



**BELS**  
Barnet Education  
& Learning Service



# MOTOR SKILLS TOOLKIT



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# How to use this toolkit

- The aim of the kit is to provide individuals with a range of fun activities which will hopefully improve their fine motor skills. These skills are crucial for achieving independence and participating in activities of daily living. Before using the kit it is important to remember that the individual you will be working with may have other underlying difficulties, which may have to be addressed before you consider focusing on their fine motor skills.
- As highlighted in the 'Introduction to fine motor skills', children are required to master a variety of skills before their fine motor skills can be refined with increasing dexterity and precision. If the individual you are working with has not developed the necessary prerequisite skills, they will struggle to make any progress with their fine motor skills. Please also consider the following:
  - Does the child have good shoulder and hip stability? If you are unsure, look and see how they sit. Do they W sit on the floor? Do they wrap themselves around their chair? Do they slouch/ lay across their desk? Do they lean on walls or other objects? Good core/ proximal stability is a requirement for good balance. If the child is struggling to sit upright they will have great difficulty working at a table/desk to carry out activities.
  - Can the child cross midline?
  - Do they have good hand-eye co-ordination?
  - If a child has poor core stability or a specific coordination problem, or both, then input from an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist should be sought, as this will have to be addressed before you can begin to look at developing fine motor skills.

# Fine Motor Skills



### What are Fine Motor Skills?



#### Definition:

This is the ability to use the smaller muscles in the body for **precise tasks**, such as writing, drawing, sewing, using scissors, tying shoe laces, etc.

Many school activities involve developing fine motor skills.

# Fine motor skills

## Introduction

The activities suggested are general ones that can be used to develop fine motor skills for most pupils in a class. However, some pupils may need a much more specific programme of activities. Occupational therapist and physiotherapist will need to assess individual needs in some case cases and advise on particular fine motor activities to address their specific difficulties.

Children with difficulties in this area may have:

- Poor eye-hand coordination
- Poor manipulative skills
- Immature drawing skills
- Poor handwriting and presentation skills
- Some perceptual difficulties
- Good auditory memory skills
- Confidence as speakers and listeners
- Good verbal comprehension skills
- Some strengths in verbal and non-verbal reasoning
- Enjoyment in using multi-sensory strategies when learning



# Fine motor skills

## Assessment of Fine Motor Skills

### SCORES

Child's name:	
Assessor's name:	
Date:	
Child's preferred hand for fine motor tasks:	

To establish a baseline for each child, rate your perception of their skills before and after completing advice given.

In order for the scores to be consistent it is recommended that the same person scores the child both times, using this five-point scale:

- 1 – unable;**
- 2 - poor;**
- 3 - satisfactory;**
- 4 – good;**
- 5 – excellent.**

ACTIVITY	EXAMPLES OF SKILLS REQUIRED	Baseline Date:	Evaluation Date:
<b>Pencil grip</b>	Uses a tripod grip to hold pencil/pen correctly, uses appropriate amount of pressure on paper.		
<b>Copying shapes</b>	Copies age-appropriate shapes accurately.		
<b>Scissors skills</b>	Holds scissors correctly and uses a snipping action.		
<b>Sitting posture</b>	Sits with bottom at back of the seat with a straight back and feet flat on the floor (without reminding)		
<b>Manual dexterity</b>	Ability to use pincer grip e.g. can pick up and manipulate small objects such as beads. Demonstrates accuracy when gluing/sticking		
<b>Cutlery skills</b>	Can use a fork and a spoon or knife in opposing hands in a coordinated manner, positioning fingers correctly		
<b>Colouring skills</b>	Ability to colour within the lines of a picture, with even coverage.		
<b>Dressing skills</b>	Puts on own shoes and socks. can fasten and un-fasten buttons and zips		
<b>Attention/ concentration</b>	Demonstrates good listening skills, can sustain concentration throughout the activity in progress. Able to follow age-appropriate instructions		
<b>Confidence and self esteem.</b>	Ability to ask for help when needed, confidence to attempt tasks, communicates well with peers.		

# Fine motor skills

## Activities to develop Fine Motor Skills

Maze and tracking activities

Create shapes and patterns using free pencil movement

Tracing

Line links (eg. Mouse to cheese)

Dot to dot

Sorting- sort small objects (eg. Paper clips, buttons) to encourage precise finger movements.

Role play: dressing up (involves the use of clothing fasteners like zips, buttons, etc)

Role play: finger puppets and string puppets





# Fine motor skills

## Activities to develop Fine Motor Skills

Puzzles- complete puzzles of varying degrees of difficulty.



Copy writing patterns using coloured sand, chalk and other media; trace or copy patterns for display

Jacks or marbles- play games that can help with fine movement control

Colour in using different media

Model with clay and play dough

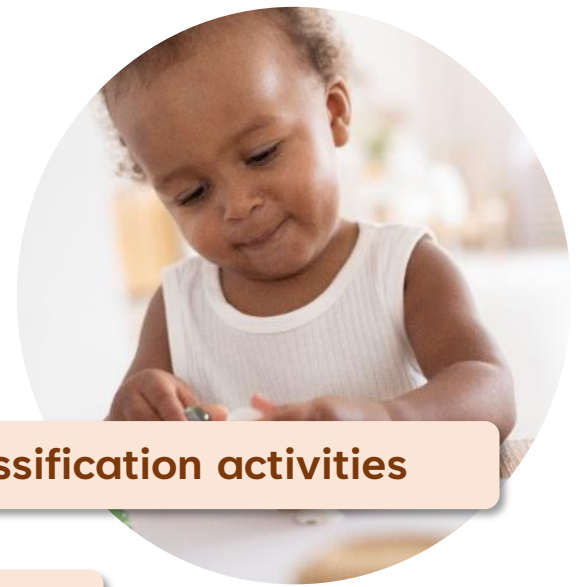
Paint and print using different size brushes and different types of materials

Patterns- copy patterns using beads, peg boards and shapes; investigate tessellating shapes.



# Fine motor skills

## Activities to develop Fine Motor Skills



Cut and paste for patterns, pictures, projects scrapbooks, classification activities

Sewing activities

Design & Technology: Open-ended activities using a range of tools and media

Design & Technology: Open-ended activities using given construction apparatus

Computer-aided picture and design activities- use graphics programs and encourage use of different features

Musical instruments- use precise finger movement to play an instrument (eg. a recorder)



# Strategies

## Fine motor skills

### Classroom strategies

- Use these checklists to identify strategies and equipment to try in the classroom.

### Seating

Difficulty	Equipment/Strategy	Period of trial	Successful? Yes/No
Chair too high	Foot-step		
Chair too high/ Table too high	Lower table/ add seat cushion and foot-step		
Child slouching	Writing slope and seat wedge		
Child sitting sideways	Seat wedge		
Child raises shoulders when writing	Writing slope		



# Fine motor skills

## Pencil Skills

Difficulty	Equipment/Strategy	Period of trial	Successful? Yes/No
Hooking wrist while writing	Writing slope Practice writing on vertical surface Shoulder stability exercises		
Thumb-wrap or closed web space when writing	Pencil grip Tripod/pincer grip exercises		
Difficulties with tripod grip	Pencil grip Tripod/pincer grip exercises		
Presses too hard	Pencil grip Light-up pen Experiment with carbon paper Writing slope		
Doesn't press hard enough	Experiment with carbon paper		
Paper moves when writing	Prompt to stabilise with other hand Use Dycem mat/ blutak		
Difficulty stabilising ruler	Left-handers: draw line from right to left Ruler with handle / non-slip ruler Coat base of ruler with thin layer of silicone bathroom sealant		

# Fine motor skills

## Pencil Grip

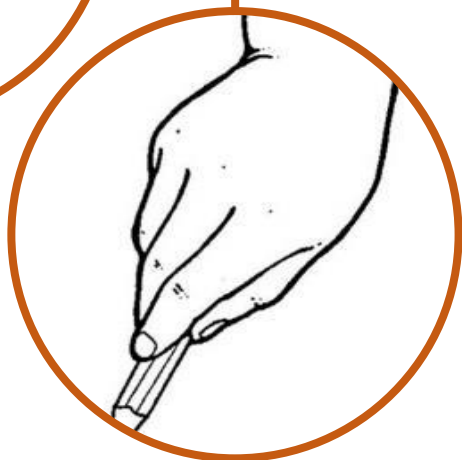
### CYLINDRICAL GRASP

1 – 1.5 Years



### DIGITAL GRASP

2-3 Years



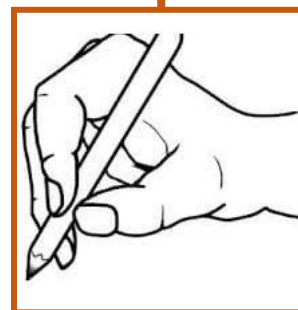
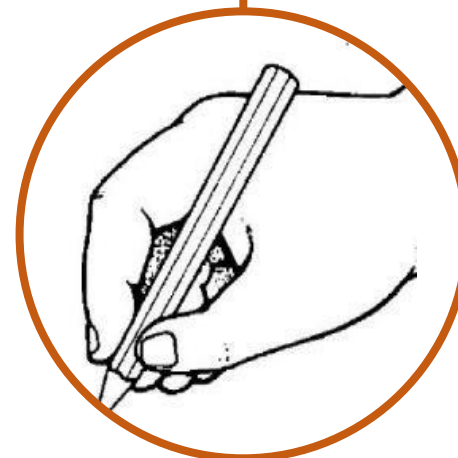
### MODIFIED TRIPOD GRASP

3.5 – 4 Years



### TRIPOD GRASP

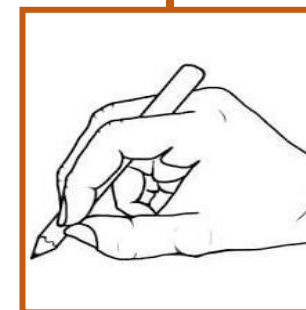
4.5 – 7 Years



DYNAMIC  
TRIPOD



LATERAL  
TRIPOD



ADAPTED  
TRIPOD



# Fine motor skills

## Pencil Grip

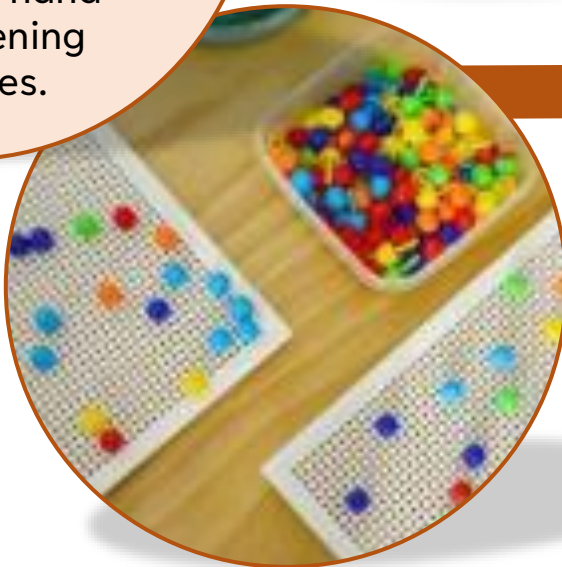
Fine motor activities that help to develop an appropriate pencil grip include threading, pegboards, craft activities, hand strengthening activities.



Use tiny, short crayons for drawing.



Encourage the child to rest their arm down on the table when drawing



## Fine motor skills

# Assessment of Fine Motor Skills

## Cutting and Scissor Skills

Difficulty	Equipment/Strategy	Comments from observation
Scissor Grip and posture when cutting	Left or Right-handed scissors Elbows in Hand over hand guidance	
Opening and closing scissors	Easy grip Long grip	
Cutting skills	Adapted cutlery	
Zips, buttons and laces	Skilled hand use	



# Fine motor skills

## Scissor skills

(starting with straight lines such as a triangle, square or rectangle and moving to curved lines such as in a circle)



Child can co-ordinate the lateral movements

Child cuts forward in a straight line

Child cuts out simple geometric shapes

Child cuts out simple figure shapes

Child cuts out complex figure shapes

(e.g. around a house or a flower)

(e.g. can cut within a path without straying outside)

# Fine Motor Weakness

# Fine Motor Weakness



- Fine motor skills are connected to the **small muscles** of the body that enables writing, holding small objects and fastening clothes with zips and buttons.
- Fine motor skills involve **strength, control and dexterity mainly of the hands**. It is also used in co-ordination with eyes, mouth hands and feet. Like wriggling your toes, sticking out your tongue, and flexing your fingers.
- **Learning and living skills**  
A weakness in the small muscles of the hands, can seriously affect a child's ability to eat by themselves, write, use a computer, and turn pages in a book and perform personal grooming tasks, like brushing hair and teeth. So as you can see, **dexterity of the small muscles** are most important for school [activities](#) and everyday life in general.
- **Fine motor weakness**  
If the child's has motor weakness it may be affecting their school work, discuss this with teachers, to determine if this may be causing a problem. The child may have to be evaluated by a [physical therapist](#) and/or an [occupational therapist](#) to determine if his/her motor skills or small muscle control are of concern. **Therapy can improve this weakness considerably.**
- The child's schoolteacher will use the therapists' assessments to determine if the child needs regular therapy. The school will then also incorporate the therapy activities into his/her everyday work, thereby **increasing the effectiveness of the therapy.**

# Developing Fine Motor Skills Activities



- Always encourage and motivate the child with plenty of positive feedback and praise for his/her efforts, especially when he/she has mastered a skill. We all need to improve our weaknesses to an acceptable standard, compensate where we have to, and enjoy our strengths and talents.
- No one is good at everything. When you have a special needs child, it is important to find the right stimulating activities to help the child develop an area that he/she has potential in. Do not over stimulate the child or force them to do activities that they do not enjoy. This is counter productive and will demotivate the adult and the child.
- Have fun, fun and then some more fun!!!
- Learning and practising skills without even knowing it, is what it's all about.
- The following pages show some activities for your child to develop fine motor skills. You can adapt them to his/her abilities and expand on them as the child gets older.



# Fine motor skills

## Activities



Drawing and colouring with crayons, markers, coloured pencils and chalk are good for promoting exercises of the small muscles in the hands.

Make a scratch pad by colouring a piece of cardboard with different coloured wax crayons. Paint a layer of black paint onto. When it is dry, use an orange stick to scratch pictures onto the black and see the crayon colour come through.

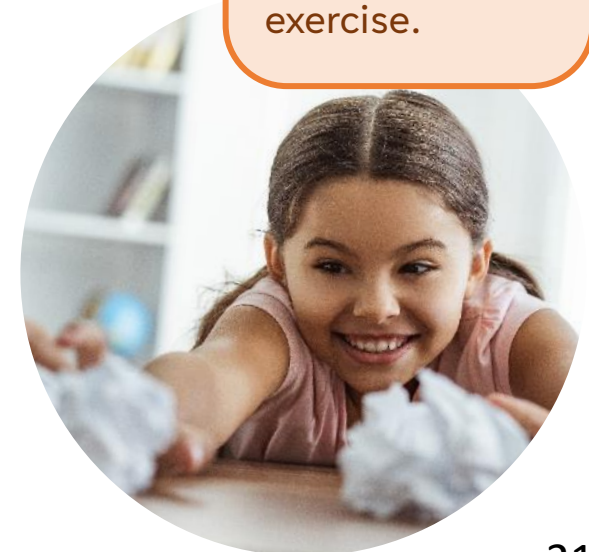


Use bath time to exercise motor skills, by playing with bath crayon soap, shaving cream on the side of the bath, letting your child draw pictures in the foam.

Manipulating play dough, strengthens the hand muscles and teaches controlled movement.



Folding, tearing and scrunching paper, a good strengthening exercise.



# Fine motor skills

## Activities



Jenga is a strategy game that uses fine motor skills focusing on the pincher grip which is used in writing.

Cutting with scissors, use different thicknesses of paper, and start by cutting out simple shapes eventually moving to intricate patterns, like snowflakes.



Threading beads and lacing activities.



Picking up small objects like beads with wooden pegs.



Remote control cars, manipulating the remote controls not only develops hand and finger control, but helps with hand-eye co-ordination as well.

Playing with finger puppets.



# **Fine motor skills for children with physical difficulties**

## Fine motor skills

# Fine motor skills for children with physical difficulties

- Children with physical difficulties can still develop fine motor skills with appropriate activities tailored to their needs and abilities.
- Each child is unique, so it's important to observe their abilities and preferences closely. Tailor activities to their specific needs, and always provide positive reinforcement and encouragement to boost their confidence and motivation.



# Fine motor skills

## Adaptive strategies & activities



### 01 Adapted Art Supplies

Provide larger grips for crayons and brushes or consider adaptive devices like easy-grip scissors designed for children with limited hand strength.

### 02 Sensory Bins

Create sensory bins filled with various textures like rice, beans, or sand. Children can explore these textures with their hands, enhancing sensory perception and fine motor skills.

### 03 Switch-Adapted Toys

Use toys that can be operated with switches, allowing children to practice fine motor movements within their range of motion.

### 04 Assistive Technology

Introduce touchscreen devices with specialized apps designed for children with disabilities. These apps often include games and activities tailored to improve fine motor skills.

### 05 Hand Strengthening Exercises:

Utilize squeezable balls, putty, or therapy bands to help strengthen hand muscles. Simple exercises like squeezing a stress ball can be beneficial.

### 06 Adaptive Playdough Tools

Offer adaptive playdough tools with larger handles, making it easier for children to mould and create shapes



# Fine motor skills

## Adaptive strategies & activities



### 07 Velcro and Fabric Activities

Use Velcro strips and fabric boards to create interactive activities. Children can attach and detach items, enhancing hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills

### 08 Adapted scissors

Consider adaptive scissors with spring-loaded handles or self-opening features, allowing children to engage in cutting activities more easily.

### 09 Customised puzzles

Create puzzles with larger, easy-to-grasp pieces. You can also adapt puzzles by adding textures or auditory cues to assist in solving.

### 10 Hand-over-Hand Activities

Engage in activities where an adult guides the child's hand to perform tasks, providing physical support and facilitating fine motor movements

### 11 Adaptive Keyboard and Mouse

For computer-based activities, use adaptive keyboards and mice designed for individuals with limited motor skills.

### 12 Modified Writing Tools

Explore writing tools with built-up grips or adaptive devices like stabilizing braces to assist children in holding pens and pencils.

### 13 Encourage Independence

Provide opportunities for self-care activities like buttoning shirts, zipping jackets, or using utensils during meals. Encouraging independence fosters confidence and further develops fine motor skills



# Fine motor skills for all

# Fine motor skills

## Fine Motor Skills for all

Developing fine motor skills in children is essential for children's overall growth and independence. Here's a few ideas you can consider to help children enhance their fine motor skills

Building with blocks helps improve hand-eye coordination, grasp, and manipulation skills.



Playdough activities encourage squeezing, rolling, and shaping, enhancing hand strength and coordination

Jigsaw puzzles aid in developing problem-solving skills and precise finger movements.



Art supplies: Crayons, markers, and child-safe scissors promote hand strength and control while enhancing creativity.

Threading beads onto strings or wires refines hand-eye coordination and finger dexterity.

Lego and Construction Sets: These toys improve fine motor skills through connecting and disconnecting small parts.

Pegboards: Using pegs and boards helps children practice precise hand movements and improves grip strength

# Fine motor skills

## Fine Motor Skills for all



**Scissor Skills Worksheets:** These worksheets provide cutting exercises to enhance scissor control and hand coordination.

Engaging in finger painting activities enhances sensory experiences and fine motor skills.

Utilize tools like tweezers, tongs, and pipettes to transfer small objects, enhancing finger control and grip

Toys with buttons, zippers, and snaps teach children essential dressing skills while improving finger strength.

**Theraputty or Therapy Balls:** These items provide resistance exercises, improving hand and finger strength

Simple cooking tasks like stirring, pouring, and kneading dough enhance hand-eye coordination and grip strength

Instruments like piano, drums, or xylophone encourage precise finger movements and hand coordination

Activities like digging in sand, playing with water, and using chalk develop hand muscles and coordination.

Remember, the key is to make these activities enjoyable for children, ensuring they engage in them willingly while honing their fine motor skills.



# Activities

## Fine motor skills

### Using an index finger to poke and probe

I am learning to isolate my index finger to poke, probe or feel objects. This helps prepare me for pointing and using my finger and thumb in position to pick up tiny objects such as Cheerios. It is important for me to have experiences poking with my left and right index fingers.

#### Ideas to help



Place different textures on the bottom of egg carton sections to encourage me to feel them with my index finger.

Let me try pushing buttons to “make something happen”

e.g. the button on a busy box, a doorbell, an elevator button or keys on a piano.

Let me explore the holes of a pegboard, Chinese checkerboard or telephone dials.

Show me how to poke little marble sized balls of playdoh placed in the bottom of egg carton sections.

Name the facial parts on my dolls & stuffed animals as you encourage me to touch the eyes, nose and mouth with my index finger.

Textures could include: a cotton ball, a Cheerio, a piece of felt, a ball of aluminium foil, a lego brick



## Fine motor skills

### Picking up tiny objects using a pincer grasp

I am learning to pick up tiny objects with my index finger and thumb. At this stage my finger and thumb are held in opposition to each other, which helps me to pick up tiny things more precisely without needing to rest my forearm on the table. This mature grasp is often termed a “neat pincer grasp”.

#### Ideas to help



Provide many opportunities for me to practice picking up small or thin objects.

e.g. give me only one or two Cheerios, at a time to pick up rather than a whole handful.

Provide only one or two tiny things for me to pick up at a time rather than several; I am more likely to use my whole hand if there are several things

Let me pull a tissue from a tissue box, a straw from a carry-out drink lid, or thin pegs from a board

Place tiny objects in sections of an empty egg carton for me to pick up e.g. Cheerios, cotton balls.

Suggestions include: shoestrings, yarn, pegs, strings on my pull toys, bits of food and dry cereal, straws, spoon handles.

## Fine motor skills

### Activities to help with hand and arm skills



Encourage me to build a tower with blocks

You start the tower then encourage me to add more on; count the blocks with me

Find other materials for me to stack. E.g. books, butter tubs and cereal boxes.

Encourage me to play using both hands together

Get me to hold and hit a drum or you can place the drum on the floor.

Encourage me to place and remove shapes into shape sorters

Encourage me to push and pull apart large Lego blocks

Encourage me to put my toys out of the box and put back into a noisy tin or Tupperware.

Remember to give lots of encouragement and praise and that I will may need you to show me what to do before I try. Use lots of songs and funny silly noises when encouraging me to drop toys into containers or take them out.

## Fine motor skills

### Activities to help with hand and arm skills

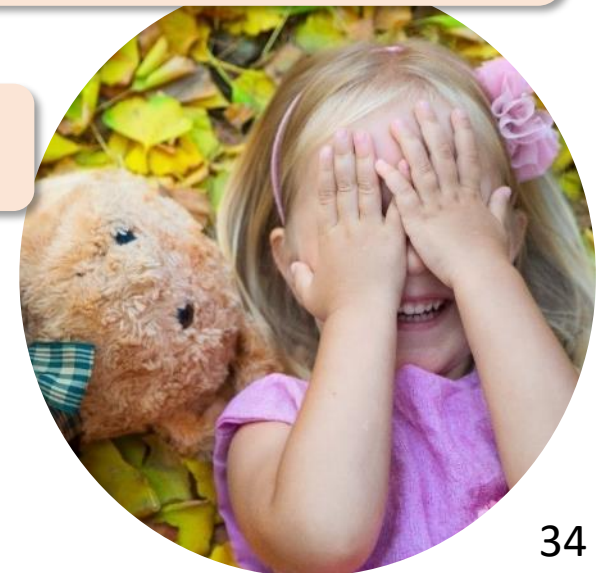
Encourage me to play "Peek-a-boo!"

