

THE ROLE OF GROSS MOTOR SKILLS ON FINE MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

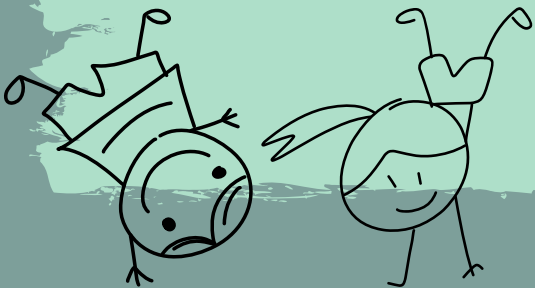
SAPIK EDUCATIONAL NEWSLETTER



In practice, we are often asked why a child is recommended to do gross motor exercises when they struggle with fine motor skills. The answer is simple – Gross motor skills are the foundation we need for overall development. When focusing on fine motor skills development, an understanding of gross motor skills is needed first.

WHAT ARE GROSS MOTOR SKILLS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

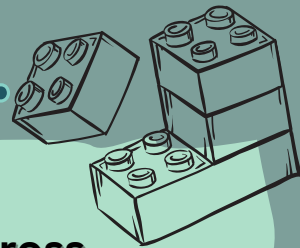
Gross motor skills can be described as the ability to move your body's large muscles in a coordinated manner. These movements make everyday tasks possible, such as walking, sitting, skipping, running and jumping. Hand-eye and foot-eye coordination, such as kicking or catching a ball, are seen as gross motor skills.



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Gross motor skills are critical for everyday functioning. Children need a good level of gross motor development for adequate playground skills (e.g. climbing) and sport skills (e.g. running, kicking, catching, etc.). When gross motor skills are established, children will be able to maintain and control their posture (upper body support) in the classrooms, which in turn contributes to better fine motor skills.

NECESSARY BUILDING BLOCKS FOR GROSS MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.



Necessary building blocks for the development of gross motor skills, as provided by Kid Sense:

- **Strength:** Stronger body muscles, strengthening core muscle and posture.
- **Muscular endurance:** Providing muscles with the ability to work for longer periods of time without becoming exhausted.
- **Motor planning:** Moving your body in a coordinated manner to complete a sequence or pattern.
- **Sensory processing:** Registering, understanding, and responding to different sensory stimuli in the environment around you and on your own body.
- **Spatial orientation:** Being aware of your body in the space around you and understanding your body's movement in relation to other body parts.
- **Balance:** Controlling your body movement when performing a static, dynamic (moving) or rotating balance activity.
- **Coordination:** Ability to combine different movements into a singular efficient movement.
- **Mid-line crossing:** Crossing the imaginary line, running from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. This divides the body into the left and right side.

- **Proprioception:** Being aware of your body position and body movement through the information received from your muscles and joints.
- **Muscle Tone:** The continuous contraction of your muscles when performing an activity, such as keeping your body posture upright when sitting at a desk.

RECOGNISING WHEN YOUR CHILD MIGHT STRUGGLE WITH GROSS MOTOR SKILLS.

A child struggling with one or more gross motor skills could possibly display the following signs:

- Low participation in physical activity.
- Delayed milestone development (e.g. sitting, crawling, walking, running, etc.).
- Low muscle tone and struggling to keep body upright.
- Unable to complete a set-out sequence of instructions.
- Getting fatigued quicker than peers in physical activities.
- Struggles with performing activities without falling over or bumping into objects.
- Participates in physical activities but only in short sessions (low endurance).
- Unable to perform new skills if not practiced often.
- Slower in completing activities than peers.
- More attention needs to be given to complete an activity.
- Poor writing or cutting skills.
- Struggling with processing sensory inputs.



ACTIVITIES THAT CAN HELP IMPROVE GROSS MOTOR SKILLS.

These are examples of basic activities that can help improve different aspects of a child's gross motor skill.

- Locomotor activities: Hopping with two feet, running, froggy jumps, walking on hands and feet like a monkey.
- Balancing activities: Standing on one leg, walking on balancing beams (forwards and backwards), hopping on one leg, standing on unstable surfaces.
- Ball skills: Kicking, catching, throwing or rolling different objects.
- Obstacle courses: Combining three or more activities a child should complete. (Obstacle courses focus on more than one skill at a time.
- Simon says: Helps children with performing specific instructions, including being aware of their body.



WHO CAN HELP YOUR CHILD WITH THEIR GROSS MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT?

A qualified Kinderkineticist, specialising in ages 0–13 years. The role of a Kinderkineticist:

- Help a child develop their age-appropriate gross motor skills.
- Improve a child's self-confidence when it comes to physical activities.
- Build a child's strength and endurance to achieve the physical activity level his/her age requires.
- Developing a love for movement to ensure that a child continues being active even into adulthood.



Only after understanding gross motor skills completely and achieving the necessary foundational level of development, can the building of fine motor skills be engaged.

“
Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning, but for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.

FRED ROGER
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About the Author

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References:

1. Kid Sense. 2023. Gross motor activities.
<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/gross-motor-skills/gross-motor-activities/>. Date of access: 04 March 2024.

