



Gross Motor Development in Early Childhood Education

During their first five years, young children undergo more rapid and dramatic changes in their physical development than at any other time in their lives. Changes in body proportion, coordination and strength occur, as does increasingly complex brain development. Children develop remarkable physical, motor and sensory capabilities that enhance exploration and mastery of the environment.



There are two components to young children's physical development:

- * **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING** includes active physical play, safety, personal care routines and feeding and nutrition.
- * **MOTOR DEVELOPMENT** refers to the use, refinement and coordination of the body's large and small muscles.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

MOTOR DEVELOPMENT | GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

BIRTH - 8 MONTHS

Gross motor development focuses on arm, body and leg movements. Tone, strength and coordination improve progressively from head to toe. While the sequence of development is predictable, there is variation in each young infant's timetable.

8 - 18 MONTHS

Older infants climb and reach for objects beyond their reach. They are preoccupied with controlling their movements and finding new ways to move around in their environments.

18 - 24 MONTHS

As young children become more mobile, they continue developing their independence through coordinated, purposeful movement. They often use large muscles to explore their environments. Young toddlers show fearless determination and energy in order to accomplish a task.

2 - 3 YEARS (24 - 36 months)

Two-year-olds continue developing their independence through purposeful, coordinated activities. Movement now comes with a goal in mind and it tends to be practiced over and over again until mastered.

3 - 4 YEARS (36 - 48 months)

Three-year-olds continue improving balance and control, as well as coordination. They are able to combine muscle movements to complete more complex gross motor tasks. Developing coordination requires opportunities and practice to challenge these skills.

4 YEARS - KINDERGARTEN (48 months - Kindergarten)

Four-year-olds are gaining increasing control over their gross motor skills and coordinated movements. As they practice, they become more confident in their abilities.

The information above is from the [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#).



Building Gross Motor Skills and Why It Matters

 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MSU Extension
Early Childhood Development

Kendra Moyses, Michigan State University Extension - June 20, 2016

Gross motor, sometimes called large motor, skills can be thought of as the movements involved in the coordination of the arms, legs and other large body parts and movements. Gross motor skills are movements such as running, crawling, swimming or hopping. These types of movements are important for young children to practice as they develop because they help children learn how to coordinate and control their body movements. Gross motor skills also help lay the foundation to be able to complete fine motor skill movement such as pinching or grasping.

Young children need time to practice using their gross motor skills in everyday situations. The opportunity to run in large areas, practice hopping on one foot, crawling or leaping is helping children to develop their control and coordination of their bodies.

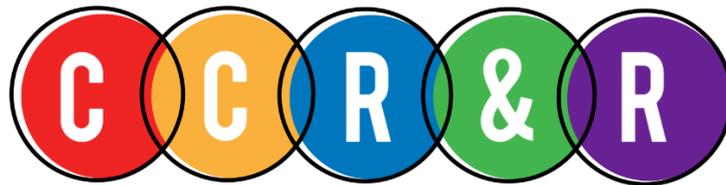
[Click here](#) to read more.

Importance of Gross Motor Skills

[Why Gross Motor Development is So Important in a Child's Early Life \(carrotsareorange.com\)](#)

- **Health** – obvious benefits of exercise to the body and mind, more specifically
- **Confidence & Self Esteem** – important in childhood, yes, but arguably a more important life skill
- **Ability to Assess Risk** – another important life skill, not only with physical well-being but with taking risks in life with decision making
- **Energy Release** – physical, social, and emotional
- **Brain Development** – the early years lay the foundation of brain pathways for lifelong motor skills and aids in learning, especially learning skills that require advanced thinking and mental dexterity





Resources for Families and Providers

Gross Motor Skills Development Timeline and Progression

By [Catherine Holecko](#)

Updated on October 28, 2020

Types of Gross Motor Skills



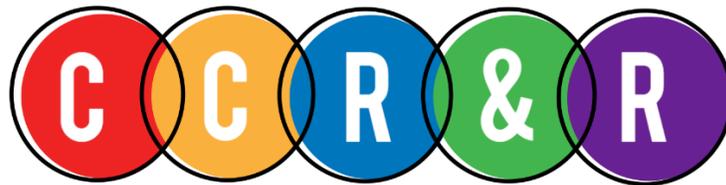
Gross motor skills can be grouped into different types.