Place a thin see through scarf over my head and encourage me to reach up with both hands to pull it off my head. If I get afraid, quickly remove the scarf and say with a smile "Here I am"



Place a scarf over my head and help me to pull it off, talk to me to reassure me that you are behind the scarf.

Play peek-a-boo with my favourite toy.



Encourage me to put my toys out of the box and put back into a noisy tin or Tupperware.

## Fine motor skills

# Activities to help with Visual Tracking



Attract my attention to an interesting object/toy and then move it slowly in an arc horizontally across my line of vision to-ward my other side. See how far I can follow it with my eyes!

Move the object slowly and smoothly just ahead of but in line with my eye and head movements.

If I lose track of the object wait to let me catch up with you or bring it back to where I am looking and try again.

Let me practice tracking in each direction: after I have followed an object from left to right side, see if I'll follow it back to left.



### Fun things for me to track

- Your face when you are talking or making a silly face
- A red ball
- A small torch or penlight covered with red tissue paper
- A toy dangling from a string or a mirror toy.

Use sound toys to attract my attention during tracking games. Encourage me to track my beaker/bottle for a moment before giving it to me.

### Hide toys

Hide a toy under a scarf, cushion and encourage me to find it.

Initially only partially hide the toy and then when I get better at finding the toy hide all of it.

**Visual tracking means for me to follow a moving target with my eyes, it helps me to improve and practice my eye-hand co-ordination.**

# Fine motor skills

## Proprioception

Before starting the vestibular activities or the messy play try some of the following activities to help me gain a better understanding of where my body is in space.

Encourage me to have time on my tummy



Use firm pressure contact whenever you touch me - avoid light touch





## Fine motor skills

### Vestibular Movement / Activities



When I am sitting on the floor hold my hands and sing row, row, row the boat while rocking me forward and backward.

You can place me between your legs for added security.



# Fine motor skills

## Messy Play ideas



### Sensory Play and Messy Play

Put together a sensory “box” – rice or sand work well.

Then place various items in the box and encourage him to feel in the box to retrieve items

### Grading Experiences

Place approximately 1/2 cup of paint (or shaving foam) in a ziplock bag, remove air and seal.

Work the paint around until it fills the bag. Have him make lines, shapes or letters by moving his finger along the outside of bag.

Once he determines that this feels safe and comfortable doing this, gradually progress to hands-on version – e.g. finger painting on paper or in a trough



### Water Play

Fill a container with water up to the mid-line and put inside small floating objects (e.g. ice moulds, fish toys, etc.).

Have him use his hands to catch the objects and take them out of the water.

### Finger painting

Using washable or finger paint in various colours, help him to dip the tip of his thumb into one colour and press his thumb onto the paper twice.

Thumbprints should be one next to the other. This will be the body of the turkey.

Then help him (hand over hand) to dip the tip of his index finger into another colour and add a row of fingerprints above the first ones.

This will be the feathers. Help him to add more rows of fingerprints (feathers) in different colours again.

Draw eyes and feet using markers or crayons.



## Fine motor skills

### More Messy Play ideas

Messy play is a really good way for me to develop my hand skills

You can use a tray, a builder's tray or an ice cream tub.

Provide me with active exploration of objects, starting with dry objects and slowly, gradually moving towards wet objects once well tolerated.

Hide toys in a box of lentils, chickpeas or pasta and help me to find them.

Use shaving foam or corn flour mixed with water and hide toys for me to find

Get me to place both hands in the foam or flour and draw lines and scribbles with my index finger.

During feeding time and outside feeding times, encourage messy play with cooked food, e.g., cooked pasta, mashed potatoes, mashed up banana, jelly, custard

We can do hand painting and hand prints together.





### Sensory preferences

- All people (both adults and children) have sensory preferences, which mean that we all like and dislike some things more than others.
- Children learn through exposure to a variety of different experiences.
- By having the opportunity to touch, smell, taste, listen, and move in different environments, children learn what they do and don't like and how to involve themselves in tasks that they may enjoy but find challenging.
- It is important for children to have opportunities to learn strategies to enable him to cope with these more challenging tasks.
- For example, your child may dislike having certain textures on his hands, but he may develop a strategy of using a damp cloth to quickly wipe his hands after playing in a sand pit or trough.

# Fine Motor Skills Games

# Fine motor skills games & activities

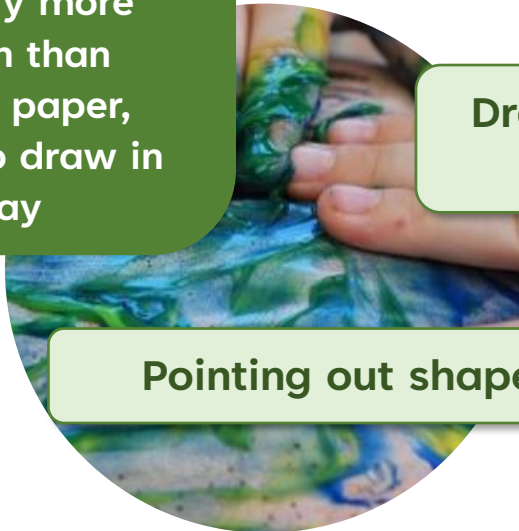
## Multi-Sensory drawing and mark making

Practicing shapes and patterns in different ways can help a child to feel the movement of lines and shapes. It is usually more motivating and fun than using a pencil and paper, see below ideas to draw in a multi-sensory way

Drawing on Magna doodle or an iPad



Forming shapes with playdough



Drawing with a finger in sand, salt, flour, rice, sugar, paint, and shaving foam.

Pointing out shapes in books and around the home and classroom

Try using a variety of mediums including, crayons, pens, chalk, and pencils.

Drawing on blackboard/whiteboard



## Fine motor skills games & activities

# Fine motor activities for children with cerebral palsy

## Introduction

- Often, children with Cerebral Palsy with diplegia (where legs are more affected than arms) or hemiplegia (where one side is more affected than the other side) will still have some difficulties with their fine motor skills in their 'non-affected' arms, so it is important to refine these skills as much as possible.
- If the child doesn't have good core stability, it is best to practice their fine motor activities in supportive seating – with any harness or supports in use. This will replace core stability to enable them to be as successful and enjoy the activity as much as possible.
- To develop good fine motor skills, a child needs good core stability and strength in their shoulders and arms . Strength further up the body provides a stable base for the hands. Without this strength and stability, the child will find it much harder to develop their fine motor skills.
- If the child doesn't have good core stability, it is best to practice their fine motor activities in supportive seating – with any harness or supports in use. This will replace core stability to enable them to be as successful and enjoy the activity as much as possible.
- Below we share great activities to help develop fine motor skills at home.



## Fine motor skills games & activities

# Fine motor activities for children with cerebral palsy



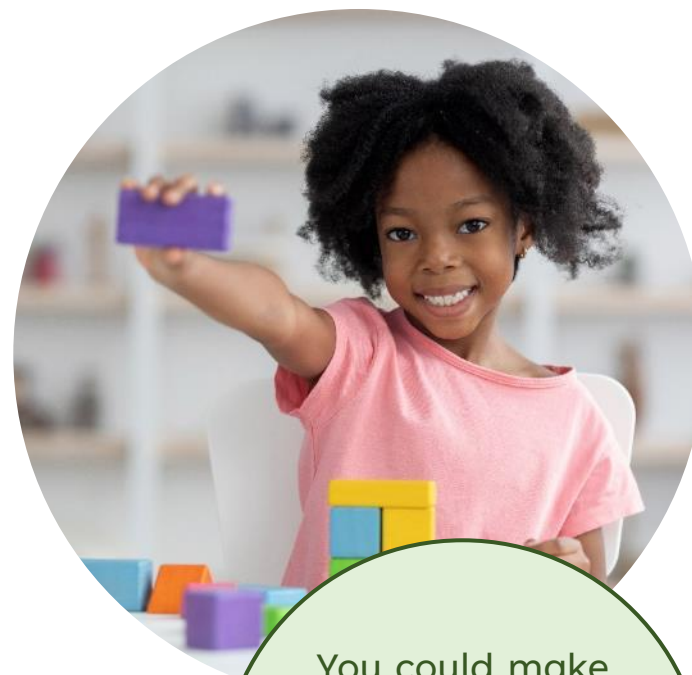
## How to prepare the child for these activities

- Before trying these exercises, take a minute to prepare the child – they will feel the benefit!
- To wake up their muscles, squeeze their hands, tips of their fingers and their arms. You could also use a brush along their skin, or a vibrating massager. All of these will increase your child's awareness of their body, helping them be more accurate and learn more effectively. It will also increase their enjoyment of the activity.
- You may want to give their hand, wrist and arm a stretch first to allow them to have the most movement possible with which to play.
- Make sure the child is successful in their game as this will motivate them to continue. As you push them to get to the next level, they should be able to manage a few of their attempts to stay motivated – even if they are not successful every time.
- Remember to praise the effort made rather than the result achieved. This motivates a child to keep putting in effort and not be put off if they don't succeed at first.

# Fine motor skills games & activities

## For children with cerebral palsy: Sorting Games

Lots of children enjoy sorting games. Start by organising larger toys – like cars or Duplo blocks – into different coloured piles.



Move onto sorting smaller items by type, shape or colour.

Try different pasta shapes, paper clips, pens and pencils, lego bricks or coins. If this works well try even smaller items.

This activity can be made more engaging by dyeing the food bright colours prior to play

Mixing different dried foods can work well: for example mixing rice with lentils and dried beans or chick peas.

To make this task more challenging, try offering a pair of tweezers to pick the items up – or suggest they use their less dominant hand.

Once your child has sorted their small objects, you can suggest an additional activity using the items they've sorted.

You could make this a little more challenging by creating a Laser Quest game in a box.

For example, they could make a necklace out of the tube pasta, or make a picture using glue and the dried food items. This will keep your child motivated to keep sorting and is another great way to work their fine motor skills.

# Fine motor skills games & activities

## For children with cerebral palsy: Drawing Games

Drawing can be practiced with a hand, finger or with an implement.

Start your child drawing with their fingers or hands. This could be during messy play (e.g. in sand or shaving foam) or using a tablet.

To show them the way, you could draw a line for them to copy or follow in the path you have made.

To begin with any grip is fine, as holding the grasp as well as keeping pressure can be a great challenge in itself

Move on to trying drawing with implements. Large pieces of chalk or crayons need less fine motor skills than smaller implements.

To begin with, encourage any kind of mark making on the page or on a chalk board. As their skills develop, encourage them to draw lines: up and down, side to side or diagonal. Curved lines are more complicated, with circles being the most tricky drawing movement.

Ikea have inexpensive laptop supports that work really well for this.

It's also usually easier to make marks on an angled surface. You can rest or stick paper onto a lever arch file, or prop a board onto something to tilt it.

As your child improves, move on to thinner crayons or pens.

Here's a helpful tip to help your child hold a pen: take a regular clothes peg and clip it round the end of the pen. If this looks comfortable for them, your child can now be helped to hold across the peg and with their index finger around the other side of the pen.



# Fine motor skills games & activities

## For children with cerebral palsy: Musical Instruments

Music is a motivating way to improve fine motor skills, and there are lots of options depending on skill level

Your child can just use their hand to hit a keyboard or a drum as an easy way to get some cause and effect without needing high levels of fine motor skill

The next step of difficulty is to use a hand-held implement in to make music.

Using a stick to hit a drum or shaking a rattle or tambourine are all good ways to practice grasping

Practice pressing a keyboard key with this finger, pressing buttons on musical toys or using the pointing finger for games on a tablet.

Fine motor skills can be further refined by just using the index (pointing) finger.

If you don't have any instruments at home you can make your own using objects in the home.

A wooden spoon and upside down saucepan can become a drum and drumstick, a plastic bottle with some rice in it becomes a shaker.





# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine motor activities for children with cerebral palsy

### Posting games



Start with putting soft toys or rolling large balls into an open container. Use brightly coloured containers such as a bright pink stain remover tub.

If you don't have a shape sorter, cut a circular hole in the lid of a plastic pot and post small objects.

Progress to smaller toys into a smaller container. You could combine this with a matching game, like putting the red objects into the red container.

Shape sorter games are fantastic for working fine motor skills.

As your child gets more accurate, cut smaller circles or slits and post smaller objects such as coins, pebbles or buttons.

or items with metal bases to give "noisy" feedback e.g. hot choc tub or Pringles tube

You could cut different sizes of slits for different sizes of objects so they have to work out sizes as they post.



# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine motor activities for children with cerebral palsy

### Threading & Lacing games



Start with threading pipe cleaner through the holes of a colander. Your child could make lines across to make a bridge for their cars.

You could also stick a piece of uncooked spaghetti in some play-dough or blue tack on the table so it is sticking right up. Your child could then thread tube pasta onto the spaghetti

Or try making necklaces with laces and tube pasta

As their skills improve, use laces (with the taped end) to thread paper. Use a hole punch to make holes along the edge of a piece of card.

As they improve, use string, or ribbon or even some thread on a needle for threading games.

Or keep to the side of the colander and just go freestyle and make some lovely patterns

They could add colour to a basket by adding ribbon through the holes, have fun re-lacing the shoes in your house or cut some straws into small tubes to lace into a necklace



# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine motor activities for children with cerebral palsy

### Puzzles



Puzzles with pegs on them are often the best place to start if children don't have full fine motor control.

Move onto regular flat puzzles as skills improve.

Use smaller pieces as skills improve

If you don't have puzzles at home, find a pretty page from a magazine and cut it into a few pieces. Your child can piece the pieces back together.

Puzzles are lovely for making children match up shapes and work their fine motor skills. Some children will try to use force instead of turning the puzzle piece to make it fit so start with easy puzzles where they can be more successful to teach them about turning the puzzle piece (or turning the board if they can't turn their hand as well).

# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine motor activities for children with cerebral palsy

### Building Blocks

Building towers requires a steady hand and precision in placement of the next block

They can build all sorts of scenes and structures with building toys and piecing the pieces together is great for their fine motor skills.



Start with bigger objects to stack, such as cushions and pillows, books or empty cans.

As they get more accurate, try smaller stacking such as coins, Lego, or blocks.

If they get really good, try to challenge them to find things to stack – use flat pebbles, cars, or soft toys

Another great thing with this game is that they get to knock it all down at the end!

This works well as a 2 handed activity – great for bringing in a weaker hand

# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine motor activities for children with cerebral palsy

### Playing with Dough

If you don't have play-dough there are plenty of different ways to make dough at home

Kneading the dough, rolling it with a rolling pin, squashing dough balls, squeezing it through their fingers, pushing items into the dough

Make the dough with the child for an extra opportunity to strengthen hands and fingers

You can also put different objects into dough or other soft play mixtures – things they need to find or things to play with e.g. cars or plastic animals/ dinosaurs/ figurines.

Hiding marbles in your play-dough will work their manipulation skills brilliantly.

With a full hand or with a pointing finger – these are all great ways to work your child's fine motor and hand skills



# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine Motor Skills by age: 3-6 Postural Control and muscle strength



Shoulder spirals. The child holds both their arms out to the side and begins to circle them, initially making small circles and gradually getting larger and larger, then returning to small circles. Movements should be controlled, don't encourage your child to go too fast.

Jumping and hopping activities e.g. hopscotch and jumping around stepping-stones.



Completing tasks in high kneeling position works on balance, core, posture, and body stability. Encourage your child to kneel in this position as often as possible e.g. when watching TV, playing play station, throwing catching beans bags/balls

Weight-bearing through the arms and shoulders - swinging between monkey bars or trapezes, or wheelbarrow walking, crab-walking, bear-walking.



Drawing on a blackboard, easel or paper on the wall or any vertical surface to increase shoulder stability.

Exercise ball games, sitting and bouncing on large exercise, peanut, or traditional therapy ball. Also pushing and pulling games, like tug of war or push of war





# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Pencil grip ages 3-6



Try to encourage your child to use short and thick crayons/pencils for drawing and writing.

The smaller the pencil or crayon the less scope they have to hold it incorrectly.

It might be helpful to place a material like blue tack, stickers or use a plastic pencil grip at the top of the pencil to help the child to know where to place their fingers.

Show the child how to hold the pencil correctly. Demonstrate how to use the pencil correctly.

Drawing on vertical or upright surfaces such as an easel or page stuck on a wall/door.

This helps to promote good positioning of the wrist and fingers when holding a pencil.



# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine Motor Activities by age: 3-6

Try activities using both hands together for accuracy (e.g. Lego, threading beads).



Squirt bottles or cleaning spray bottles (fill them with water) helps to strengthen the thumb and index finger to promote pinch grip.

Popping bubble wrap helps to strengthen the finger muscles.

Make a collage by ripping paper and rolling between fingers and thumb.

Craft activities involving cutting, gluing and finger painting.

Kitchen tongs, OT tweezers/jumbo tweezers, clothes pegs can also develop the small muscles in the hand and strengthen the pincer grip. Encourage your child to pick up items like pom-poms with the utensil.



For strengthening hand muscles, use theraputty or Playdoh. Pinch, pull, roll, squeeze and cut to work these muscles.

Try rolling coins it can be a great activity to promote thumb stability and pinch.

Using a spoon to move beans or rice from one place to another.

Tasks such as turning the pages of a book encourage and promote finger manipulation.

Songs and rhymes involving hand and finger movements such as Incy Wincy Spider and Two Little Dicky Birds.





# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Cutting skills ages 3-6



If your child does not turn the page to make cutting easier, try to remind them both verbally and physically if needs be.

Make various shaped lines with thick/bold marker and ask your child to cut along these lines.

Start with straight lines, finally progressing to circles and wavy lines. After this, you can introduce more difficult shapes such as stars, and more detailed pictures.

As children improve their scissor skills reduce the line thickness until it is the width of a normal pencil line.



Especially at the beginning of scissor skills it is often easier for children to start off with cutting other materials such as soft playdough or theraputty. They can roll it into a snake and then encourage your child to cut it into smaller pieces.

Show the child how to hold the scissors correctly, hold your hand over their hand to help them (hand over hand). Remind and encourage the child to hold the page (nondominant hand) when cutting (dominant hand). Instead of cutting paper/card, cut other textures such as playdough. Roll it into a snake and encourage the child to cut it into smaller pieces.

Alternatively cut pieces off straws and push them into playdough to make a hedgehog.

# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine Motor Skills by age: 7-10: Postural Control and Muscle Strength



Shoulder spirals. The child holds both their arms out to the side and begins to circle them, initially making small circles and gradually getting larger and larger, then returning to small circles. Movements should be controlled - don't encourage your child to go too fast.

Drawing on a blackboard, easel or paper on the wall to increase shoulder stability. For older children, get them to draw large circles this can promote upper body strength especially in the arms



Weight-bearing through the arms and shoulders - swinging between monkey bars or trapezes. Pushing and pulling games, like tug of war or push of war and wrestling.



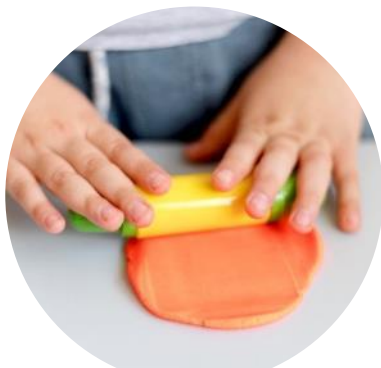
Superman / superwoman pose- how long can you last lifting your arms and legs off the ground while lying flat on your stomach.

If the child can do this easily encourage them to spiral backwards and then forwards. You could work on sequencing e.g. 5 seconds backwards or x5 backwards spirals and then x5 forwards etc.

# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine Motor Skills by age: 7-10

Leaning on one open hand on floor while working on a large picture, with sidewalk chalk, floor puzzle, or anything else that can be worked on while leaning over it on the floor.



Theraputty activities, rolling, pinching etc.

Place two pennies and two paper clips in palm of hand. Try to move one penny to fingertips and place on table without using other hand, then one paper clip and so on.



Playing musical instruments that require finger movements such as recorder, piano, or guitar

Computer games which require hand operated controls or keyboard skills.



Using OT/kitchen tongs or large tweezers (games include Operation OR Zoo sticks).



Make a collage by ripping paper and rolling between fingers and thumb.





# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine Motor Skills by age: 7-10

Use clothes pegs to pick up cotton balls or pom poms. If your child cannot use clothes pegs start with kitchen tongs, OT tweezers and then clothes pegs

Pencil walks and flip: hold a pencil as if you are going to write with it. Keeping the tripod position, walk your fingers up towards the eraser. When you get there, flip the pencil over without using other hand or a surface to brace it. Walk fingers back to the other end, still keeping the tripod position and repeat.



Using tools such as toy screwdriver or hammer will help to build upper body strength.

Popping bubble wrap, usually this is lying around and is normally what you receive parcels wrapped in or this can be bought. The bubble wrap comes in different sizes from very large bubbles to be popped too very small which are more difficult. Encourage your child to use thumb and index finger as this will help to build the strength in the fingers needed for handwriting.

### Cutting Skills

Ensure that the scissors being used is not blunt and it is an appropriate size for your child.

Encourage the child to position their thumb on the top of the scissors and the scissors to be at a 90° angle to the page.

Remind and encourage your child to turn the page to make the task easier.



# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Fine Motor Skills by age: 10+

### Creeping fingers

Ask the child to roll out the piece of fabric vertically in front of them. They can anchor the fabric at the end nearest to them with their hand. They can collect the fabric under their hand. It is important they keep the wrist as still as possible, using the fingers only. They can start off collecting the fabric using all fingers in a galloping motion and as they get better they can collect the fabric with individual fingers. You can use a towel like material or even toilet/kitchen roll.



### Thumb Scrunches

Ask the child or teenager to sit at a table with the fabric strip placed horizontally in front of them. Encourage them to use their dominant hand to complete this activity. The fingers should be used to secure or anchor the fabric. The idea is to scrunch up the fabric, collecting it under their hand whilst the thumb scrunches the fabric underneath the hand. If the child has plenty of strength in their dominant hand, they can try using their non-dominant hand. You can use a towel like material or even toilet/kitchen roll.



# Fine motor skills games & activities

## Marble Hide/Marble Drop

### Marble Hide

Place a few marbles on the table in front of the child or teenager. Ask them to pick up a marble using their thumb and index finger (finger next to thumb) and hide it in the palm of their hand (same hand). See how many marbles they can hide in the palm of their hand before they drop them. If you can, before they drop them, ask them to place the marbles one by one into a container, if this is too hard, they can place all the marbles into a container at the same time using the index finger and thumb.

### Marble Drop

Place a marble between the knuckles of each finger and ask your child/teenager to lift their hand off the table, without dropping the marbles. Once they can do this, ask them to drop each marble into a container one at a time. It would be best to start this activity with the dominant hand (writing hand).



