkey Balance board can be found on Amazon. Alternatively you can create your own if you have a spare small plank of wood; add two books, or a ball, in the middle and place the wooden board over them.

3. Balloon Tennis. Blow up some balloons and then use hands or wooden spoons to play!

4. Stair Scavenger Hunt. Using 2 puzzle sets create a scavenger hunt on your staircase (in this example, your child would be matching numbers). Have your child choose 1 puzzle piece from a bucket and then walk up the stairs to find the matching piece. Ensure he doesn't use the hand rails while walking up and down the stairs, and that he crouches down into a squat position when picking

up each puzzle piece. As an added twist, have him assemble both puzzles on the floor while standing on a stepping stool at the end of the hunt.

5. Egg Races. You can make this as easy or as hard as you want to. Start with a simple race across your living room, and then make the game more difficult by putting blankets and pillows on the floor. You can also have your child switch between his right and left hands to add an even bigger twist!

6. Animal Walking. Write a bunch of different animals on different pieces of paper, throw them into a hat, have your child randomly choose a few, and then have him walk across the living room while pretending to walk like the animal he chose, and see how long it takes the rest of the family to figure out what the animal is.

7. Leg lifts. Leg lifts are a great exercise for restless kids! Have your child stand sideways behind a chair and, using the chair for support, ask him to lift his legs up with his knees at a 90-degree angle. Try varying the length of time it takes your child to raise and lower his legs (5 counts up, 5 counts down), and then see if he can balance for a count of 10 without holding onto the chair.

8. Simon Says. Kids love this game, and if you have multiple kids or teach in a classroom, you can make it extra motivating by choosing different children/students to be 'Simon' each day as a reward for good behavior, helping around the house/classroom, completing homework, etc.

9. Stretch it. Lie on the floor and do all kind of limb stretches, knees up, legs to the side, arms above your shoulders, etc. It's a combination of yoga and Twister, and your kids will love it! If a child is on a wheelchair this can also be done using as much movement as possible.

10. Hopscotch. There are so many ways you can switch up a good old game of hopscotch. Have your child only jump on odd or even numbers, ask him to switch from jumping with 2 legs to one leg, instruct him to jump backwards and then forwards at different intervals, and yell out random numbers to keep him guessing and engaged.

11. Waddle Like a Penguin. This gross motor activity doubles as a great boredom buster for bad weather days!

- 12. Twister.** If your child has weak core muscles, this classic party game offers a brilliant way to engage his core while still having fun!
- 13. Fun with Pillows.** You can do a lot of core exercises for kids with pillows! If you have a couch with big pillows, set them up on the floor and ask your child to turn them over as many times in a row as he can. You can also have him drag them from one end of your living room to the next and place a couple of toys on top along the way to see how long he can go without dropping them! Don't have large couch pillows? No problem! Grab a couple from your bed and have your child walk up and down the stairs while holding the pillows in his arms and remind him NOT to use the handrail for better core engagement.
- 14. Leg Kicks with An Exercise Ball.** Have your child lie on his back with his hands at his side and his knees tucked into his chest. On the count of three, gently throw a ball toward him, and have him straighten his legs in front of him so he can kick the ball back to you with his feet. It's challenging to get the hang of, but it can be lots of fun!
- 15. Therapy Ball Exercises for Kids.** If you're looking for simple core exercises for kids you can do at home, an exercise ball is a fabulous tool as you can do so many different things with it. Ask your child to lie on his tummy on the ball and sort objects from one container to another, have him sit on the ball and then lie backwards and reach his arms above his head so he can retrieve objects off of the floor, see how many times he can crawl over the ball, ask him to give you a 'massage' by lying on the floor while he rolls the ball up and down your back, get him to push the ball up a flight of stairs...the possibilities really are endless!
- 16. Square Scooter.** Square scooters aren't just fun – they also help create a ton of different gross motor activities for kids. For example, you can have your child lay with his tummy on the scooter, and then ask him to navigate around your living room using only his feet while he picks up various objects off the ground with his hands. Another idea is to have him sit cross-legged on the scooter and then move himself around the room using a broom while singing, 'Row Row Row Your Boat'!

17. Jump Rope. Another simple yet effective way to help develop your child's balance and coordination is to engage him in some good ole' jump rope fun.

18. Obstacle Courses. Setting up several of these gross motor activities for kids into an obstacle course can be a lot of fun for little ones! You can do this outside in the backyard, or split it up over 2 or 3 floors of your house, requiring your child to walk up and down the stairs in between sections. It doesn't need to be anything fancy – as you've seen in this list, there are heaps of things you can do with pillows, blankets, a step stool, and an exercise ball! – and the more exciting you make it for your child, the more he'll want to participate.

19. Trampoline Fun. If your backyard is big enough for a enclosed trampoline, there are HEAPS of ways the whole family can have fun together while simultaneously helping to develop your child's gross motor skills.

20. Bike Riding. Riding a bike is one of many fabulous gross motor activities for kids, but if your child struggles with balance and coordination, teaching him how to ride a bike can be challenging. Talk to his OT about different strategies, and consider investing in a balance bike, which teaches kids proper balancing techniques rather than focusing on solely on peddling.