- **Locomotor skills** are those used to move the body from place to place, like walking and running.
- **Manipulative skills** involve moving an object, such as a bat, ball, or jump rope.
- **Stability skills** are related to balance and weight transfer—for example, standing on one foot or dodging an obstacle.

Gross motor skills aren't just important for [physical fitness](#) and sports. Kids need them for school success, too. That's partly because of the order and sequencing of development—the way new skills build on previous ones, and the way small muscles develop after large ones.

It's also because kids need to be able to sit at a desk or stand at a blackboard in order to write. And they need to be able to use balance and twisting skills to cross the midline (an imaginary vertical line dividing the right and left sides of the body), which they must do in order to read and write fluidly.

[Click here](#) for the full article.



Resources for Families and Providers

Websites that Promote Gross Motor Development

- [10 AWESOME GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITIES FOR BABIES + TODDLERS](#)
- [10 Gross Motor Activities for Toddlers](#)
- [Gross Motor Skills Activities for 2 and 3-Year-Olds](#)
- [Gross motor skills: Birth to 5 years](#)

Videos that Promote Gross Motor Development

- [Gross Motor Skills Activities For Children at Home | Part 1 | Fun Activity at Home | Nursery - Bing video](#)
- [Balancing Beanbags | Games for Preschoolers | Gross Motor Activities - Bing video](#)
- [Gross Motor Skills For Toddlers - Bing video](#)
- [5 DIY indoor gross motor activities for preschoolers & toddlers | fun indoor engaging activities - Bing video](#)

I. Physical Development

Cleaning Together

Turn cleaning a surface into a game. Give your child a clean, almost-dry sponge and ask him/her to help you wipe off a surface you're cleaning. Ask your child to wipe it clean in long lines from top to bottom. Then try making a zigzag. Then circles. See what he/she thinks of too!

Brainy Background

Doing "grown-up work" can make your child feel very proud of himself/herself and his/her accomplishments. In addition, your child is learning how to take care of the things in his/her life and is also learning new words too!

Two Year Olds

Check out www.vroom.org for more brain building tips. You can find tips that are aligned with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards at [Division of Early Learning - Early Learning and Developmental Standards \(floridaearlylearning.com\)](#).

Vroom was developed by the Bezos Family Foundation and is based on brain development research. It offers free daily tips for families to use with their young children that will turn everyday moments into "brain building moments" by connecting the tips to a family's daily routines and activities.



4 things families can do with these resources:

1. Read through the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards and use them as a guide to observe their child's Gross Motor Development.
2. Read the entire article, *Building Gross Motor Skills and Why It Matters*, and incorporate some of the suggested activities at home.
3. Watch the suggested videos that support gross motor development with their child and enjoy some activities together.
4. Download the Vroom app to receive daily brain building tips on their smartphone, tablet or computer.

4 things providers can do with these resources:

1. Share the Gross Motor Development Resources with families.
2. Use the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards Physical Development domain to structure gross motor development opportunities.
3. Have teachers use the Vroom tips for the Physical Development domain to increase brain building opportunities throughout the school day.
4. Ensure that teachers understand the types of gross motor development as described in the article *Gross Motor Skills Development Timeline and Progression*.

4 things early learning coalitions can do with these resources:

1. Share the Gross Motor Development resources with providers through newsletters or at provider meetings.
2. Host a family workshop or training on the importance of Gross Motor Development utilizing these resources.
3. Share Vroom tips that are aligned with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards Physical Development domain throughout the year.
4. Using a television or monitor, play videos that promote gross motor development on a loop while families are in the office.