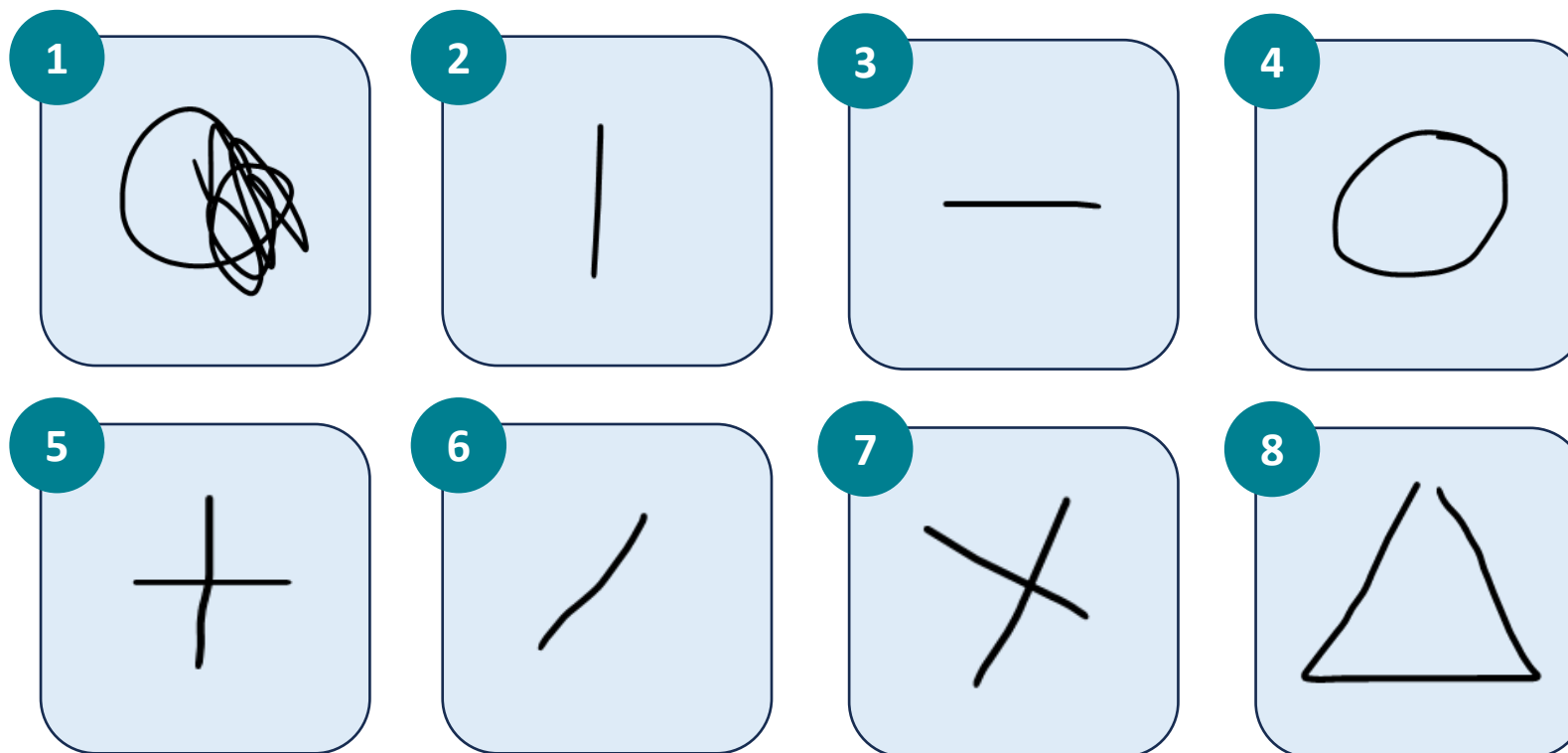


# Handwriting activities

# Handwriting activities

## Pre-writing shapes

A significant component of pre-writing skills are the pre-writing shapes. These are the pencil strokes that most letters and numbers and early drawings are comprised of. They are typically mastered in sequential order:



# Handwriting activities

## Writing letters



Imitation

Copying

Letter formation

It is important to think about where the pupil is developmentally, as pushing letter formation before a child is ready can lead to other issues such as:

- Disengagement, lack of motivation and a negative association with handwriting
- Bad handwriting habits and poor pencil grasp



# Handwriting activities

## Letter formation

Anti-clockwise  
letters

a c d e  
g o q

Clockwise letters

b h k  
m n p r

Straight letters

l j i t

Under arch  
letters

u y

Diagonal letters

v w x  
z

Curvy letters

f s



# Handwriting activities

## Letter formation

Another method of grouping letters comes from the Handwriting without Tears (Olsen) programme.

This programme recommends that capital letters should be taught before lower case as they are easier for children to learn.

### Frog jump capitals

F E D P  
B R N  
M

### Starting corner capitals

H K L  
U V W  
X Y Z

## Fluency of writing

In case of difficulty with fluency of writing, pre-writing patterns can be practiced. These should be performed in 'word' length sections.

Relaxing scribbles can help a pupil loosen up.

### Centre starters

C O Q  
G S A I  
T J



# Handwriting activities

## Typical pencil grasp development

### TYPICAL PENCIL GRASP DEVELOPMENT FOR HANDWRITING

10 Months  
Pincer Grasp



12-15 Months  
Palmar Supinate Grasp



2-3 Years  
Digital Pronate Grasp



3-4 Years  
Quadrupod Grasp



3-4 Years  
Static Tripod Grasp



5-6 Years  
Dynamic Tripod Grasp





# Handwriting activities

## Hand aerobics slide 1

Carrying out hand aerobics before carrying out fine motor activity i.e. drawing, writing, dressing and playing games etc. helps to prepare a child's hands for activity. The following exercises will increase tactile (touch) and proprioceptive (sensory awareness of a part of the body) sensory messages received from their hands, increasing the child's sensory awareness of what their hand muscles and joints are doing and what they are touching/ holding.

Briefly rub hands, palms together, then the back of each hand. If tolerated hand cream can be used.



Press hands and fingers together, squeeze then stretch fingers out wide. Repeat 5 times.



Hook fingers of both hands together and pull in opposite directions.



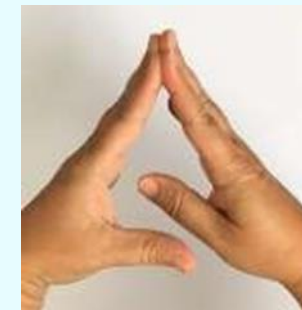
# Handwriting activities

## Hand aerobics slide 2

With palms together and fingers straight, press fingers together firmly. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, and then shake out the hands to relax fingers.



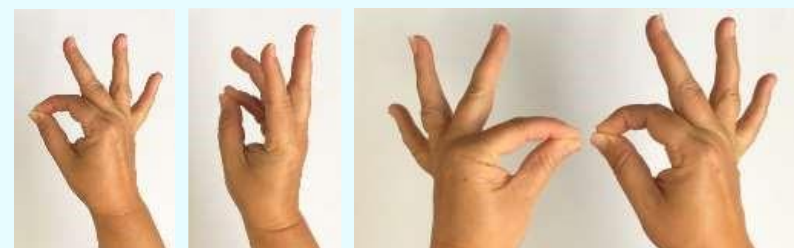
Place palms together, fingers straight, separate palms slightly, keeping fingertips touching. Rotate thumbs around each other, away from the body then towards body. Ten times each way



Put your hands on the table (palms down). Now copy your partner who is pretending to play the piano, by lifting one finger at a time from the table.



With hands separated, preferred hands first, ask the child to touch their thumb to each fingertip in turn, beginning with the index finger and back again. When mastered separately, carry out with both hands at the same time.



# Handwriting activities

## Hand strengthening activities

Throwing and catching balls

Use playdough or theraputty to pinch, squash and manipulate.

Using a rolling pin to make shapes

Baking: rolling dough, stirring ingredients, pushing chocolate chips/raisins into dough with fingers, rolling small pieces of dough in hands to make biscuits.

Using clothes pegs- place them around the edge of a cup, hang up clothes or on a clothesline, hang up pictures/photos along the string.

Using tweezers to pick up small items or to separate different coloured items e.g. large beads or pom poms

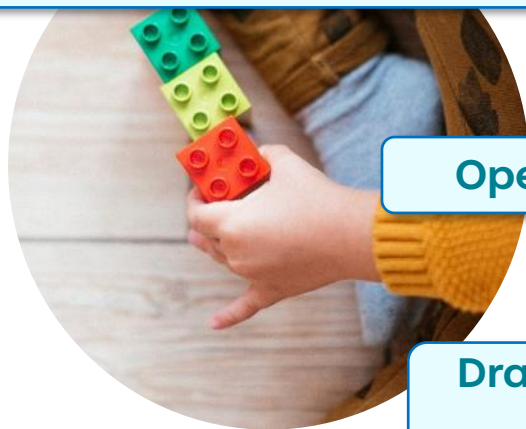
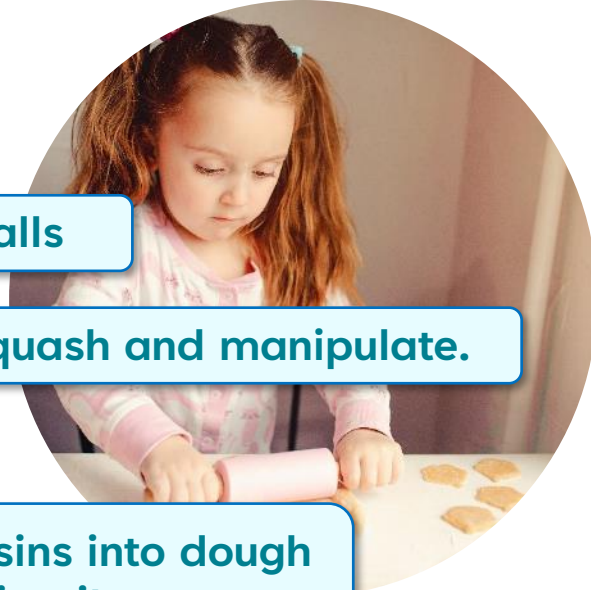
Building and pulling apart Lego or Duplo.

Opening jars and containers

Pouring liquid/sand/rice/sugar from one container to another

Drawing on an easel or paper stuck on a door at shoulder height or any vertical surface.

Playground equipment such as monkey bars or any climbing frame. Wheelbarrow/animal walks



# Hand Dominance

# Hand dominance

## Hand dominance overview



Hand dominance is needed for different tasks throughout the day, whether it is our writing, holding an object, cutting, and also brushing teeth.

Having a consistent hand preference or an established hand dominance is important as it allows us to do tasks more efficiently and skillfully.

Among the majority of kids, hand preference develops during their growth.

Typically you can see a child preferring one hand around the ages 2-4 years old. However, at this age, they may still swap between the two hands.

Hand dominance is often not fully established until 4-6 years old.



# Hand dominance

## Activities for hand dominance

### Bilateral Coordination Games



Colouring something on paper with a crayon can be done in a similar way

Pushing a toy train around the track: Holding the train with one hand and the track with the other

Opening the lid or closing the jar or a bottle.

Assembling nut-bolts

Writing on a paper: Holding the paper to set it firmly with one hand and using the other to hold the pencil and write.

Activities using play dough: Holding a piece of dough with one hand and cutting it into pieces with a scissor held by the other.



# Hand dominance

## Activities for hand dominance

### Bilateral Coordination Games

Games like Hokey Pokey, Simon Says or Twister

Sorting games like card games

Sitting on the sand and scooping sand from one side of the body and putting it onto the other side

Construction play: Moving blocks from one side of the body to the other side of the body

Play with sand and create "figure 8" in the sand



# Hand dominance

## Role of the other hand

Although we have focused on the importance of developing hand dominance, the use of the non-dominant hand plays an essential role in developing hand skills.

Most of the tasks include the involvement of both hands for completion. The simultaneous involvement of the right and left hands helps to improve efficiency.

To perform precision tasks, the activity of the dominant hand, along with the coordination of the non-dominant hand, can result in higher accuracy and efficiency.

Therefore, hand dominance and the use of the helper's hand are crucial in developing fine motor skills.

Essentially, both hands are equally required to perform together mainly. One hand is focusing on mastering the tool use, and the other one is available for assistance. It can be very difficult to complete tasks without the skill of both hands in their required roles.

The support from the non-dominant hand is very much demanding for achieving good control and strength. Thus, the assistance of a non-dominant hand is much required as it plays a vital role in hand skills.

While cutting paper into pieces, kids tend to hold the scissors with their dominant hand while the other hand helps by holding the paper. Therefore, the non-dominant hand plays a crucial role to improve hand skills. The non-dominant hand also keeps the paper in place when a child writes on it or practices handwriting.

- It is the non-dominant hand that supports the ruler while the dominant hand holds the writing utensils to draw a line.
- When opening a container, the dominance hand focuses on turning the lid while the helper hand holds onto the jar or container.

# Gross Motor Skills

# Gross motor skills

## What are Gross Motor Skills?

Gross motor skills are the movements of the large muscles of the body (legs, arms). These skills involve the coordinated effort of the large muscle groups. Pupils with some medical conditions have poor or delayed gross motor skills, which affects balance and motor planning. **Children with difficulties in this area may have:**

- The activities suggested are general ones that can be used to develop gross motor coordination for most pupils in the class.
- However, some pupils may need a much more specific programme of activities.
- Occupational therapists and physiotherapist will need to assess individual needs in some cases and advise on particular gross motor activities to address their specific difficulties.

Difficulty throwing and catching a ball

Balance problems when hopping and jumping

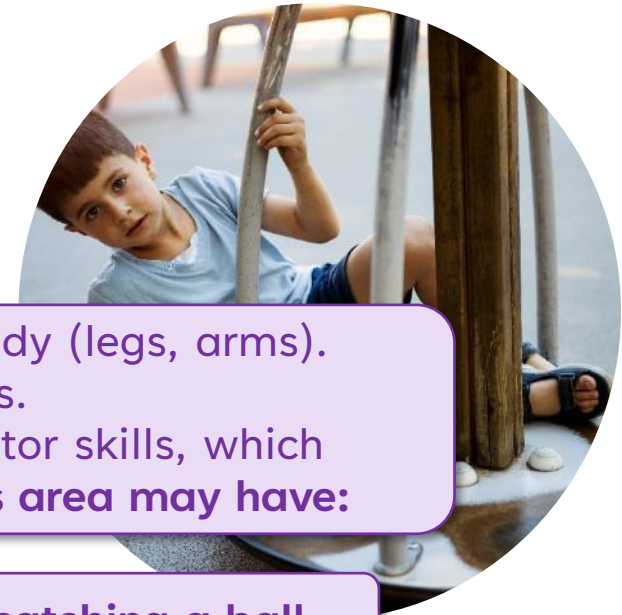
Balance problems when using apparatus in gymnastics

Low muscle tone

Balance problems when riding a bike

Confidence as speakers and listeners

Good verbal comprehension skills





# Gross motor skills

## Activities to develop Gross Motor Skills

### **Dodgems:**

Run around in different directions, dodging out of the way of each other. When the word 'change' is called out, change direction



### **Stepping Stones:**

Use small hoops as stepping stones; pupils to 'cross the water' by jumping from one to the other without falling in.

### **Parachute Games:**

Choose those games that use the large muscle movements; specific individual targets can be incorporated into the activity

### **Hopscotch:**

Pupils can jump to begin with until they are confident with hopping.



### **Stone Cold:**

Run around in different directions. Each pupil has a number (1 to 6); when their number is called out pupil must stand still until next number is called out.

### **Ball Games:**

A variety of paired or team games involving rolling, throwing, catching, kicking, dribbling...



# Gross motor skills

## Activities to develop Gross Motor Skills

### Climbing Activities:

Use a range of large apparatus (could use a long bench or even a straight line); specific individual targets can be incorporated into the activity



### Brain Gym:

Select activities involving the coordinated movement of some of the large muscles (dancing to a quick beat...) and try to cross the middle line of the body (right hand touches left side of the body and vice-versa)



### Bean Bag Activities:

paired and team games involving throwing (to each other or into a hoop) and balancing; specific individual targets can be incorporated into this activity

### Skipping Activities:

Individual, paired and group games (use groups with different names such as salt, pepper, vinegar, etc)



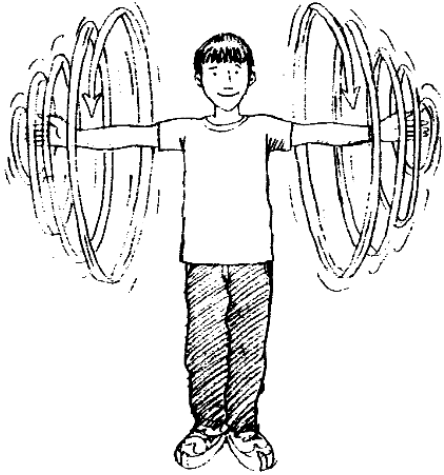
### Batting Games:

A variety of games involving the use of bats, sticks or rackets (rounders, tennis, cricket, football, hockey, etc...)



# Gross motor skills

## Warm up exercises



### Shoulder Spirals

Hold both arms out horizontally to the side and start to circle them, initially making small circles but gradually getting larger until the circles are as large as possible, (this should take about 5 rotations).

When the circles have reached full size, change direction and gradually reduce the circles, (again taking about 5 rotations) to get back to the smallest size.

Start by trying to complete 3 spiral sequences then gradually build up the number you can do. Aim to do 10 spiral sequences comfortably. This will help improve your stamina when writing.

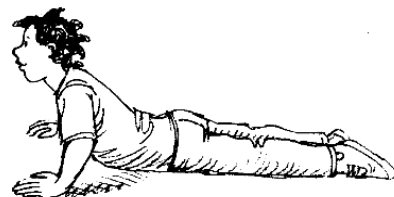
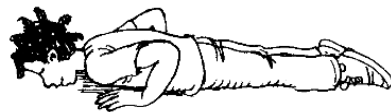
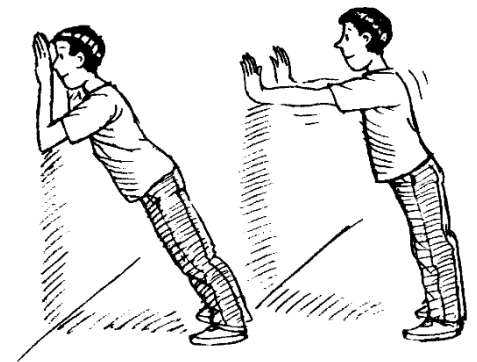
### Wall Press-ups

Stand facing a wall about one and a half arms length away from it.

Stretch your arms out in front (keeping them at shoulder level) to place your hands flat on the wall. Then bend your arms to try to bring your face to the wall, without moving your feet.

Keeping your body straight, straighten your arms, pushing yourself away from the wall.

Repeat 10 times.



### Half Push-ups

Lie face down on the floor and push your body up with your arms in the same way as a normal press-up, but keeping your tummy on the floor. (If you are able to lift your tummy off the floor then you can do this.)

Repeat 10 times.





# Gross motor skills

## Activities for development of Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are big motor skills that require balance and co-ordination and include a variety of big movements in play, such as running, jumping, hopping, crawling, climbing, kicking, pushing and pulling. In order to develop these skills, try some of these activities

Rough and Tumble play with an adult.

Jump on a space hopper or trampoline



Funny walks e.g. wriggle like a worm, walk like a crab, soldier or pirate, hop like a frog

Sing songs or rhymes and add actions and dance

Try following the actions of party songs e.g. Superman, Hokey Cokey, Cha Cha Slide.

Create different obstacle courses for play that require walking along a line, on stepping stones, over, under and through objects, hopping, jumping or walking in a crouched position.



Place mats or paper on the floor and pretend they are islands surrounded by sharks so your child has to use them as stepping-stones.

# Gross motor skills

## Activities for development of Motor Skills

Play with balloons – hitting or kicking to another person.

Play tug-of-war.

Kicking a ball in the back garden or park.

Skateboarding.

Play “Twister” or “Simon Says” (using odd body parts such as standing on one leg, or balancing on one foot and one hand).

Play with balls or beanbags whilst the child is sitting, kneeling, half-kneeling, squatting and standing to practice throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing etc.

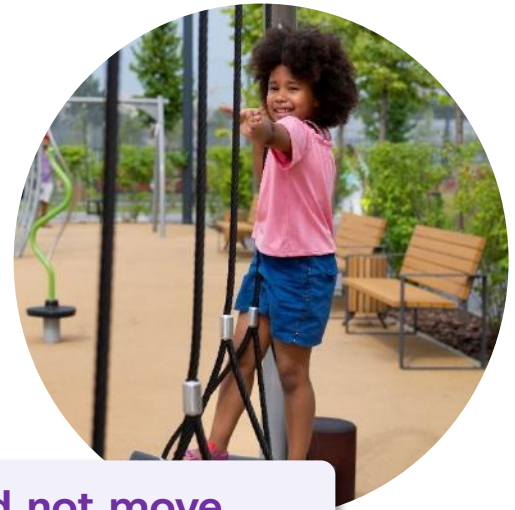
Blow bubbles and get your child to pop them with their pointer finger. Make sure you vary the height and direction of the bubbles so your child has to reach, jump, crouch and chase them. This activity also helps development of hand-eye co-ordination in preparation for writing and drawing.





## Gross motor skills

### Activities for development of Motor Skills



Play “What’s the time Mr Wolf?” where the child has to stop quickly and not move.

Hopscotch or jumping on squares in an obstacle course.

Practicing walking along balance beams or stools with supervision.

Organised activities such as swimming, gymnastics, horse riding, martial arts such as Tai Chi, Tae Kwon-do or Karate or dance classes.

Playing on playground equipment such as swings, climbing frames and merry-go-rounds

Attend organised play gyms.



# Gross motor skills

## Ball skills: Familiarity activities

Equipment needed:  
balls of different  
sizes, beanbags,  
ropes, skittles, etc.

1

Standing with feet apart, roll the ball in a figure of eight around the feet, using different parts of the hands, (backs, fingers, palms), first in one direction and then the other

2

Sitting, legs bent, feet on the floor. Roll the ball gently under the knees from one hand to the other

3

As in 2, but roll the ball under the knees, round the feet, first in one direction, then the other

4

As in 3, but roll the ball under the knees, round the feet then round the back in both directions

5

Sitting legs astride. Hold the ball near the ground in both hands, open the hands to release the ball. Try to get both hands back to the original position as the ball bounces up.

6

Sitting legs straight, feet together. Place the ball on the ankles, raise the legs and catch the ball as it rolls down the legs

7

As in 6, but first roll the ball down to ankles, then raise the legs and catch the ball as it rolls back towards the body.

8

Using different parts of both hands, guide the ball between and round an obstacle course made from beanbags, ropes, skittles, etc.

9

As in 8, using either hand

Once the child is more familiar with balls and how to handle them, work through the following activities, beginning with rolling and ending with throwing and catching. Always use bigger balls (or balloons) first and then move onto smaller balls as skills improve. Encourage the child to talk themselves through each activity beforehand (verbal self-guidance).



## Gross motor skills

### Ball skills: Familiarity activities



Catching a ball is a skill which should be approached carefully and sympathetically.

Some children are quite frightened of a ball coming towards them through the air and are more inclined to avoid being hit by it than attempting to catch it.

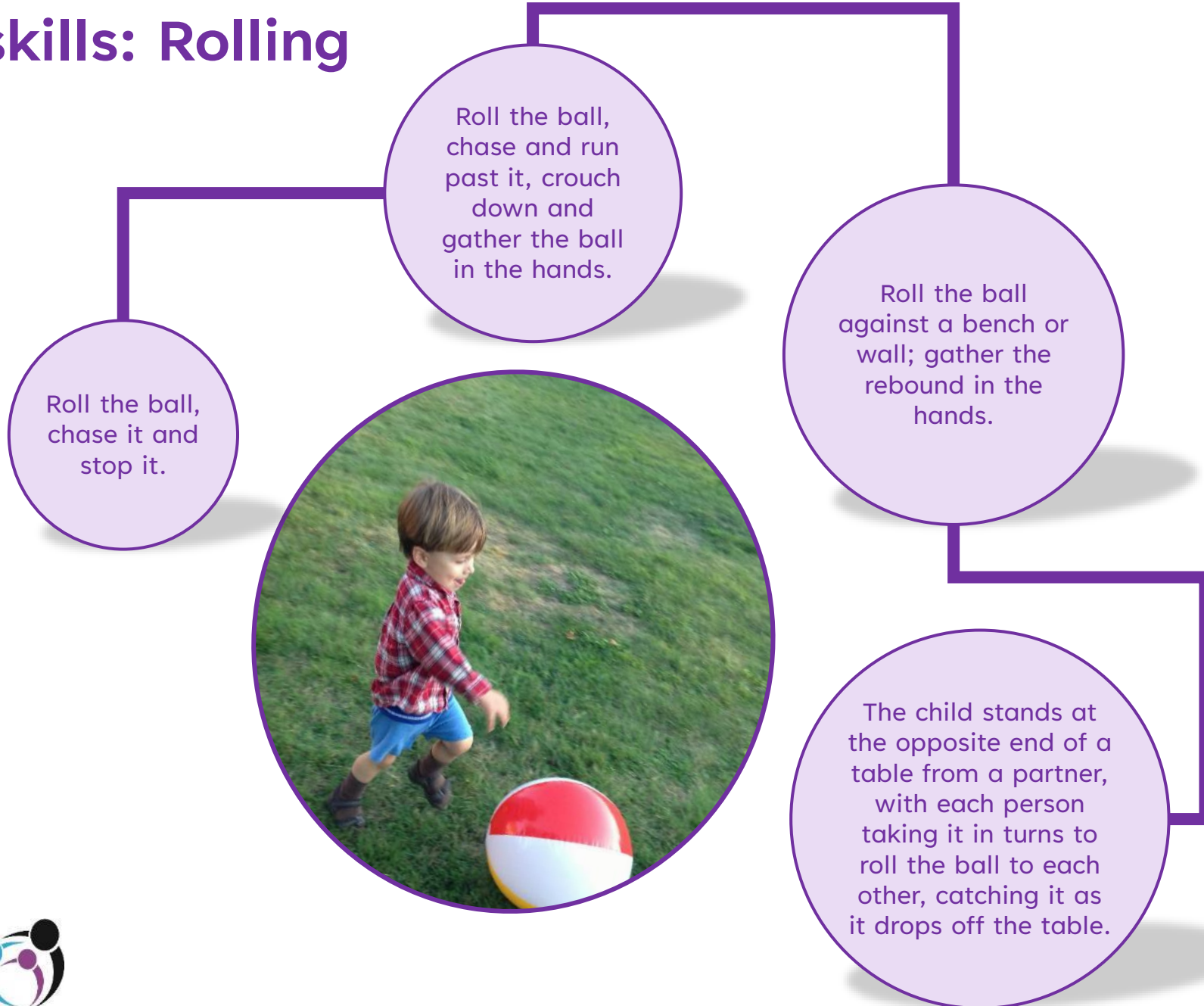
While children are waiting to catch a ball, ask them to rub their hands together quite hard.

The tingling sensation felt afterwards gives tactile feedback in the catching area of the hands. Before catching is attempted, making the hands familiar with the feel of a variety of sizes of ball is useful.



# Gross motor skills

## Ball skills: Rolling





# Gross motor skills

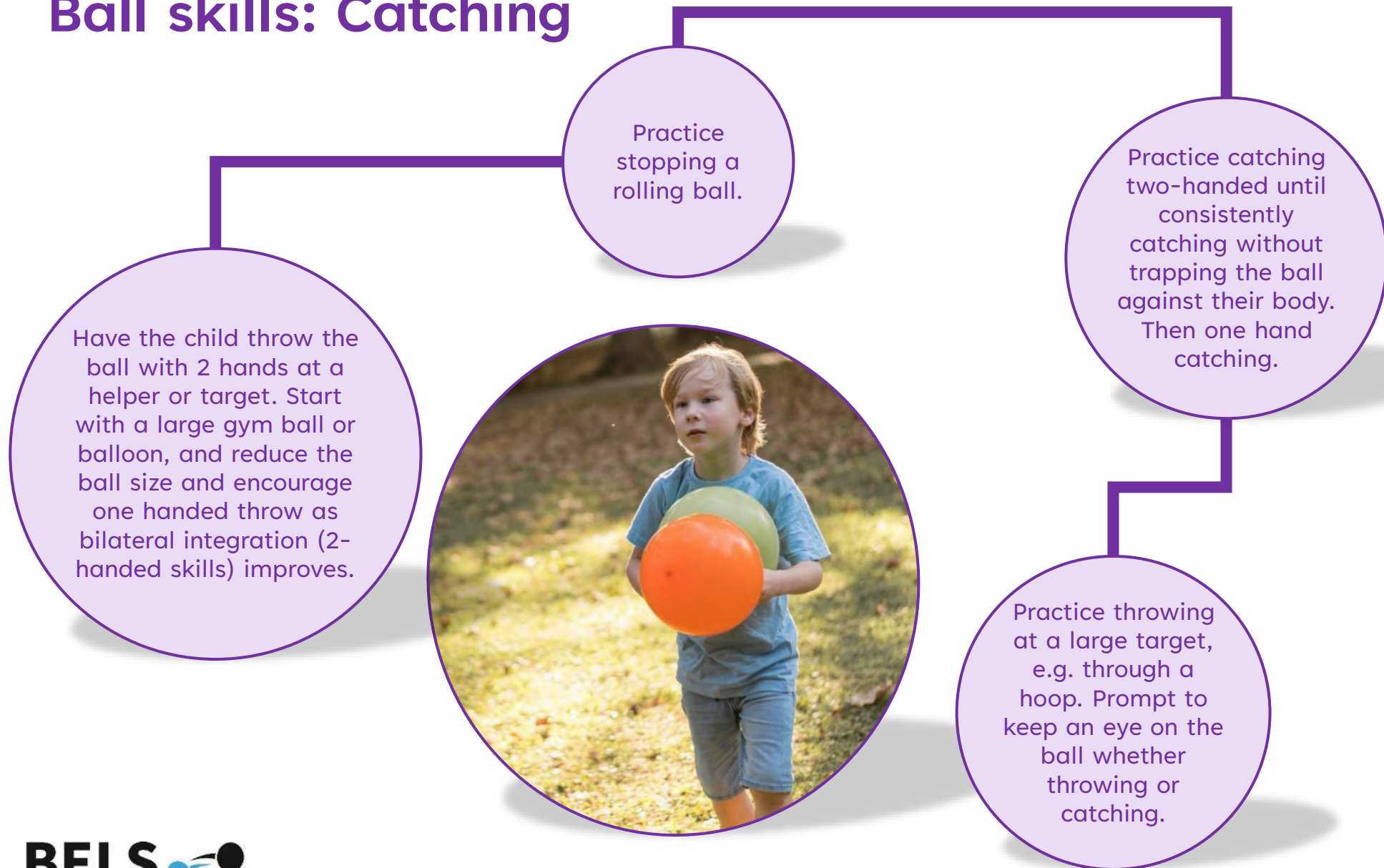
## Ball skills: Kicking





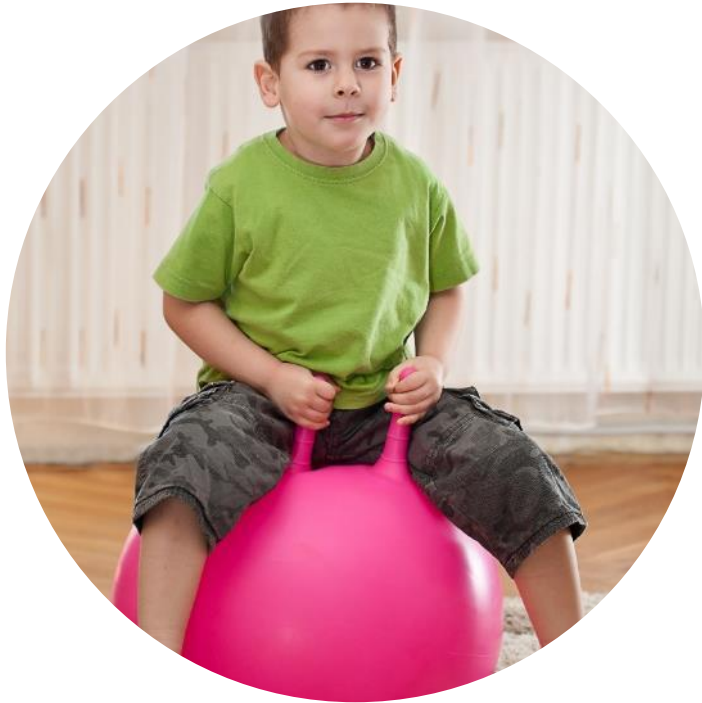
# Gross motor skills

## Ball skills: Catching



## Gross motor skills

### Posture control and Shoulder Stability



**Shoulder stability** refers to having the strength to keep your upper arms steady against your body so you can use your hands for completing a task.

**Postural control** is the ability to maintain your trunk position, such as being able to sit at a desk or on a therapy ball without falling.

Postural control provides the underlying support needed for developing fine motor skills.

Without adequate postural control, a child might have difficulty maintaining a sitting position and may fatigue quickly.

Similarly, the stability needed for fine motor tasks like handwriting and cutting depends on having adequate stability in your shoulders.

The following activities will help:

# Gross motor skills

## Posture control and Shoulder Stability



Encourage child to spend time playing and watching TV on their tummy – propping on the arms helps shoulder stability

Complete games, drawings or read books while the child has their tummy supported on the edge of the seat of a study chair and are supporting themselves with their hands. At first, they may find it difficult to lift one hand off the floor, but once they get stronger they may be able to use one hand to turn the pages of a book etc. and the other to support their weight.



Get child to help carry heavy items around the house e.g. carry the shopping bag, washed clothes to the line.

Pour water or sand from a pitcher.

Work on a vertical surface (writing on blackboard or easel).

Chair push ups.

Swimming



# Gross motor skills

## Posture control and Shoulder Stability



Sit on a gym ball for 5 minutes (increasing time as child gets better) whilst watching TV.

Get child to help with household chores: using a vacuum, wiping the walls or windows (using big, circular arm movements).

Climbing frame.

Any jumping on a mini trampoline, old mattress.

Scooter board in prone-lying position to pick up objects around the room

Carry an object on a spoon at arms length and have a race, without letting it fall off the spoon!

Use masking tape or string to make paths or set up obstacle courses. Do wheelbarrow walks, combat crawls or imitate animals around the course.

Tug of war games



# Gross motor skills

## Posture preparation

Here's a warm-up that's great for posture and a positive attitude.



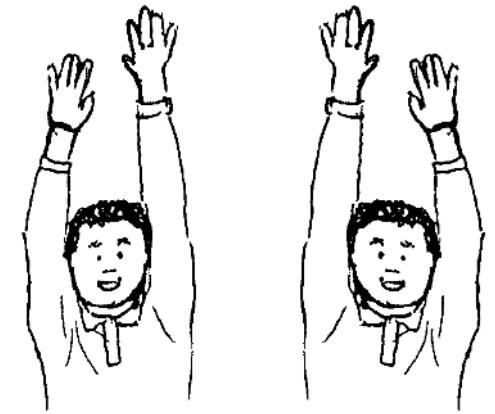
Push Palms



Pull Hands



Hug yourself  
tightly



Reach high, one hand,  
then the other



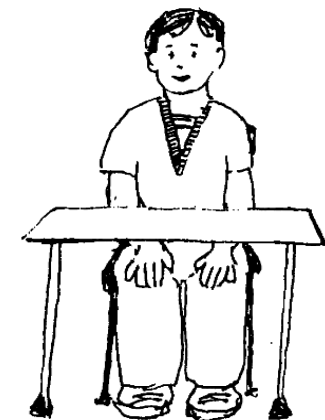
Pull up on the  
chair



Stack your  
blocks



Assume a  
funny posture



Stack your  
blocks again



# Gross motor skills

## Posture blocks

Head

Shoulders

Hips

Knees

Feet



# Gross motor skills

## Pelvic & Core stability: Half kneeling & kneeling

### Half-Kneeling Position.

- Develops core stability (balance, pelvic stability, shoulder stability).
- Gives kinaesthetic feedback.
- Promotes wrist extension.
- Promotes trunk rotation and crossing of the midline.
- Promotes an upright sitting position (1/2 sitting).
- Develops bi-lateral co-ordination.



### Kneeling Position.

- Develops pelvic stability, shoulder stability and shoulder triangle.
- Promotes external rotation of shoulder and forearm.
- Promotes trunk and head extension as in an upright position.
- Promotes flexion of knees.
- Gives proprioceptive feedback through knees.
- Promotes weight shifting through knees.
- Promotes trunk rotation and crossing of the midline.



# Gross motor skills

## Pelvic & Core stability: Standing & Puppy



### Standing position.

- Gives proprioceptive feedback through feet.
- Gives kinaesthetic feedback.
- Promotes weight shifting through feet.
- Promotes trunk rotation.
- Develops core stability.
- Develops shoulder strength due to large movements.
- Abduction of shoulder.



### Prone “Puppy” Position.

- Upper body extension.
- Gives a wide base of support.
- Gives proprioceptive feedback.
- Develops shoulder triangle & shoulder stability.
- Promotes midline position & bilateral integration.
- Forces wrist extension. Stabilises elbow.
- Forced to adjust paper.

## Gross motor skills

### Pelvic & Core stability: Centrefold & All Fours



#### **Centrefold” Position.**

- Develops trunk stability (laterality, more alignment).
- Develops bilateral integration (legs & arms crossing midline, trunk rotated).
- Gives proprioceptive feedback through elbows & shoulders.
- Promotes dynamic use of wrist and discourages hand swapping.
- Promotes wrist extension.
- Develops lateral muscle of neck.



#### **All-Fours Position.**

- Develops shoulder triangle.
- Gives a wide base of support.
- Gives pelvic stability.
- Weight bearing through shoulder.
- Promotes 90° sitting position.
- Helps bi-lateral weight shifting.
- Gives proprioceptive feedback through knees and elbows.



## Gross motor skills

### Gym Trail: What is a gym trail?

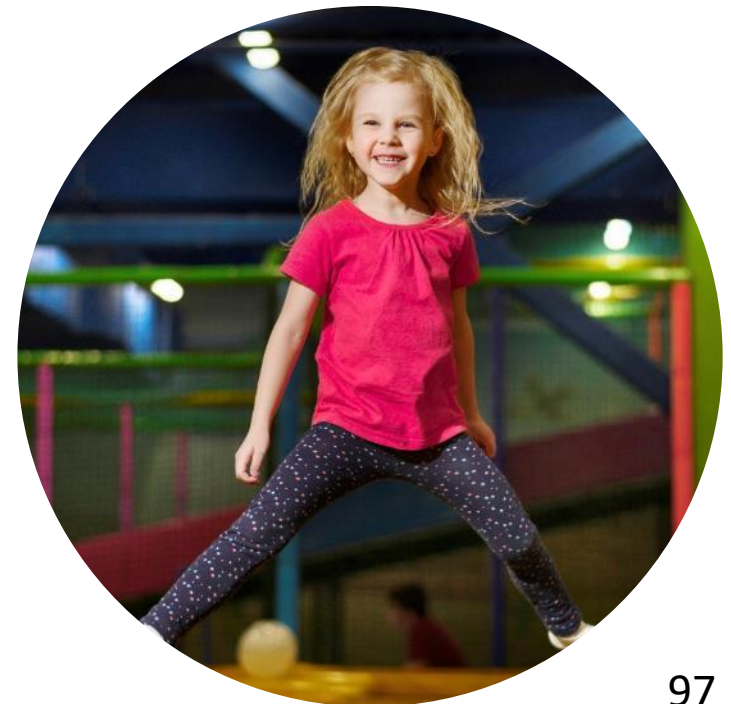
A gym trail is a circuit of motor co-ordination activities carried out on a regular basis to support pupils with movement and co-ordination difficulties.

Gym trails build upon existing skills in the following key areas:



- **Motor skills – gross and fine**
- **Crossing the mid-line**
- **Balance coordination**
- **Bilateral exercises**
- **Motor planning and sequencing**

Children with difficulties in some or all of these areas are likely to find some tasks in life difficult. Attending a gym trail helps children improve these skills that directly help in the learning environment and throughout their lives.





## Gross motor skills

### Gym Trail: Who is a gym trail for?

Pupils of primary age who exhibit motor coordination difficulties have been shown to benefit from participating in gym trail.

These difficulties include:

- Poor posture and gait
- Weak spatial awareness
- Co-ordination difficulties in PE
- Difficulty in planning and carrying out a motor activity
- Difficulties developing hand dominance
- Immature drawing skills
- Slow, inaccurate copying
- A mismatch between general understanding and the ability to record information
- Difficulty dressing and doing fastenings
- Poor organisational skills
- Pupils with a diagnosis of developmental coordination disorder (DCD can also be known as dyspraxia)
- Weak listening and attention skills
- Problems remembering instructions
- Difficulties with processing language
- Immature social skills
- Low confidence and self-esteem



# Gross motor skills

## Gym Trail: Benefits

- Developing gross motor skills improves a child's ability to become more independent, i.e. changing for P.E. or putting their coat on. Working on fine motor skills might mean they are able to manage fastenings on their own, opening their yoghurt at lunchtime or confidently manage tools in the classroom, such as, pencils, scissors and glue sticks.
- Crossing the mid-line is the ability to cross the body's mid-line with arms and legs. This allows children to cross over their mid line and perform a task on the opposite side, for example, drawing a horizontal line across the page without having to switch hands in the middle.
- Coordination helps children achieve objectives quickly. Hand-eye coordination is the ability to track the movements of the hands with the eyes, thus enabling the eyes to send important signals to the brain about hand movement. Poor hand-eye coordination can greatly compromise your ability to exercise and can also affect everyday tasks such as writing.
- Being able to coordinate both sides of the body together enables many daily tasks, such as, during handwriting, one hand writes, the other should stabilise the paper. During cutting, one hand operates the scissors, the other manages the paper.
- Planning and sequencing is important to enable a child to perform many everyday tasks such as walking, running, playing on a playground and playing sports.
- Motor planning and sequencing is defined as the ability to organise the body's actions: knowing what steps to take, and in what order, to complete a particular task. For example, a motor plan for getting dressed would include knowing that putting socks on comes before stepping into shoes. Also, knowing which shoe goes on which foot etc.
- We understand that all key areas in Gym Trail are linked and overlap within exercises and games.
- Children are able to build on existing skills, developing independence in a fun and relaxed way.
- Children can build confidence, resilience and self esteem which in turn, improves their daily school life

## Gross motor skills

# Crossing midline: What is Crossing Midline?

### What is midline?

If you were to draw a line down the middle of your body, starting at the head, that is your midline. Every time you cross that line with either side of your body, that is crossing midline. Crossing midline is a skill that children can learn from infancy.

Crossing midline is something that all of us do every day without even realising it. You may not realise it because it is an integrated movement in our bodies from childhood.

Crossing midline is an important part of development in a child. They need it for reading, writing, and many other important school activities as well as play activities.

### What does it look like if your child is having difficulty crossing midline?

- Your child may actually “get stuck” in mid-reach and have to switch hands to continue
- They may compensate by moving their whole trunk to reach toward the opposite side.

Poor mid-line crossing will affect how your child reads (tracking with the eye from left to right) and writes (using their dominant hand across the writing page). So if your child is demonstrating poor crossing midline skills, or even if they aren't, here are 10 activities that you can do to encourage crossing midline skills in your children.

# Gross motor skills

## Crossing midline: Exercises: 1

### Playing with cars on a large path

Draw a line on a large piece of paper or make a large path on the floor with blocks for your child to drive their toy cars. Put lots of turns in the path. Encourage your child to just use one hand to drive the car.



### Painting with paintbrushes

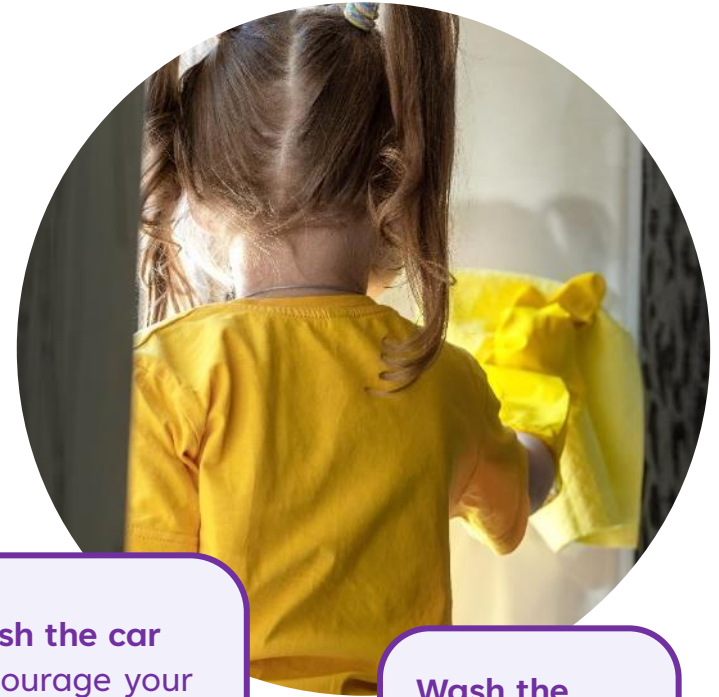
Use large (adult size) paint brushes and/or rollers and let your child paint the sides of the house with water. Encourage using one hand at a time

### Play flashlight tag

Have each child use their own flashlight, holding on to it with both hands. You can do this at nighttime either outside or in a dark room or gym. Whoever has the flashlight shown on them is frozen and must be untagged from their team member. Remember to not allow the flashlights to be directed at someone's eyes.

### Wash the car

Encourage your child to use their dominant hand and reach in all directions



### Wash the windows

Using a spray bottle and towel, have your child wash the windows in your house or on a flat surface such as the table.





# Gross motor skills

## Crossing midline: Exercises: 2

### Figure 8 pattern

Draw a large figure eight (the number eight facing side to side, not top to bottom) with pavement chalk for your child and have them walk the figure eight OR draw the infinity sign and have your child trace it with their finger of their dominant hand.



### Squirt gun target practice

Use both hands on the squirt gun to try and knock over cups, wash away chalk etc.

### Wiping the table with one hand

Put a light coat of shaving cream all over the table and have your child wipe it off with a wet cloth.



### Windmills & Cross Crawls

For windmills, have your child reach out to the side with their arms straight. Then pretend that they are a windmill by moving their arms in a circle while crossing across the middle of their body.

For cross crawls, have your child march in place, then touch their opposite knee as it is at their waist. The right arm would touch the left knee and the left arm would touch the right knee as they are marching in place.



### Water the garden

Water the garden or flower beds/pots using both hands on the water hose





## Dressing skills

Being able to dress independently requires many steps and motor skills.

If you require further information, please contact the Occupational Therapy team and the Advisory Physical Disabilities team .

# Dressing Skills

# Dressing Skills

## Introduction



- The ability to complete the functional task of dressing requires various gross motor skills, balance and coordination skills.
- Dressing skills are often worked on during occupational therapy or physical therapy sessions to help children to become more independent.
- Teaching dressing skills to children with additional needs is often a goal of parents and therapists during the early years.
- It is important to remember that there are many steps to dressing.
- When you perform a task analysis on dressing, you quickly realise all the skills involved from fine motor skills, coordination, balance, cognitive awareness, and gross motor skills.

# Dressing Skills

## Dressing skills by age

Independent dressing skills require higher level gross motor skills to complete. The developmental milestones of dressing skills occur along a continuum. A child moves along the developmental stages gradually learning the gross motor skills needed to undress and dress.

**At about 12 months of age,** a child will extend his foot or arm to go into a pant leg, shoe or sleeve. The child needs to range of motion in the muscles and joints to complete this skill.



**At around 18 months,** a child has the balance and postural control to sit unsupported and use his/her hands for other tasks. The child can reach and pull off socks and possibly shoes if unlaced. The child can again maintain the postural control to reach overhead to remove or place a hat on his/her head.

# Dressing Skills

## Dressing skills by age

**At around 24 months,** a child can coordinate both sides of the body to unzip and remove shoes. These skills require the ability to bring the hands to midline, maintain postural control and balance in sitting.



**From 24 months to 36 months,** a child continues to progress in dressing skills. A child will be able to put shoes on, pull pants down and up with assistance, unbutton, undress and dress with assistance.

To put shoes on, a child must cross midline, coordinate both sides of the body to work together, rotate the trunk all while maintaining postural control and balance.

At this age children will still require assistance with some of the gross motor tasks of undressing and dressing such as maintaining balance, eye hand coordination to reach and motor planning skills to complete all the steps.

# Dressing Skills

## Dressing skills by age

**From 3 to 4 years old**, a child will be able to pull down and pull up elastic type pants, put on front opened shirts and t-shirts, put socks on, button, removes pull over or front opening shirts and unbuttons. When pulling down and up pants, a child must be able to squat, maintain balance and coordinate both sides of the body to hold the waistband. Putting on shirts or removing shirts, require crossing midline, reaching with the shoulder, postural control and balance skills.

Kinaesthetic and body awareness skills are needed to complete the skill because the eyes may be occluded when the clothing is covering the head. Putting on socks requires the ability to cross midline, reach and the strength to pull the sock over the foot.



**Around 4 to 6 years old**, children will be able to dress and undress independently, including understanding directionality of the clothing (front and back) and shoes (left and right).





# Dressing Skills

## Complete independence checklist

Therefore, for complete independence with dressing skills, a task analysis of dressing indicates the child must be able to:

- ☒ reach in all directions
- ☒ rotate the trunk and cross midline
- ☒ bend at the waist
- ☒ maintain sufficient postural control to allow the extremities to complete the skill
- ☒ squat and return to standing
- ☒ maintain balance in sitting and standing while reaching
- ☒ stand on one foot while the other half of the body is moving
- ☒ be aware of where the body parts are in space (ie body awareness)
- ☒ motor plan multiple steps
- ☒ coordinate both sides of the body and the eyes/hands to work together.



# Dressing Skills

## Pre-dressing skills



Dressing is a complex activity that requires many pre-requisite skills to be able to perform successfully. Below is a quick reference guide to pre-requisite skills to gain an understanding of the demands the activity places on the child.

- **Motor skills** – a child needs to be able to move limbs and body in a full range of movements both with and against gravity. For this, the child must have adequate muscle strength and flexibility at their joints.
- **Co-ordination** – a child needs to be able to create co-ordinated movements, using both unilateral (using one arm) and bilateral skills (using both arms). Hand dominance is important for movements that require fine motor skills, such as fastening buttons. A child needs to be able to cross their midline to complete tasks such as removing a jumper.
- **Balance** – a child must be able to maintain their balance whilst changing posture/position with and without vision occluded.
- **Fine Motor Skills** – a child must be able to reach, grasp and release objects in order to complete tasks such as buttoning or holding the item of clothing.
- **Perception** – a child needs various perception skills, such as form constancy (i.e. knowing various sizes and shapes of buttons are all still buttons) and spatial awareness (i.e. knowing the position of body in space related the position and size of arm holes).
- **Stereognosis** – the child must be able to feel objects to know their relation to their body without relying on sight, for example, finding arm holes with jumper over head or doing back buttons.
- **Body Schema** – A child must have good awareness of body parts and where their body is in space. A child must be able to differentiate their left and right to know which arm hole is correct.

# Dressing Skills

## Pre-dressing skills: Activities

- Play dressing up games and dressing toys.
- Dressing dolls: using age appropriate dolls to dress up provides the child with increased sense of body schema and organisation of clothes. It also provides a way of completing dressing skills whilst being able to use vision skills.
- Musical dressing up (a variation of musical chairs): the children put items of clothing on from a pile until the music stops, at the end of the game the child with the most clothes on is the winner.
- Using a variety of large shirts or smocks, get the children to get ready for wet play, painting or cooking.
- Button boards or play cubes. These can be made to give the child practice at certain types of fastening.
- Cloth button or popper book. Parts of a picture have to be buttoned or 'popped' on.
- Matching sock game. Place a variety of socks in a pile, the child has to find pairs and put them on.
- Wooden shoe - a shoe-shaped piece of card or wood with holes in can be used to practise lacing and tying shoes.
- Bow book. A fabric book with different types of materials to make a bow, e.g. ribbon, laces, apron strings, etc.
- Package wrapping. Making parcels and tying them up with different sorts of ties.
- Play 'Simon Says' and get the child to identify various body parts. Start with arm, leg, tummy. Move onto ankle, elbow, knees. Build upon this by asking the child to touch left arm, then right leg. Finally being able to locate left elbow, wrist, etc.
- Completing threading activities. Getting them to copy a pattern of various sized beads on thread (wool is better for larger beads) to improve pattern recognition. Adapt the task by getting the child to pull desired bead from bag without looking to improve stereognosis.

# Dressing Skills

## Pre-dressing skills: activities

Complete lacing activities using lacing boards to develop fine motor skills such as grip, release and eye-hand co-ordination.

Labelling clothes. Let the child develop labels for their clothes, i.e. front, back, etc. Ensure that you are able to remove them.

OR get an old white t-shirt and paint on labels. This will help raise body awareness and will assist with orientation.

Posting coins. Let the child use pincer (finger and thumb) grip to post coins into a money box. Once child has mastered this, post pennies through slit in piece of paper. This will help develop pre-button skills.

The 'Hokey Cokey'. Get child to participate in this song, could be part of group to enhance body awareness.

Completing jigsaws and form boards will assist with visual perceptual skills.

Foot massage. Give the child a foot massage to provide sensory input to increase awareness of feet. This can also be achieved by walking on various surfaces barefooted, grass, concrete, etc. Do these as a preparation for putting on shoes and socks, tying shoelaces.

## General Dressing Principles



- Try and do each dressing task the same so a routine can be established.
- In order for the child to be able to learn new skills the environment must be appropriate. Think about the noise levels and distractions; other children in the room, computers, pictures on walls, toys and smells, e.g. from the kitchen.
- Allow extra time for the child to be able to learn the new techniques. Progress at the child's pace and give lots of praise for practicing skills even if they are not successful at completing the task.
- Success is important; therefore begin with breaking the dressing activity into small, straightforward steps. Tackle one step at a time and give help where needed with the other steps of the task, e.g. help the child to pull the t-shirt over their head and then allow them to put their arms through the sleeves.



## General Dressing Principles

### Examples of breaking individual tasks down:

- If the child has difficulty undoing fastenings, undo the fastenings for the child, then get them to pull the trousers down and take them off.
- If the child has difficulty taking off a jumper/t-shirt, assist the child to take their arms out and then get the child to pull the jumper/t-shirt off over their head.
- If the child has difficulty putting on tights, assist the child to get the tights on each foot in turn whilst they are sitting down, then get the child to pull the tights up.
- Undressing is usually easier than dressing. Dress in front of the mirror to provide visual cues and use to check all is correct before going out
- Start with undressing. Undressing before bed and helping to put on pyjamas is a good time to start as you have more time at night than in the morning. If there is weakness on one side of the body, put clothes on the weaker side first, and then take the weaker side out of the garment last when undressing (see dressing hemiplegic child).

## General Dressing Principles



**Follow a consistent sequence and technique when dressing:**

- Place clothes in a pile in the order in which they need to be put on.
- Follow the same technique for each garment, e.g. t-shirt is put over the head first and then the arms are put through the sleeves.
- The order and technique can be written down so that it can be followed by other carers and school staff. You could use pictures as a visual prompt to help the child remember the clothing order/technique.
- Describe actions and parts of the body as you are helping the child to dress, e.g. 'put right foot in', 'now stand up while I pull your trousers up your legs'.

## General Dressing Principles



### Positioning

- Ensure that the child is sitting in a stable position, e.g. on the floor (where it is easier for the child to reach their feet) or sitting on a chair or firm bed with their feet supported. If sitting balance is poor, try sitting against a wall. Some children may sit better in a corner where both walls give added support. Alternatively, stand against a wall.
- Sit next to, in front of, or directly behind the child during activity. Guide the child through the task.
- Instead of automatically correcting a mistake, get the child to look (maybe in a mirror) and feel if all is correct. Then encourage them to identify and sort out what needs to be done, e.g. t-shirt needs pulling down; shoes 'feel wrong' because they are on the opposite feet.
- Try to avoid fastenings, tight clothes and lots of layers. Instead use loose fitting clothing, such as tracksuits, sweat shirts. Use clothes with wide neck and arm holes to make it easier to locate these. Initially it may be easier to practice with clothing a size too big.
- Try not to watch all the time; the child may do more when left alone.

# Dressing Skills

## General Dressing Principles

### Ensuring Clothes are the correct way round

- Wear t-shirts, sweat shirts, pants, etc, with a picture on the front. Point the picture out to the child.
- Identify the back of all garments through having a label or using coloured thread. If necessary, and to avoid confusion, remove other labels, e.g. inside seam of knickers. Encourage the child to find this mark to identify the back of their clothing.
- Alternatively for top half garments, mark the inside,
- bottom front edge of the garment with coloured thread. Lay the garment out flat on a table (or the floor) front facing downwards. Roll up the bottom, back edge of the clothing to give a good grip to reveal the special mark identifying the front.
- Choose a coat with a contrasting lining. Encourage body awareness by naming parts of the body and then piece of clothing that covers.
- Lay clothes out flat in front of the child in the order that they are going to be put on. Place the end which is going to be put on first nearest to your child. Place arms into the garment first so that it is easier for the child to see what they are doing. Then put the garment over their head.

### Gripping Clothes

- Roll up clothing to create 'more' to grip, for example roll up bottom edge of the t- shirt before putting on.
- Use adult's hand over child's hand to assist grip (hand-over-hand technique).
- Avoid slippery fabrics.

## Dressing Skills

# Difficulties in gross motor skills and the effects on dressing skills



If a child has deficits in range of motion, it will greatly affect the child's abilities to dress independently. For example, children cannot reach their arm through a sleeve if their elbow cannot straighten completely or the shoulder cannot reach up high enough to put the hand into the sleeve. If the child cannot bend the hip and knee, he/she will have a difficult time removing or putting on socks and shoes.

Trunk rotation and flexion/extension (bending/straightening at the waist) are necessary to reach to undress and dress. The trunk muscles need to be able to sustain a contraction and stabilize the body while the arms reach to help with the clothing. If a child is unable to rotate the trunk and cross midline, he/she may require assistance or adaptive equipment since many dressing skills require to use of two hands.

If a child is unable to squat and return to standing, pulling pants up and down can be difficult. A lack of muscle control in the lower extremities may result in falling down while dressing.

Significant deficits in sitting and standing balance may result in the child needing assistance or modifications to the environment such as sitting in a corner or on a bench while dressing.

When motor planning deficits are present, a child may need assistance to break down the steps of dressing or with organizing the clothes (clearly marking front/back or left/right). Visual step by step dressing directions may be helpful.



# Dressing Skills

## Difficulties



- Delays in eye hand or bilateral coordination skills will also make independent dressing difficult. A child may need verbal or physical cues, modelling and extra practice time to complete the skills.
- For children with gross motor skill and/or motor planning deficits, try teaching dressing using backward chaining. Backward chaining means that an adult provides assistance throughout several steps until the child can complete the last steps independently. For example – you help the child hold shirt, put arm through, put overhead and put other arm through. The child then completes the last step independently of pulling the shirt down. Continue this process by advancing to the child completing the last two steps...the last three steps...etc until the child is independently putting on the shirt.
- If a child has delays in gross motor skills that are affecting independent dressing, you may be working on dressing skills in occupational therapy and need to modify the environment.

# Dressing Skills

## Five tips for teaching dressing skills



Try completing the dressing skills in different positions. Laying on the floor on the back or side may be easier for some children. If the child is unable to maintain his/her balance, try sitting in a corner or on a bench. If minimal support is needed in standing provide a grab bar or a chair for the child to hold onto while completing the dressing routine.

If the child has one side of the body weaker or tighter than the other, dress that side first. If undressing, remove the weaker/tighter side last.

If the child has decreased balance and/or postural control choose easy on and easy off clothing whenever possible such as elastic shorts, elastic pants or shirts without buttons.

For motor planning and/or body awareness deficits, lay the clothes out in the proper order and direction for the child. Make sure all the clothes are turned right side out.

Reduce visual and auditory distractions. Children need to visually focus on their body parts and clothing to dress independently. Provide verbal reminders if needed. Try to use the same wording on each step-by-step direction for consistency. As the child becomes more independent, reduce the verbal cues until they can be discontinued completely.

## Dressing Skills

### Gross Motor Activities: 5 suggested activities

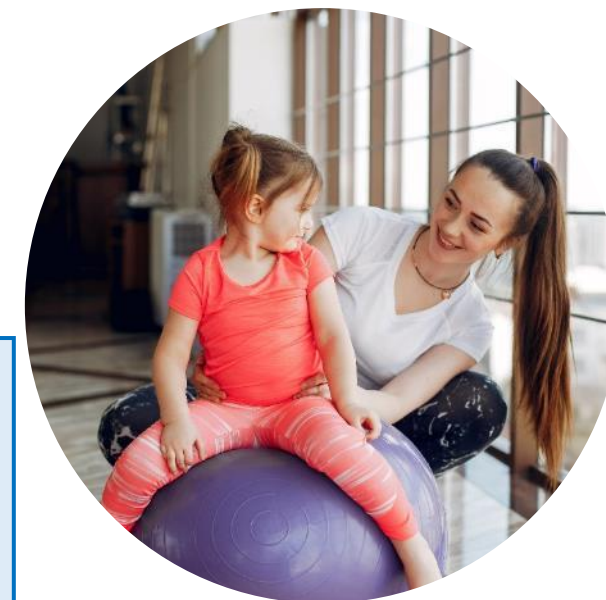
Gross motor activities that focus on postural control, trunk rotation, bilateral coordination, eye hand coordination, motor planning and balance skills are beneficial when it comes to teaching dressing skills in occupational therapy. **Here are 5 suggested activities...**

# Dressing Skills

## Playing games

Play games where the child has to reach outside of his/her base of support without falling over.

Practice in sitting or standing depending upon the child's skill level.



For example, try batting a balloon in the air with your hands but do not move your feet.

The child will be practicing trunk rotation, eye hand coordination skills and balance skills.



# Dressing Skills

## Body awareness game: Simon Says

Adding in directions such as “Simon says touch your both hands to your left foot” or “Simon says squat down and touch the floor”.

If Simon Says is difficult for the child play a game of Match Me.



Move your body a certain way ie reach your right arm behind your back and the child tries to match your actions exactly.





# Dressing Skills

## Squatting activities

Squatting activities while the child is holding an object. Put a hula hoop on the floor.

Can the child squat down, pick up the hula hoop and reach it overhead? Put it back on the floor in front of the child and repeat



Roll a large ball to the child. The child can squat down, pick it up with two hands and push it back.

Can you get across the whole room only stepping in the hula hoop?



# Dressing Skills

## Obstacle courses & relay races

Set up obstacles courses that require the child to motor plan different activities. Include activities related to dressing...

Put on bigger shoes and walk several feet forward without losing your balance

Hide an object in a zippered bag for the child to rescue at the end of the obstacle course

Pick up a small hula hoop or ring with your left hand and slide it up your right arm (this mimics putting on a shirt)



Try relay races including getting dressed in bigger clothes. Set up two teams, run to the pile of clothes, put on large shorts, front open shirt and big shoes. Take them all off and run back to the starting line

Not enough kids to make teams? Just time one child and see if they can beat his/her record and get it done as fast as possible.



# Dressing Skills

## Move like me – motor planning, coordination and body awareness

Simple games of catching, throwing and kicking include many of the underlying skills necessary for learning how to get dressed.



Play catch or  
kick a ball to  
each other

When catching a ball a child brings his/her hands to midline (skill needed for unzipping, buttoning, etc).

When throwing a ball, a child rotates the trunk and brings the arm across midline during the follow through phase (skill needed to reach for socks and shoes).

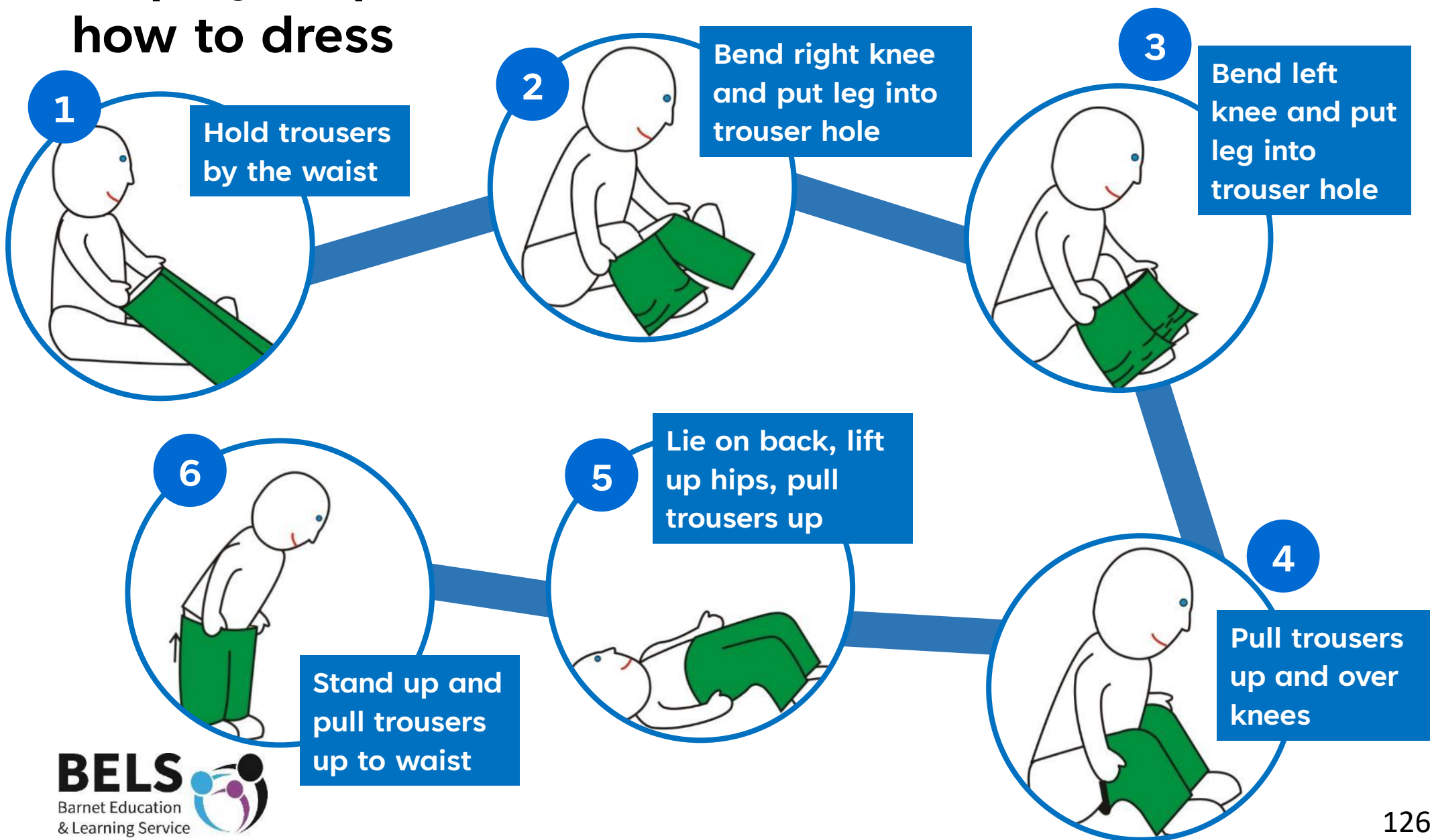
When kicking a ball, a child has to momentarily stand on one foot while the other side of the body is moving (skill needed for getting pants on and off in standing).





# Dressing Skills

## Step by step visual directions to teach children how to dress



# Dressing Skills

## Developmental Dressing Skills in Children



**1**  
year

- Holds arm or leg out to help with dressing
- Pulls off socks
- Removes shoes

**2**  
years

- Finds arm holes in a shirt and tries to put on socks
- Helps you remove clothes, may undress independently

**3**  
years

- Can pull zipper up and down (but can't start zipper at bottom hook)
- Puts shoes on without fastening them

**4**  
years

- Can put a t-shirt on (may be backwards)
- Can pull up clothing, like trousers

**5**  
years

- Can dress independently (sometimes puts clothes on backwards)

**6**  
years

- Masters fasteners (buttons, zippers etc)
- Learns and masters shoe-tying



# Dressing Skills

## Common Dressing Tasks Broken down into Steps



### Steps for putting on a pull-over/t-shirt

1. Pull shirt over head
2. Push right arm up through right sleeve
3. Push left arm up through left sleeve
4. Pull shirt down to waist

### Steps for putting on trousers

1. Hold **trousers** by waistband
2. Lower trousers and lift left leg
3. Put left leg into trousers hole
4. Put right leg into trousers hole
5. Pull trousers up to knees
6. Stand and pull trousers to waist



### Steps for putting on a jacket

1. Pull jacket onto right shoulder
2. Slip right arm up through right arm hole
3. Reach with left arm to pull jacket around
4. Pull jacket onto left shoulder with right hand
5. Hold collar of jacket with right arm
6. Push left arm through left arm hole

### Steps for putting on socks (while sitting)

1. Hold sock by edge with both hands
2. Push toes into sock
3. Lift foot and pull sock over heel
4. Pull sock up leg

Using the left and right side of the body may be switched depending on your child's abilities.

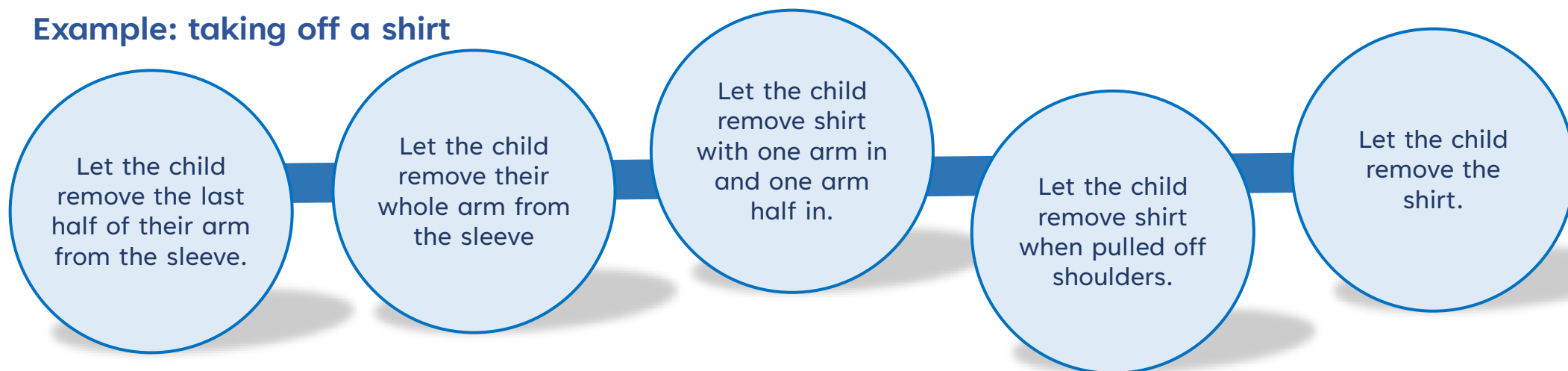
You will want to have your child use his/her strongest arm/leg to dress the other arm/leg first.

# Dressing Skills

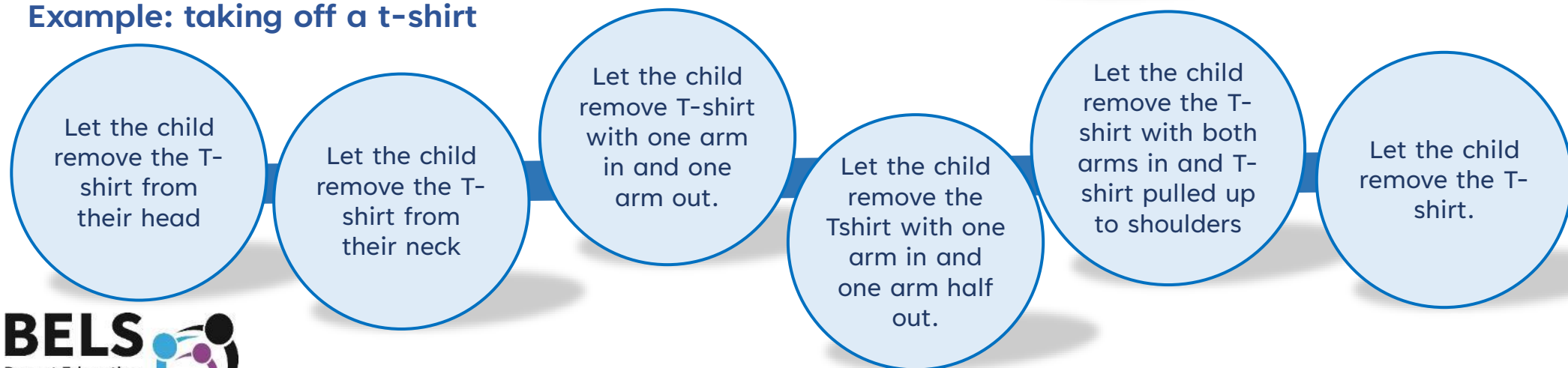
## Ways to learn: Backward Chaining

Here the adult begins the task, with the child only doing the last step. Gradually the adult does less as the child is able to do more of the task themselves. This way the child always gets the reward of finishing the task, e.g. the adult puts the t-shirt over the child's head and helps them to get their arms through the holes. The child then pulls down the t-shirt at the front.

### Example: taking off a shirt



### Example: taking off a t-shirt



# Dressing Skills

## Levels of Assistance

- On the next page are definitions for the Levels of Assistance you will provide your child while using backward chaining.
- The first level is the maximum amount of help (A: Helping Only), which is where you will want to begin backward chaining.
- You will move down through the levels until you reach the minimum amount of help (E: Talking only).
- By following these levels of assistance, you are providing your child with the right amount of support they will need in order to be successful.
- The amount of time you spend at each level will depend on your child.
- Many things can affect your child's performance and as a result their performance in the dressing task.
- You will need to monitor how they are doing and do less for them when you feel they are ready.
- You will also find some tips on how you will know when to decrease the amount of help you provide.



# Dressing Skills

## Levels of Assistance

### A: Helping only

This is doing the step with your child, hand over hand. For example, you help your child to pull up their trousers by holding your child's hands and pulling up the trousers to his/her waist.

### B: Talking & Helping

This is telling your child what to do and doing the step with your child. For example, you told your child to pull the trousers up to the waist and you helped to pull the trousers up. Helping may involve holding your child's hands and moving your child through the motions.

### C: Talking & showing

This is telling your child what to do and demonstrating what you would like him/her to do alone. For example, you told your child to pull up the trousers to his/her waist and you showed how you pull up your own trousers to your waist.

### D: Talking & pointing

This is telling your child what to do and pointing to something that shows him/her what you are talking about. For example, you told your child to pull up the trousers to the waist and you pointed to his/her waist.

### E: Talking only

This is telling your child clearly and simply what to do. For example, you told your child to pull his/her trousers up to the waist.

### Tips for Adjusting your level of Assistance

- As your child becomes more familiar with the step of a task, gradually reduce your assistance.
- Let your child take more and more responsibility for performing the task alone.
- If your child can perform the step and you are helping by talking only, your child is ready for the next step.
- If you still need to help or show your child the step, he/she is probably not quite ready for the next step.

## Dressing Skills

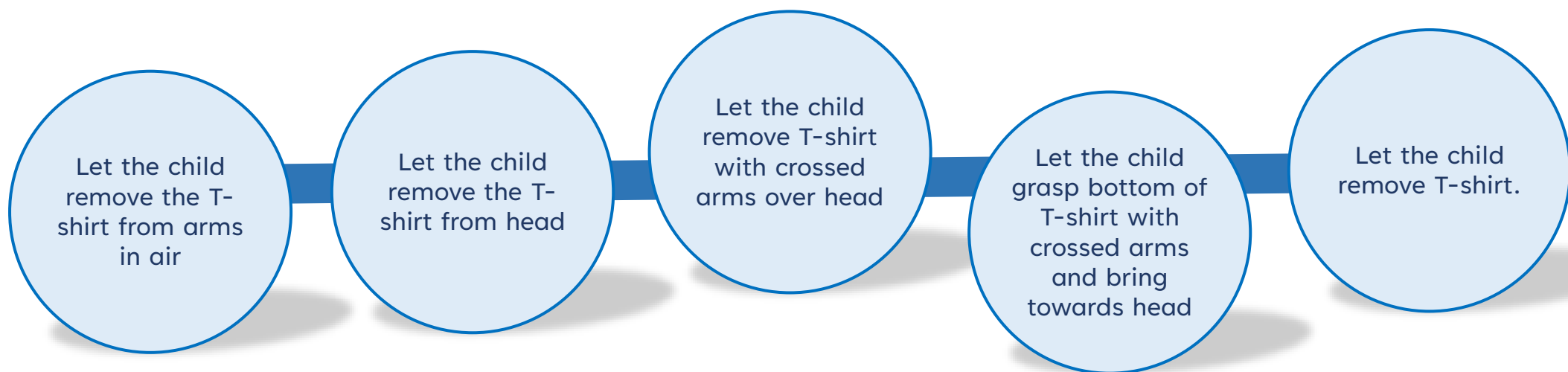
### Ways to learn: Forward Chaining

This is when the child starts the task, for example, putting the t-shirt over their head, and the adult helps with the later stages the child needs help with, e.g. putting their arms through the sleeves. The child needs to be motivated to begin the task themselves.

Always demonstrate the correct technique first, telling the child what you are doing at each stage, e.g. I am unbuttoning the shirt, I am taking your arm out of the sleeve, and so on. Try to maintain the same order of this activity time for consistency

### Ways to learn: Alternate method

(Needs more skills in co-ordination and crossing midline)





# Dressing Skills

## Adaptive strategies & activities

Dressing can be a challenging task for children with physical disabilities. However, with appropriate strategies and aids, it can become an easier and more independent process. Here's a broad outline of how to approach this



### Involve the Child

Involve the child in choosing their clothes and in the dressing process to whatever extent possible to encourage independence and self-expression

### Technology

Emerging technologies such as specialized apps or devices might offer additional assistance in learning and mastering dressing skills

### Patience and Encouragement

Be patient, and provide lots of positive reinforcement to encourage the child

### Customisation

Custom-tailoring clothes or modifying existing clothes to better suit the child's unique needs can also be a great help.

Each child's needs and abilities will be unique, so it may take some trial and error to find what works best. It's always advisable to consult with healthcare & education professionals and therapists who are familiar with the child's specific situation

# Dressing Skills

## Adaptive strategies & activities



### Adaptive clothing

Clothing with Velcro closures, magnetic buttons, or zippers can be easier for children to handle than traditional buttons or snaps. Look for clothes with wide neck openings, loose fits, and stretchy fabrics to ease the dressing process.

### Dressing Aids

Various tools such as button hooks, zipper pulls, and dressing sticks can help in managing small fasteners and in pulling clothes up or down. Shoe horns, elastic shoelaces or shoes with Velcro closures can also be beneficial.

### Therapy and Skill Development

Occupational therapy can help in developing the necessary motor skills and strength. Practice and repetition, with the guidance of a therapist, can improve dressing skills over time.

### Environmental Modifications

Arrange the dressing area to minimise the need to reach, bend or balance, for instance by using a dressing chair or a lowered hanging rod.

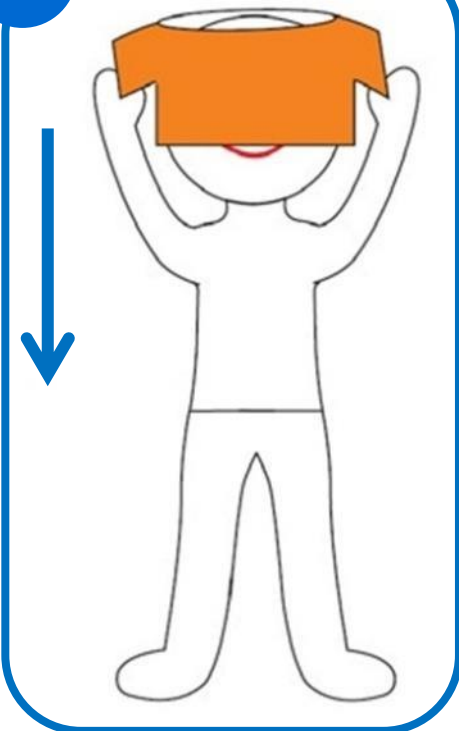
### Educational Resources and Support

Contact organisations dedicated to helping individuals with physical disabilities for resources and advice such as the advisory services -Physical Support Team, SCOPE, paediatrician, etc. It may also be beneficial to connect with other families facing similar challenges for support and ideas.

# Dressing Skills

## Visual Guide – T-shirts

1



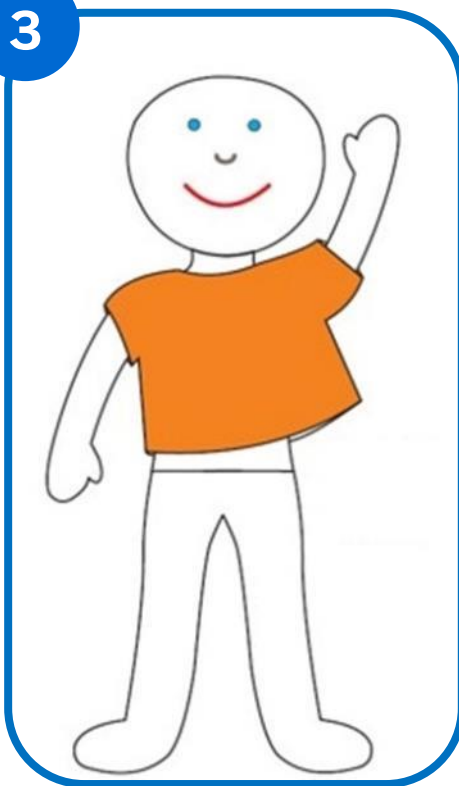
Pull shirt over  
your head

2



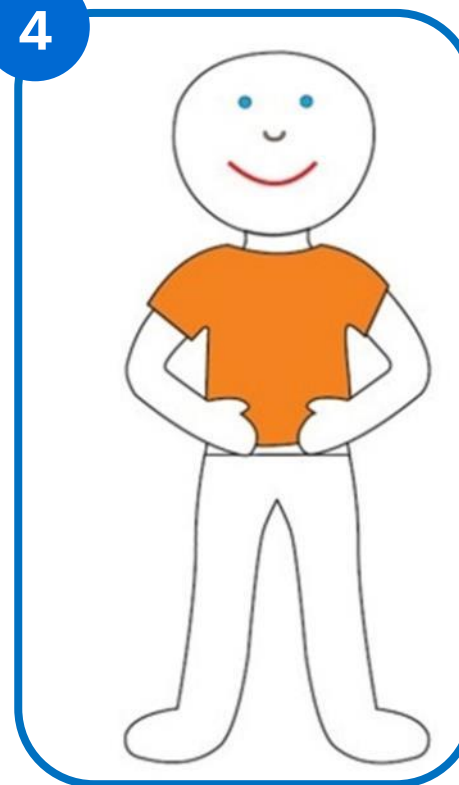
Push right  
arm up into  
sleeve

3



Push left arm  
up into  
sleeve

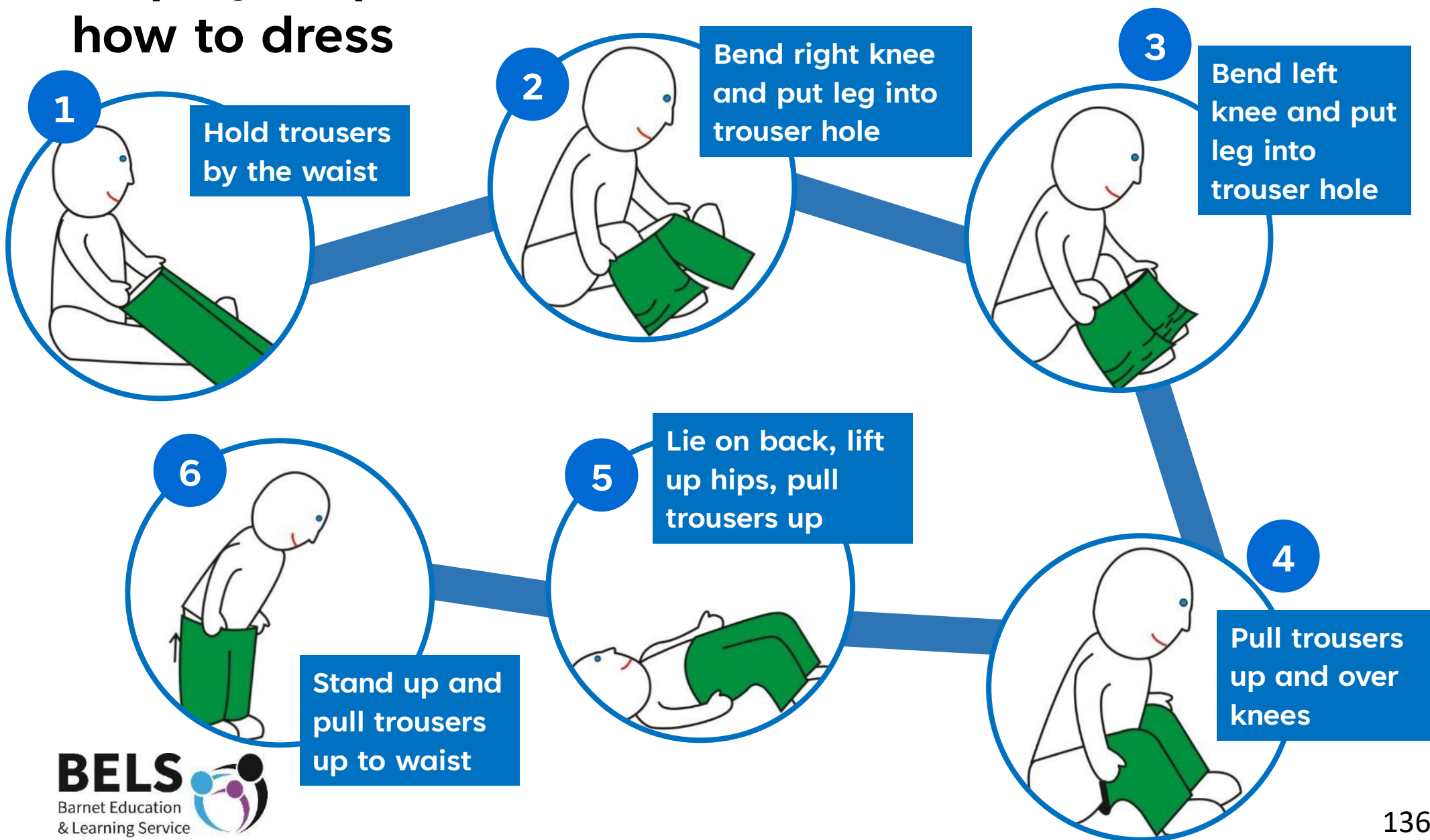
4



Pull shirt  
down

# Dressing Skills

## Step by step visual directions to teach children how to dress



# Dressing Skills

## Guide – Socks

Place socks partly over your child's foot, then encourage them to perform the last part. (Tubular sport socks are easier than those with a heel).

Socks with coloured heels and toes also make it easier to work out the correct way round. Alternatively mark the back of the sock with thread on the inside, top edge.

Make sure that the elastic is not too tight.

Prompt your child to use their “magic thumbs” to help pull the socks on. i.e. isolating their thumbs to get them under the socks to pull up.

Roll down the top of the sock to make it easier to get the foot in. Use a loop on the back of the sock for the child to hold as they pull them up.



# Dressing Skills

## Shoes & shoelaces 1

On the inside of the shoes and pumps, mark the inside border of each piece of footwear with indelible ink. The child can then place these two marks together to ensure that the correct foot is inserted into each shoe.



Flat laces are easier to tie than round ones. Ensure that the laces are long enough to comfortably tie a bow.

Give your child plenty of time so that they do not feel rushed.

Ask them to sit down while practicing their laces

To start with, it is better to use two different coloured laces, as it is easier to explain the steps. A shoe-shaped board/card with lacing holes is needed or you can use a lace up shoe/trainer. Do not get your child to put it on their foot when starting – it is easier to learn while the shoe is held on their lap.

You may need to place your hands over your child's to show them how the movement feels.

# Dressing Skills

## Shoes & shoelaces 2

Teach one step at a time and then get your child to practice that step until they master it. Then you can teach the second step and again get them to practice those two steps until it is easy for them.

There are several techniques for doing up laces. If one technique is too difficult for a child then try another one.

When tying the first knot, loop the lace under the base lace a second time. This helps the knot to stay firm without loosening whilst your child gets their hands ready to make the loops.

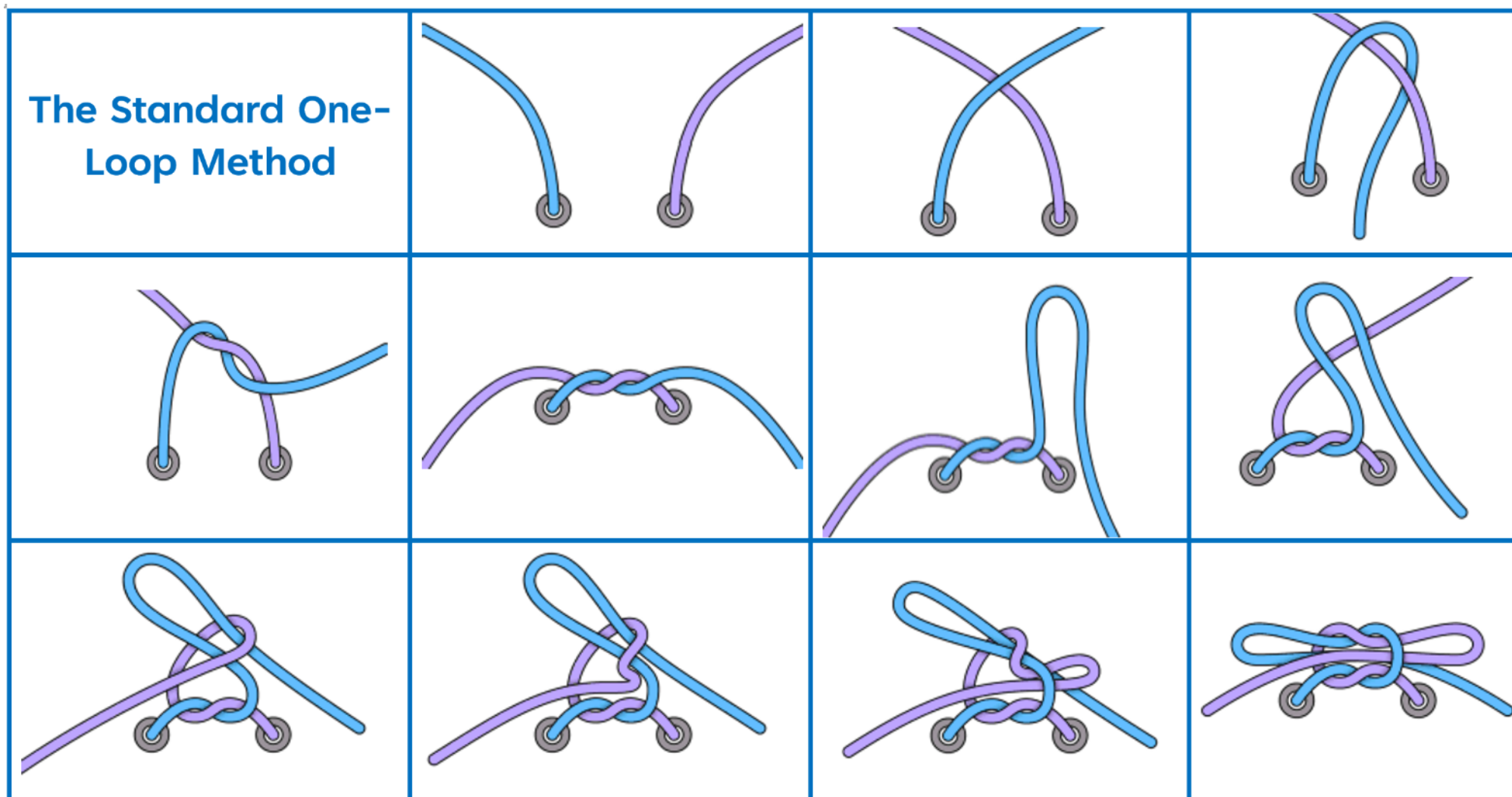
Use thicker, cotton laces as they slip less than round or nylon laces.

Allow time for your child to watch you tie laces. Encourage them to do the last part of the task, for example pulling the knot tight: backward chaining. This involves gradually allowing your child to complete more and more of the task.



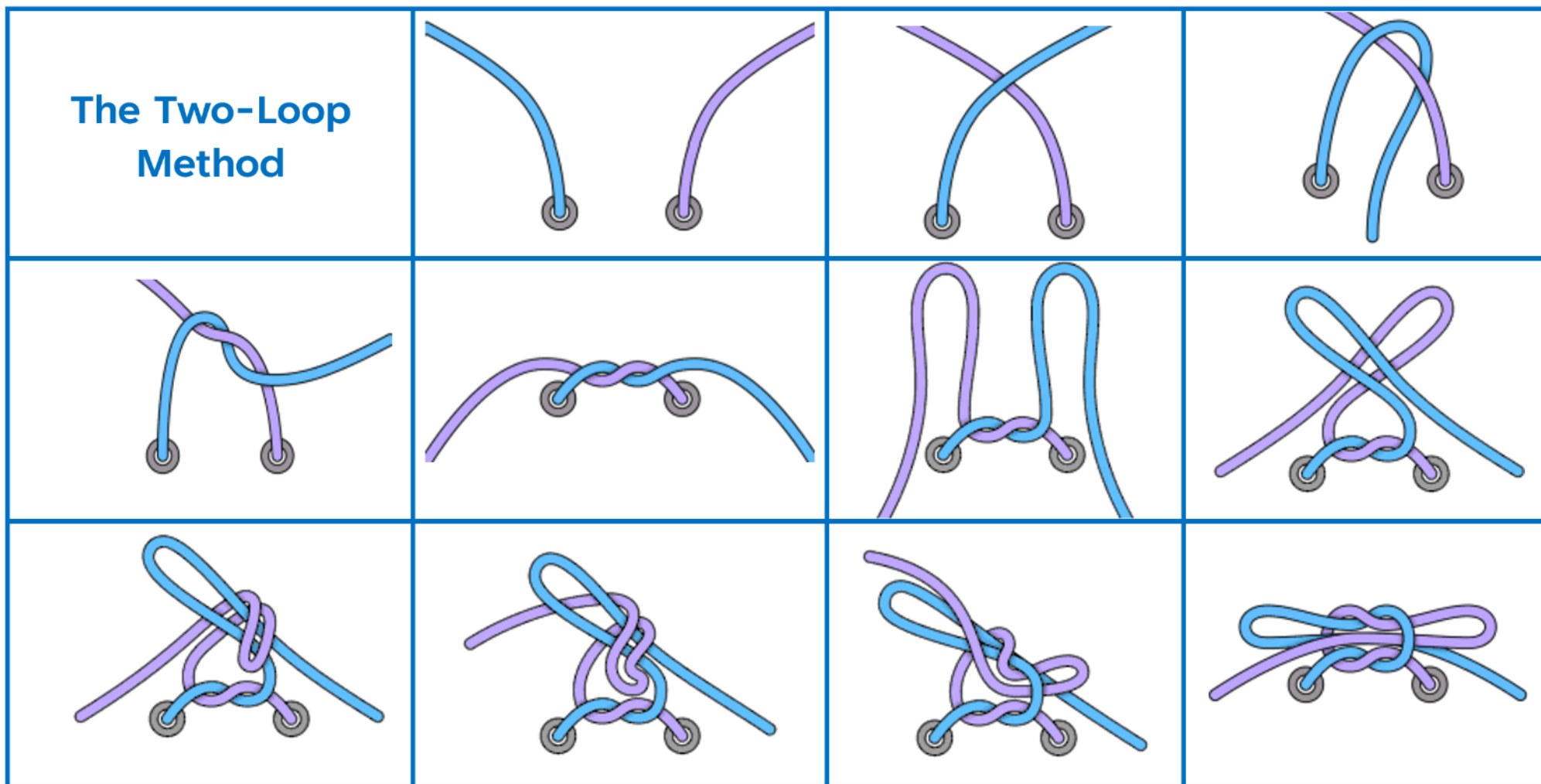
# Dressing Skills

## Shoelaces: the standard one-loop method



# Dressing Skills

## Shoelaces: The Two-Loop Method



# Dressing Skills

## Alternative shoelaces



Alternatives to needing to tie laces include – using Velcro fastenings, elastic laces, springy spiral laces, slip on shoes.

**Coiler Shoe Laces** (also known as Spring Laces) These elastic based laces do not require tying. Lace the shoes up and release the laces at the required pressure and the lace will coil to keep in place.

### **Elastic Shoelaces**

Shoes can be prelaced and tied, allowing them to be slipped on or off without tying each time. Feature flat style laces that stay securely tied.

### **Soesi Elastic Laces**

These look like normal shoe laces with crimped ends, but are elasticated and effectively convert lace-up shoes into slip-on shoes, for those who have trouble reaching or tying shoelaces.

**Lace Locks** These lace locks hold the shoelaces in place, taking away the strain of continually tying your laces. Only one hand is needed to pinch or pull the locks to loosen or tighten the laces.





# Dressing Skills

## Teaching buttons



Start practicing with larger, flat buttons and then progressing to smaller ones. Ensure that the buttonhole is large enough for the button.

Buttons are easier to grasp if they are flat (instead of concave) large, textured or sewn slightly above the surface of the garment. Be sure buttonholes are large enough for buttoning ease.

Only undo the top few buttons when taking off a shirt/blouse, and then remove the garment over the head. It can be put on over the head and only a few buttons will need to be done up.

Try leaving the cuff buttons done up. Alternatively sew a piece of elastic or a button attached with elastic thread across the cuffs so that it can be stretched open when the hand is pushed through.

Allow your child to do up those which they can see (e.g. at the bottom of a shirt). Start the task if necessary but then allow your child to finish e.g. pull the button through.

Velcro can be used instead of buttons, e.g. on a coat/shirt use Velcro and sew buttons on to top flap.

Choose trousers or skirts with elastic waist bands if buttons and buckles are difficult.



# Dressing Skills

## Tips for practicing button fastening skills



Post coins into post boxes/money box.

Start with a large posting hole and reduce its size as your child improves.

Play threading games with beads that are different shapes and sizes.

Remind your child to slow down and concentrate.

Start with large buttons and gradually make them smaller as your child improves

Start by asking your child to do up one button and you complete the rest.

Buttons are easier to grasp if they are flat (not concave), larger or textured.

Then slowly build up the amount that you expect them to do.



# Dressing Skills

## Tips for zips

When buying a coat with an open ended zip, test the zip thoroughly as the ease of fastening can vary a lot.


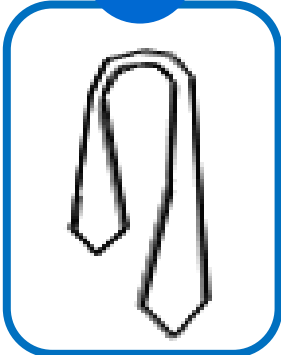
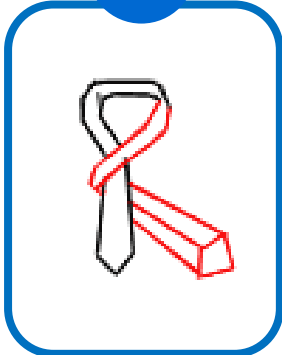
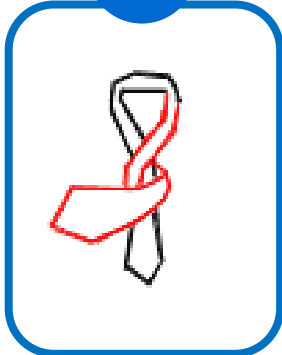
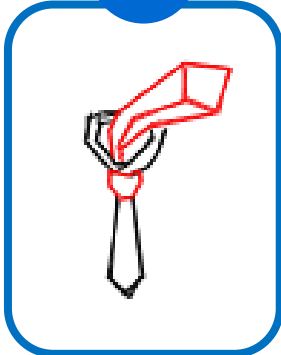
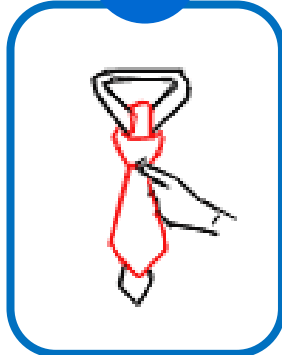

A key ring attached to a zip can help a child to grasp the zip more easily.

When learning to put the bottom end of the zip together, get your child to practice first with their coat off, then get them to sit down and try dressing in front of a mirror.



# Dressing Skills

## Visual Guide – School tie

						
Sit or stand in front of a mirror so that you can see your head and shoulders	Start with the wide end of the tie on your right and hanging down below the narrow end so it reaches your waist.	Cross the wide end over the narrow and back underneath.	Continue around passing the wide end across front of the narrow once more.	Pass the wide end up through loop	Holding the front of the knot loosely with index finger, pass the wide end down through the loop in front.	Remove finger and tighten knot carefully. Draw up tight to collar by holding the narrow end and sliding the knot snug.

# Self Care



# Self Care

## Introduction

- Self-care skills can be taught to children with disabilities through hands-on practices that combine direct instruction, opportunities, and modelling. Activities like self-feeding and self-dressing, along with toilet training, shoe-tying, etc. can help them live independently and confidently.



- Self-care skills are extremely important for a person to live independently. The process of developing self-care skills begins from a very early age that goes into adulthood. However, some young children with disabilities find it difficult to grasp certain self-care skills for various reasons. Developmental delays due to their mental, physical and behavioural difficulties may prevent them from performing some basic self-care activities, so they may require additional strategies and help to learn independent living skills.



# Self Care

## What are Self Care Skills?

These are the actions we take for granted every day, like:

Brushing our teeth

Tying our shoes

Putting on or taking off clothes and/or shoes

Brushing our hair

Sitting up unassisted

Bathing

Eating

Toileting



For those of us without special needs, these actions came as usual milestones without issue, but a special needs child requires a little bit of extra attention along with a safe and comfortable ambience, additional support and encouragement to ensure they will be capable of performing these actions on their own.



## Teaching self-care skills Tip #1

All children need specific direction while learning self-skills, but these instructions are harder for a child with special needs to grasp. Here are some basic strategies on how to engage a child in fruitful learning:

### Give them the courage to help themselves.

As a parent and or educator, it can be difficult to see a child struggling to complete a task.

Your first instinct will probably be to swoop in and take care of the issue for them, lest they experience anxiety or frustration when attempting it themselves, but it's important to take a step back in these situations and provide the child with the assistance needed for them to complete the task on their own.

If they are trying to tie their shoes but can't remember the way you've taught them, try a different approach in a manner that they can understand and learn from; being supportive while the child attempts a task on their own can go a long way towards self-confidence, self-esteem and self-skill mastery.



### Teaching self-care skills Tip #2



#### **Break it into bite-sized bits.**

When you see a child struggling to understand the basic concepts of certain self-skills, take a moment to break the task down into smaller steps.

What is second nature for us can puzzle a child with special needs, so give them clear methods in their own language that can help them recognise the bigger picture.

Getting dressed without assistance can prove to be frustrating if a child doesn't remember the correct order in which to put things or can't master buttons.

Modify the steps into cohesive concepts a child can easily complete with moderate assistance until the behaviour becomes learned.



### Teaching self-care skills Tip #3



#### Identify self-skill problem areas.

Does the child do okay at the beginning of a task, such as unbuttoning a coat, but becomes frustrated the longer the process continues?

If a similar situation occurs in which the child with special needs encounters a part of the task that cannot be completed on their own, go ahead and assist them with that particular step alone by letting them know you are going to help and/or asking them if they need help.

This still allows for the child to retain some of their own independence while they work to master the skill in question.

Watching the child closely while they perform a number of self-skill tasks can help you determine which areas need the most attention.



### Teaching self-care skills Tip #4



#### Make Learning Fun.

If the child is having difficulties picking up cutlery for dinner, for instance, give them related tasks to perform throughout the day that mimic the behaviour but are considered play for the child.

Because grasping a fork or spoon requires fine motor skills, try having the child play with clothespins or training chopsticks during times when they are engaged in other play.

Have the child squeeze and eyedropper or pop the bubbles in bubble wrap; these are interesting, fun activities that can help the child refine their motor skills until they are ready to try picking up cutlery and eating on their own.

Positive Reinforcement and continual praise will help boost the rate in which the child will learn and retain these critical self-skills.

### Teaching self-care skills Tip #5



#### **Simplify the everyday.**

While it's not encouraged for you to do every hard task for the child, it is okay to make things easier for them while they practice mastering problematic self-skills.

If a child with special needs cannot tie their shoes properly, give them shoes with Velcro closures, which are often much easier for children to manage. Is buttoning an issue?

Provide the child with elastic waist pants until they feel confident enough to try buttons on their own.

Consider pullover clothing for a child who cannot properly operate zippers.

In these cases, making things temporarily easy can allay the child's frustrations while you continue to work with them on these basic self-skills.

### Tips On Teaching Self-Skills - Conclusion



Each child learns at their own unique pace, which can be frustrating to you as a parent and to any educator. Keep in mind that this is just their way of learning about the world around them.

Make a list of goals to be met and keep it where both you and the child can reference the information at any time.

Check off each step or skill that has been conquered, celebrate each victory, and reassure the child during any setbacks.

There is no right or wrong way to learn, and the child will eventually master these important life skills, in their own way.

Self-care skills are important for every child to learn, but they can be especially empowering for children with disabilities.

By teaching the child how to care for themselves, you're helping them to gain independence and confidence.

# Intimate Care

## Intimate Care

### What is Intimate Care?



#### Definition:

Intimate care is any assistance that involves touching a child while carrying out a procedure that most children can do for themselves, but some are unable to manage without help.

This may involve help with eating, drinking, dressing, and matters of personal hygiene such as washing and toileting. In some instances, more, specialised intimate assistance may be needed for children with physical or medical difficulties.



# Intimate Care

## Introduction

- Children and young people at school often require support in personal care. Children in the early years of school, and those with physical disabilities, and learning difficulties may require assistance in managing their personal needs. Other pupils, because of accident or illness, may also at some time require such assistance. Many pupils have support staff to assist them in all aspects of school life including personal care, while others may rely on the help and goodwill of staff and peers.
- This guidance has been drawn up to help schools safeguard pupils and staff by providing this support in as safe, structured and dignified way as possible.



- The guidance is based on the experience and good practice of those working with children and young people requiring intimate care in school situations, and may or may not need to be specifically adapted to suit your individual school's or pupil's needs.
- Within this document, the term “child” includes pupils at all stages of school life from preschool to young adult, the term “assistant” refers to those adults with responsibility for providing intimate care in school, and the term “parent” refers to those persons having primary responsibility for the child in the home.



## Guidance



### Aims

The aim of this document is to help schools put in place policies and procedures that:

- Safeguard the dignity, rights, and well-being of children;
- Provide guidance and support to staff; and
- Reassure parents that their children are cared for and protected.

## Guidance



## Confidentiality

- Information regarding agreed procedures must be treated confidentially and recorded/held only in the child's school file. Information should not be disclosed or discussed with any adults other than those with responsibility for the child's personal care, and should not be referred to in the presence of other children.
- Care should be provided at agreed times, at the child's request or in response to an agreed signal. Staff should make themselves familiar with the child's manner of communication, whether verbal, sign or eye contact.
- Appropriate terminology for parts of the body and bodily functions should be clarified between the child, parents, and their assistant/s.

## The child & the parents



### The Child

- The child has the right to assistance that respects his/her dignity, and to feel safe when being moved or handled.
- The child has the right to feel comfortable with the adult's assisting him/her, and to make it known if this level of comfort is disturbed.
- The child should be encouraged to engage in the care procedure, to know what is happening, and give permission at each stage.
- The child should be encouraged to work towards independence, and helped to do so as much as possible for him/herself.

### The Parents

- Parents have the right to information regarding school policy and procedures designed to meet the needs of their child. The school should work closely with parents to ensure that all aspects of the care procedure are shared and understood.
- Parents have a responsibility to ensure that all relevant information is provided to help the school assist their child in an appropriate way.
- Parents should meet the adult/s who will provide intimate care to the child, and be informed of the school's arrangements in the event of this person/s being absent.
- Parents should consider alternative arrangements to allow the child to participate in school activities (PE, examinations, performances, swimming, sports day, etc.), and activities outside school (field trips, educational visits, transport, etc.).
- The school should gain written permission from parents for the care to be provided

## Writing an intimate care plan

- The plan should have the child's safety, privacy, and dignity as paramount
- The plan should include:
  - Clear information regarding the assistance to be provided;
  - The method of communication to be used by the child;
  - The named person/s with responsibility to assist the child;
  - The timetable, if possible, when assistance will be provided;
  - Arrangements in the absence of the named assistant/s;
  - Arrangements for school events and activities;
  - The means by which the arrangement will be monitored;
  - Strategies to prevent or deal with questions/comments from other pupils and
  - The maintenance of a record of assistance
- While it is recommended to have two members of staff assisting the child, this level of resourcing may not be available, and while the introduction of a second assistant may be perceived as providing protection against allegations of abuse, it can also further erode the child's privacy.
- If the plan has been agreed and signed by parents, staff, and child if appropriate, it is acceptable to have one assistant unless there are implications regarding safe handling.
- Two persons should be assisting if a hoist is being used. In this case the second person should be identified and made known to the child and parents.
- Alternative arrangements must be in place in the absence of one or both named staff. However, the school should be aware that the introduction of other staff to the care context without prior arrangement can increase the vulnerability of the child and adults.
- The plan should specify the assistance to be provided as clearly as possible e.g. Undressing/cleaning the child, changing a nappy, holding child in position, etc.
- The assistant/s should talk to the child throughout the procedure e.g. "I am going to help you undress", "I am using a wipe to clean your bottom".
- The assistance should be rehearsed in the bathroom with the parent/s present to ensure clarity. Following this there should be no change to what has been agreed.
- Teachers should be made aware of the care timetable, particularly if the child needs to be absent from class, and should be aware of the approximate time the procedure should take. The assistant/s should ensure their return to the classroom is noted.
- The plan should be signed by all contributors and reviewed on a regular basis



# Training & Resources

- Guidance/advice may often be provided by the child's parent, and/or the child him/herself.
- All staff providing personal care must have received child protection training.
- Specialised training may be required if the child uses a colostomy bag or requires an invasive procedure such as rectally administered medication. This training may be arranged through the SEND Specialist Nurse (NHS).
- It is recommended that the school's arrangements in the absence of named assistants should involve only members of staff who have undergone appointment procedure including background scrutiny. Casual substitute staff should not provide intimate care in the school setting.
- The school must provide appropriate accommodation that ensures privacy for the child, and is sufficiently spacious to accommodate any other equipment the child may need, such as a changing bench or hoist. The provision of appropriate accommodation and equipment should be arranged in conjunction with the advice from the therapists.
- The school should provide resources to ensure that procedures are carried out hygienically. This may include disposable aprons, gloves, wipes and medicated hand washing products. Additional requirements may include labelled bins for the disposal of soiled waste; items such as needles, catheters, etc., and arrangements for the collection of such waste.
- Schools should ensure that the assistant has a means of attracting attention and assistance in an emergency.

# Vulnerability to abuse

- Children should be encouraged to recognise and challenge inappropriate assistance, and behaviour that erodes their dignity and self-worth. However, the following factors may increase a child's vulnerability:
  - Experience of multiple carers;
  - The inability to distinguish between assistance and abuse; and
  - The inability to communicate.
- While adults are protected by their adherence to procedure, the following factors may increase their vulnerability:
  - The possibility of accidents;
  - The possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpretation; and
  - The possibility of the child becoming aroused.
- The school should ensure that the programme of assistance is monitored and both child and adult given the opportunity to report any concerns that they may have.
- The school's designated child protection person may be the most appropriate individual to undertake this responsibility.

# Protecting Teaching Assistants from allegations of abuse

- Personnel working in intimate situations with children/young people can feel particularly vulnerable. School policies can help reassure both staff involved and the parents of vulnerable children/young people.
- The school policies should refer to:
  - Signed agreements being in place for any procedures to take place e.g. toilet management plans. Each child/young person's parents retain legal responsibility throughout and it is therefore essential that agreements are in place.
  - Working closely with parents and the child/young person, as appropriate, e.g. this would include parents and child's/young person's signature on the toilet management plans.
  - The following will help both parties to feel supported and empowered:
    - Clear guidance about the nature of work,
    - Discussion about how to manage the tasks with the child/young person
    - Management plans designed with the child/young person
- These plans should include protocols for informing another member of staff before commencing the procedure and after completion, on each occasion
- To support the child/young person's dignity it is recommended that there is no more than 1 TA/LSA in the toilet unless it is necessary for the safe moving and handling of the child/young person.
- Requirements for staff to record all accidents/near accidents particularly those experienced when they are alone with the child/young person. In this way openness and transparency is encouraged
- Provide a listening environment where the child/young person's concerns are heard, taken seriously and addressed before they become too great.
- If there is a discrepancy between what the child/young person says is happening, and what the SLA says, particularly with reference to the time when they are alone together, action should be taken immediately. It is advised that in these situations support personnel are changed as quickly as possible. This is as much to protect the member of staff as well as for the child/young person.
- If there is an allegation of abuse, the guidelines in the Barnet Child Protection Guidance must be followed.

# Sample Intimate Care Policy

School: .....

### **Intimate care policy**

Intimate care is any assistance that involves touching a child while carrying out a procedure that most children are able to do for themselves but some are unable to manage without help. This may involve help with eating, drinking, dressing, and matters of personal hygiene such as washing and toileting. In some instances, more, specialised intimate assistance may be needed for children with physical or medical difficulties.

### **This policy aims to:**

- Safeguard the dignity, rights and well-being of children;
- Provide guidance, support and protection to staff; and
- Reassure parents that their children are cared for and protected.
- The school is committed to ensuring that all staff undertake their responsibilities in such a way that the rights, dignity and welfare of the children is protected.
- The school is committed to ensuring that staff undertaking these responsibilities are supported by policy, training and monitoring.
- All school staff receive child protection training, undertake to help children do as much as possible for themselves and develop each child's ability to achieve independence.
- Staff receive appropriate specialised training and are provided with facilities and equipment to ensure safety, privacy and dignity.
- An intimate care plan is drawn up for each child requiring such assistance, and is carefully planned and agreed in consultation with parents and child.
- Provision is monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that policy and procedure is adhered to, and that children and staff remain comfortable with the school's arrangements

# Intimate Care

## Permission form for intimate care

Permission form for intimate care			
Child/YP full name:			
Date of Birth:		Name of parent/Carer:	
Address:			

	Signature	Name	Relationship to child	Date
I/we give permission for the assistance detailed overleaf to be provided to my/our child, and will advise the school of any change that may affect this provision				
I, the child, give permission for the assistance detailed overleaf to be provided to me.				
I/We give permission for school to provide intimate care to my/our child.				
I/We will advise the school of anything that may affect issues of personal care (if medication is changed or my child has an infection for example)				
I/We understand the procedures that will be carried out and will contact the school immediately if there are any concerns.				



# Intimate Care

## Intimate Care Plan

Intimate care plan			
Child/YP full name:			
Date of Birth:		Name of parent/Carer:	
Address:			

Diagnosis			Signed	Date
Assistance			Parent	
Timetable			Pupil	
Persons assisting			Assistant(s)	
Alternative arrangements			SENCo	
Location/Equipment			Headteacher	

# Intimate Care

## Record sheet

Intimate care record sheet	
Child/YP full name:	
Name of staff involved:	

Date	Time	Procedure	Signature 1	Signature 2	Comments

# Intimate Care

## Intimate Care Checklist

Child/YP full name:			
Date of Birth:		Admission date:	

### Adaptations required?

- ☐ Changing Table/bed
- ☐ Grab rails
- ☐ Step
- ☐ Locker for supplies
- ☐ Hot and cold water Lever taps
- ☐ Mirror at suitable height
- ☐ Disposal unit/bin
- ☐ Hoist
- ☐ Other moving and handling equipment
- ☐ Emergency alarm
- ☐ Other

### Family-provided supplies

- ☐ Nappies/pads
- ☐ Catheters
- ☐ Wipes
- ☐ Spare clothes
- ☐ Other

### School provided supplies

- ☐ Toilet rolls
- ☐ Antiseptic cleanser
- ☐ Cloths/paper towels

- ☐ Soap
- ☐ Disposable gloves/aprons
- ☐ Disposal sacks
- ☐ Urine bottles
- ☐ Bowl/bucket
- ☐ Milton/sterilising fluid
- ☐ Other
- Good practice
- ☐ Advice sought from Health professionals?
- ☐ Moving and Handling Co-ordinator?
- ☐ Parent/carer views
- ☐ Pupil's views
- ☐ How does child communicate?
- ☐ Agree use of language to be used
- ☐ Preferences for gender of carer
- ☐ Training required for staff?
- ☐ Awareness raising for all staff
- ☐ Other

Toilet management/intimate care plan to be prepared

- ☐ By whom
- ☐ When

- ☐ To be reviewed when PE issues
- ☐ Discreet clothing required?
- ☐ Privacy for changing?
- ☐ Other
- Specific advice for swimming
- ☐ From parents/carers
- ☐ From Health professionals
- ☐ Moving and Handling Co-Ordinator
- Support
- ☐ Designated staff
- ☐ Back-up staff
- ☐ Training for back-up staff
- ☐ Transport
- ☐ School visits
- ☐ After school clubs

## Intimate Care

# Toileting plan discussion with parents/carers

Child/YP full name:			
Date of Birth:		Date of meeting:	
Persons present:			

Working towards independence, e.g. taking pupil to toilet at timed intervals, rewards		
Arrangements for nappy changing, e.g. who, where, privacy		
Level of assistance needed, e.g. undressing, hand washing, dressing		
Moving and handling needs, e.g. equipment, training needs, hoisting equipment		
Infection control, e.g. wearing gloves, nappy disposal		
Sharing information, e.g. nappy rash, infection, family/cultural customs		
Resources needed, e.g. toilet seat, step, nappies, creams, nappy sacks, change of clothes, gloves		
Other		

# Toilet Training



# Toilet Training - Introduction

- All children learn to use the potty or toilet at a different stage in their life. Most children start to show an interest in moving on to a potty or toilet at about two years old.
- If your child has a physical or learning disability they may not be ready to start until they are older. They may need longer to learn to use the potty or toilet.
- It is important to speak to a doctor to check for physical problems if your child is having difficulty in learning to use the toilet.
- Some children, particularly those with profound and multiple difficulties may not be able to use the toilet on their own but will need to have a toileting programme which will ensure their needs are treated with respect. Ask your health visitor or community nurse for advice.
- All children are different and the way they learn to use the toilet may be linked with the specific condition they have. It is a good idea to get in touch with the relevant support groups to get advice from people who have more experience.

# Toilet Training

- Toilet training for children with neurodevelopmental conditions may take longer.
- Some children may be prone to constipation or diarrhoea. They may experience one or both at the same time.
- Make sure that everyone involved with your child knows the approach that you are using so that you are all consistent.
- Keep to the same routine. If your child does not like change, it may be easier not to train using a potty as this will mean more change from potty to toilet.
- Watch your child to see when they wee and poo so that you can try and work out when you are likely to need to take them to the toilet.
- Have a visual sequence beside the toilet to help your child understand what to do.
- Some children may find bowel movements frightening so it may be useful to explain this.
- Some children may like the feel of a full nappy and not want to change.
- Some children enjoy the feel of smearing (touching their faeces), therefore other acceptable activities need to be provided.
- Check if anything in the toilet/bathroom may be affecting sensory issues e.g. water flushing.
- If your child does not like the texture of toilet paper, think of alternatives to use.
- Avoid using baby language as this may be difficult to change later.
- Use the same toileting routine when out of the home. If difficulties persist, contact your GP or another health professional, like an OT, involved in the care of your child to give advice.

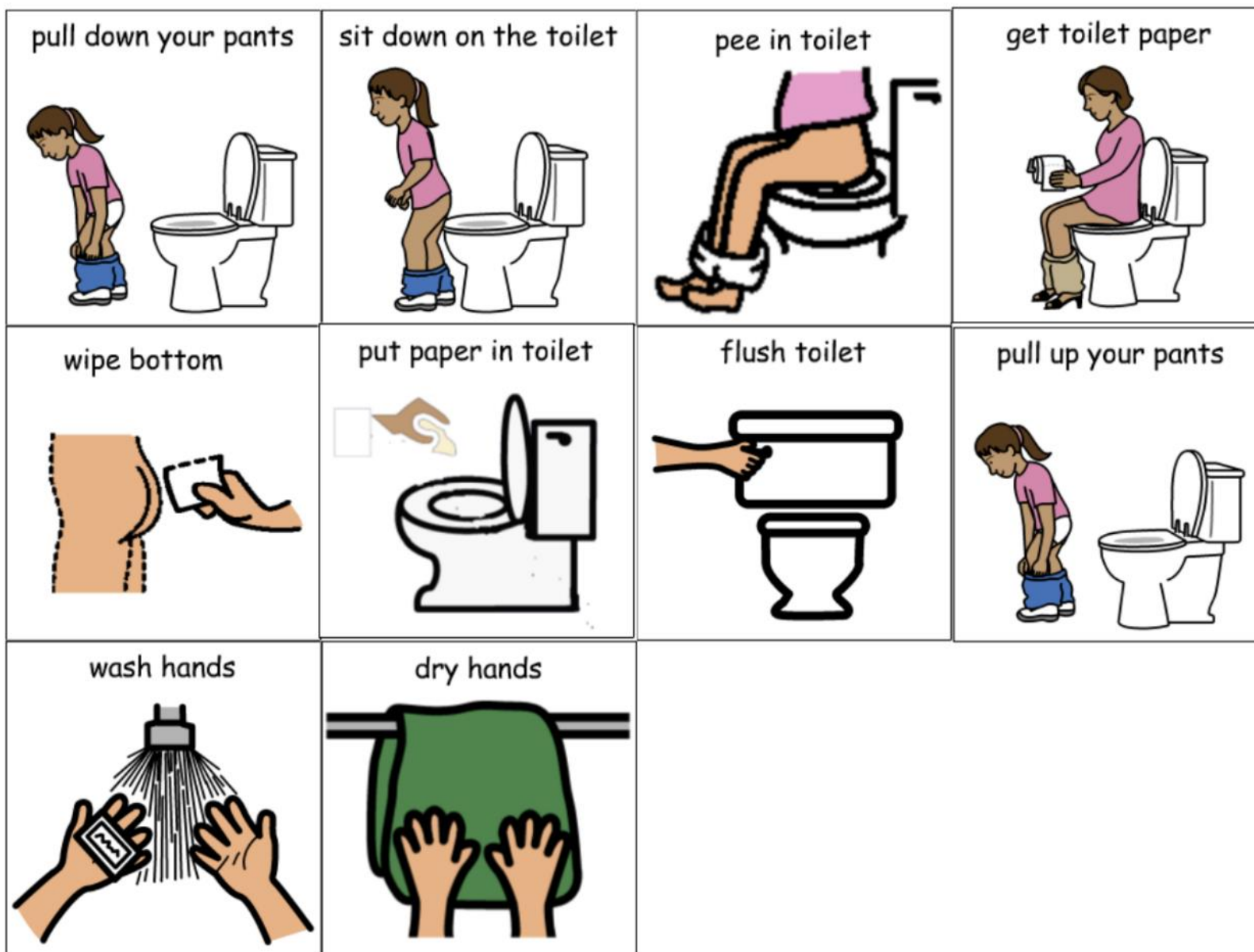
# Toilet Training

## Toileting visual aid for boys



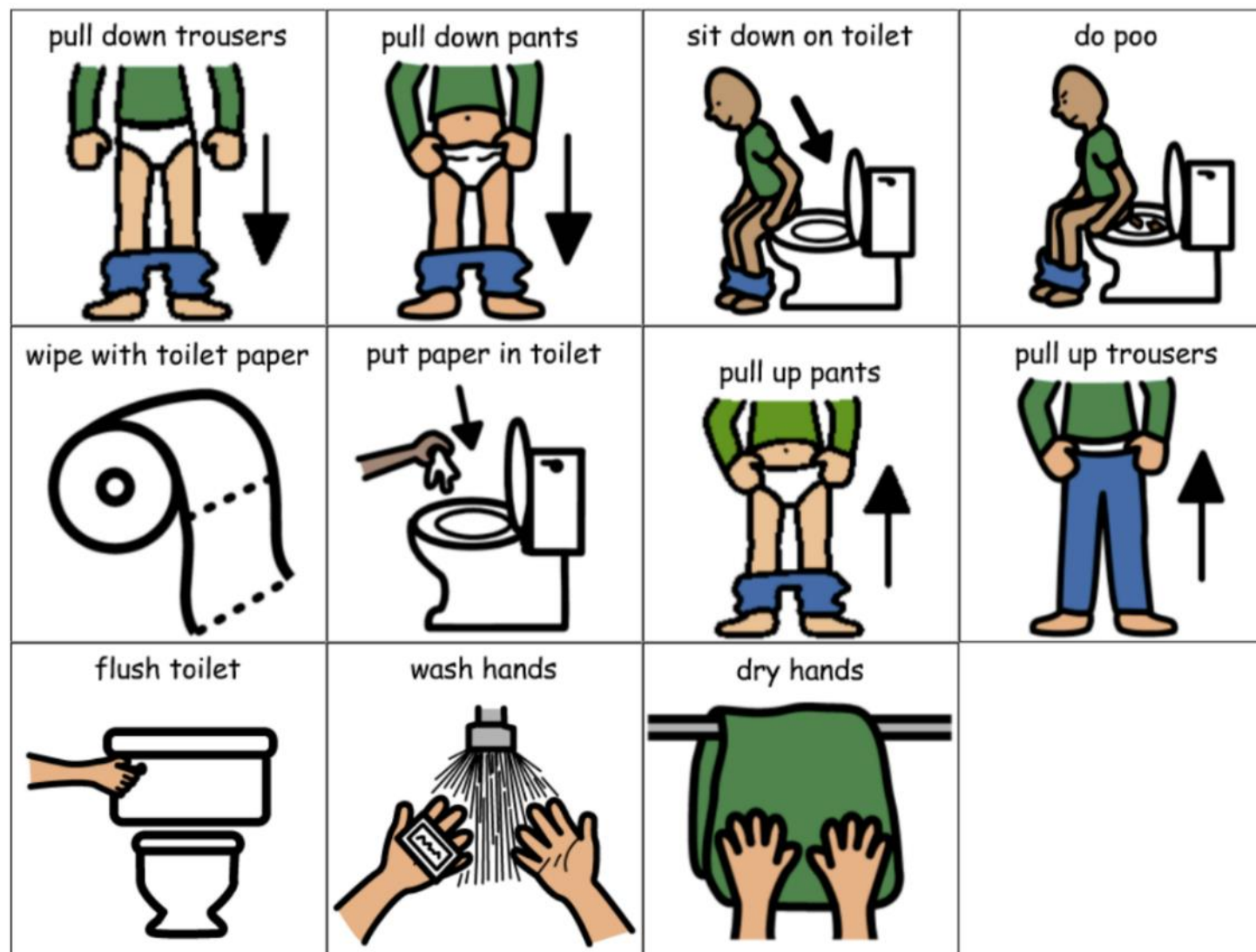
# Toilet Training

## Toileting visual aid for girls



# Toilet Training

## Toileting visual aid - pooing





# Toilet Training

## What do we mean by “toilet training”?

We are aiming for a child who is able to:

Pull their underwear down

Get onto the toilet

Have a wee and/or a poo

Wipe themselves

Get off the toilet

Pull their underwear up

Flush the toilet

Wash and dry hands



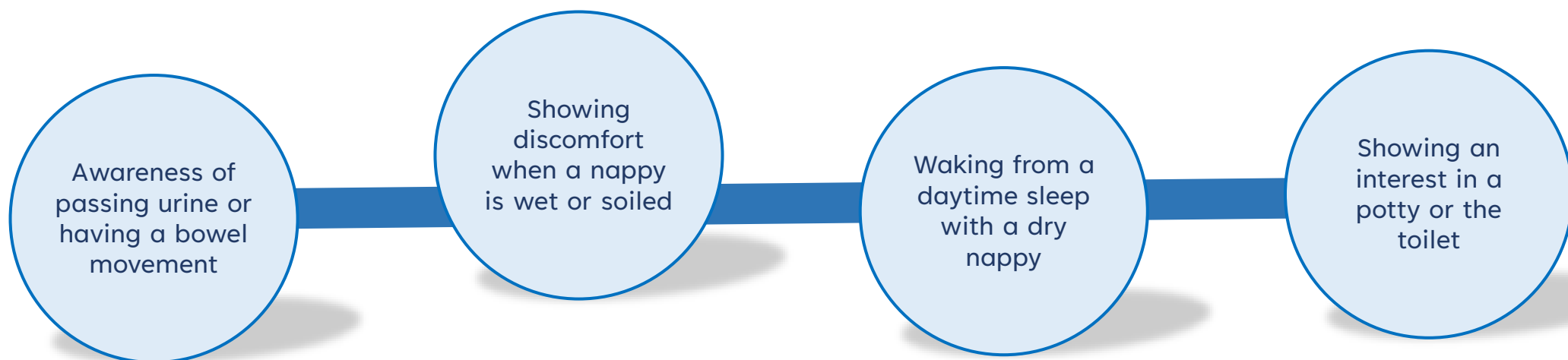
Toilet training helps children:

- Recognise the need to go to the toilet
- Control the need
- Communicate the need to go to the toilet
- Complete the toilet sequence as far as they are able.

# Toilet Training

## When should you start toilet training?

Look for signs that your child is ready to use the potty or toilet. These might include:



### What if your child does not show these signs?

If your child's condition means that they are not showing any of these signs you should discuss it with one of the professionals involved with your child's needs.

This could be the health visitor, community nurse, occupational therapist, paediatrician or, if they are in a nursery or school setting, the teacher, teaching assistant or school nurse.

You will need support from the professionals who deal with your child on a day to day basis and it is important to work together on ways of addressing the issue.

# Toilet Training

## Toilet training: Before starting

Choose a time when you can spend a lot of time with your child, when your child seems happy and there are no major distractions or stressful events like starting nursery, moving house, moving from a cot to a bed.

Make sure the time you choose fits in with you as well – perhaps at a time when there is someone else to help you if this is possible.

It may take some time for a child to learn, so make sure that toilet training can be carried out in the other places your child visits such as the playgroup, nursery, or school.

You will need to be sure that any one-to-one workers contribute to the toileting plan.



# Toilet Training

## Toilet training: Tips before starting

Look at the times your child is most likely to use the toilet, for example after meals, when s/he wakes up from a sleep. It is worth making a chart for a few weeks to establish any patterns. The chart can be very simple where you note the times when the child wees or poos

Plan a routine you can stick to, until it becomes established

Make sure the potty or toilet is comfortable for the child and the child can sit on it without any fear of falling off. The child should be able to place his/her feet flat on the floor or foot step



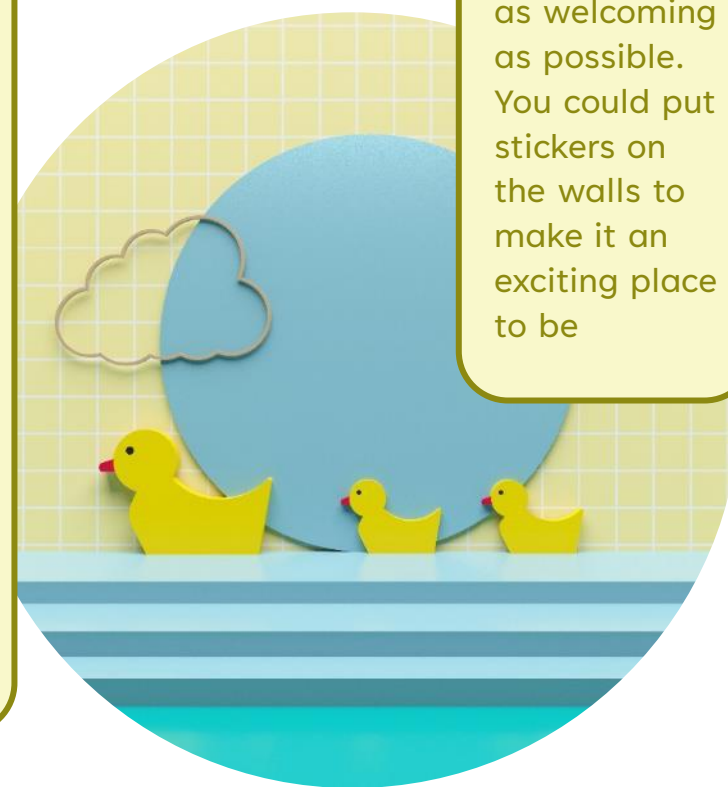
There are various toilet seats and steps available from retail outlets. It is worth looking at the range and deciding what would be good for your child

If your child has difficulty in sitting, an occupational therapist should be able to help with equipment and check whether the toilet needs to be adapted so it is more comfortable for the child

Make sure you change the child in the toilet so that they get used to the toilet as a place where wee and poo happens



Try and make the bathroom as welcoming as possible. You could put stickers on the walls to make it an exciting place to be



# Toilet Training

## Toilet Training: Once you start



- Be patient – don't expect instant results.
- Do not restrict fluid intake – plenty of drinks should be given so that the need to go to the toilet becomes familiar.
- Ensure your child has a healthy diet with plenty of fibre, for example brown bread, fruit, Weetabix – to help their bowel movements to be soft and easy to pass.
- Take your child to the toilet at the times you expect they may need to go – refer to the chart you have made.
- Avoid taking your child too frequently. If they have just used the toilet, they will not need to visit for at least one hour



# Toilet Training

## Toilet Training: Once you start



- Keep to the planned routine as much as you can.
- Do not show any signs of concern – it will make your child feel anxious.
- Remember there are several steps in the whole process and each one needs to be reached – they may not all happen at once.
- If your child is reluctant to sit still, you could sing some songs or read a book with them just for a few minutes to get your child used to sitting on the potty or toilet. Never keep your child on the potty or toilet for more than five minutes

# Toilet Training

## Toilet Training: Once you start



If your child is older and too big for a potty and still not showing interest in using the toilet then make sure they visit the toilet area regularly. You may need to put a favourite book, picture or toy next to the toilet or play a favourite piece of music to encourage them to come into the room.

Make sure all toileting needs occur in the toilet or bathroom so that your child associates the changing of nappies/pants with the toilet area.

Praise your child first for showing an interest in the potty or toilet, then for using the potty – every small step should be rewarded with praise or stickers.

Make sure your child sees you washing your hands after wiping them so it becomes part of the process of using the toilet.

Let your child get used to the routine of washing his/her hands after being on the potty or toilet



# Toilet Training

## Bowel movements & smearing



- Sit your child on the toilet or potty when you think they are likely to have a bowel movement and encourage them to push down gently. To encourage this, try making your child laugh or to blow into a toy or whistle – if they are sitting upright it will also help to encourage a bowel movement.
- If nothing happens, say nothing and try again a bit later. If it is acceptable to your family, take your child into the toilet when you or family members go, to show the child what is expected. It may take much longer than with other children, so be patient.



# Toilet Training

## Bowel movements & smearing

### Smearing

Some children with learning disabilities smear their faeces after going to the toilet.

There can be various reasons for this.

It could be a child has simply not understood the process of wiping with paper properly.

Others enjoy the feel of the texture of the faeces and providing them with an alternative activity such as play dough can resolve the situation.

Some will use it as a way of getting attention, or because they have learnt they are rewarded for such behaviour by being given a nice warm bath.

Children can also behave in this way because they are extremely upset and agitated

### If your child smears:

- try to stay calm
- avoid giving them lots of attention as a result of their behaviour
- reinforce good behaviour by giving them lots of praise when they carry out other activities well
- try to see if there is a pattern to their behaviour, as it might help you understand why they are doing it
- seek advice from a professional such as a nurse, health visitor, occupational therapist or psychologist on dealing with it
- set a period of time to try any strategies and if nothing happens, wait for a while before starting again

### Children who find it hard to communicate

- Make sure your child can communicate to you when they need to use the toilet if they are able.
- Some children who are able to speak will be able to use words. Others may not be able to ask to use the toilet and may need to use another system such as a signing system like Makaton or a symbol.
- Other children may be able to use a photograph or object such as a roll of toilet paper to show that they need to go to the toilet
- Make sure your child knows where the toilet or potty is, and can get in and out of that room easily. Make it fun – find a special toy, which your child only uses when in the toilet – this will help them to associate going to the toilet with fun and not stress. If your child needs to be cleaned, make sure that people working with them know this should be done in a private bathroom area in an age-appropriate way. It is not acceptable for a physically able young person to be ‘changed’ whilst lying down



## Toilet Training

# If your child takes a long time to learn to use the toilet

- Try to get clothes that are easy to wear, change, and wash.
- Items such as large size nappies, waterproof mattress covers, and covers for duvets and pillows may be available from the continence service, when your child is three or four– ask your health visitor. If not, you can get them from larger chemists.
- If your child is older, it is often you as their parents who understand their needs, and you may be able to devise your own strategies.
- Do not despair. Try to speak with other parents for support, advice and tips

## **Motor activities are a part of every day, all day long!**

This toolkit is packed with information aimed at professionals and parents/carers supporting children developing their motor skills and independence.

If a child has difficulties with fine & gross motor skills, it is recommended they consult an Occupational Therapist and a Physiotherapist. It is important to acknowledge however that in many (but not all) paediatric cases, there is a large overlap in the skills addressed by Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy.



Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence (ERIC) A helpline for parents, and offer products and publications to buy online 0845 370 8008 [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk)



Family Fund Gives grants to families on low income for washing machines, tumble driers or towards cost of bedding and clothing. 01904 621 115 [www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)



National Autistic Society Provides information advice and support for people with autistic spectrum disorders and their families, including a fact sheet on toilet training. Offers an interpreting service in over 120 different languages to callers using landline telephones in the UK 0808 800 4104 [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)



Scope supports families of children with cerebral palsy and can provide written information on toilet training. 0808 800 3333 [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

# Useful Contacts

## contact

Contact is a UK charity that provides support and information to families with disabled children, whatever the condition or disability [www.contact.org.uk](http://www.contact.org.uk)



Council for Disabled Children CDC [www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)



Shine - Aiming to transform the life chances of children, young people and their families, particularly in areas of disadvantage and deprivation [www.shine-charity.org](http://www.shine-charity.org)



Muscular Dystrophy UK – charity for over 60 muscle wasting and weakening conditions <https://www.musculardystrophyuk.org/>



Cerebra- national charity dedicated to helping children with brain conditions and their families discover a better life together. [www.cerebra.org.uk](http://www.cerebra.org.uk)



Epilepsy action- offer a range of services for people affected by epilepsy [www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)



Mencap: Passionate about changing the world for everyone with a learning disability. [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)



Hemiplegia Hemichat –a parent led UK charity supporting families of babies, children and young adults living with Hemiplegia [www.hemichat.org](http://www.hemichat.org)



The Brain Charity-helping people with all forms of neurological condition to lead longer, healthier, happier lives [www.thebraincharity.org.uk](http://www.thebraincharity.org.uk)



Whizz Kidz - The UK's leading charity for young wheelchair users. [www.whizz-kidz.org.uk](http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk)