

Moving

“Babies need to learn movement before they can learn non-movement activities (reading, writing, etc.)” ~ Pat Babendure, Pediatric Physical Therapist, Boise, Idaho

As I am growing and changing, both my large muscles (gross motor) and small muscles (fine motor) are developing. I need a variety of experiences and opportunities to develop my new motor skills.

Stage 1 (Birth to around 3 months)

I am:

Gross motor

- using automatic movements or reflexes. I will root for a breast or bottle, suck, grasp, blink, or swallow.
- beginning to support my head when held on an adult's shoulder.
- beginning to turn my head from side to side while on my tummy and lifting my head to look forward for a short period of time.
- beginning to support my head and upper body when held in a lap.

Fine motor

- lifting my hands to my mouth to suck on my fingers.
- watching human faces with interest and mimicking facial expressions.
- starting to smile and maybe laugh.
- using my fists to reach for objects.

My caregivers help by:

- encouraging and offering supervised tummy time.
- helping me to get into different positions when I am not able to move: on my tummy, back, and sides.
- placing simple toys within reach.

A newborn's hand are closed or fisted for the first few months. As they become more aware of their body in space, they will open their fists to reach or explore objects.

Tummy Time

Allow infants supervised time on their stomachs to help them to develop important skills. This also strengthens the muscles needed for more advanced motor movements.

Babies should be placed safely on their stomachs frequently throughout the day.

Join babies on the floor to play!

Remember, you are their favorite toy.



Stage 2 (3 to around 6 months)

I am:

Gross motor

- turning my head from side to side while on my tummy and lifting it up to look forward. I will then push up with my arms to look ahead.
- making swimming motions while on my tummy.
- kicking my legs back and forth. I love to push off walls, couches, and my crib.
- rolling from my stomach to my back, and then back to my stomach.
- beginning to support myself while sitting, and getting in and out of a sitting position.
- turning my head in all directions while sitting.
- discovering my new skills to move by arching, rolling, kicking, and rocking.



Provide a lot of opportunities for infants to practice their new skills. Give them floor time with simple objects that are easy for them to grab and safe for them to bring to their mouth.

Fine motor

- able to grasp a simple toy and bring it to my mouth.
- able to grab and let go of items.
- shaking, throwing, and banging different items I pick up.
- starting to pick up small items by using my whole hand like a rake. This may include my first finger foods.
 - Then I will use the tips of all my fingers to pick up items.
 - Eventually I will use just the tip of my index finger and thumb, called the “pincher grip,” to pick up small items.

My caregivers help me by:

- placing me in spaces where I am free to practice moving my body. Limit my time in swings, saucers, walkers, jumpers, etc. Provide safe push and pull toys.
- routinely putting me down to play on the floor on my tummy, so I can build my muscles.
- placing simple items close to me that are safe to chew so I can practice moving my body and grabbing them.
- making my environment safe and ready for me to explore. Check to make sure all electrical outlets, lamps, plants, objects, and shelves are child-safe and/or secure. Place a gate in areas that are not safe. Secure doors, low cabinets, and drawers that may pinch or hurt fingers.

Now is the time to move all cleaning items, chemicals, medication, or toxic containers away from the child's reach and into a locked cabinet.

Stage 3 (6 to around 12 months)

I am:

Gross motor

- a little explorer! I will try to figure things out by dumping, pushing, waving, and throwing.
- creeping on my belly before I can crawl on my hands and knees. I might crawl backwards too!
- practicing my crawling by rocking back and forth on my hands and knees. I will even do this in my sleep!
- beginning to imitate different motor actions like waving and clapping.
- crawling, scooting, or rolling to get objects and toys of interest.
- very interested in stairs, doors, and drawers.
- pulling myself up when holding onto something or someone, and practicing lowering myself back down again. At first this won't look very balanced.
- beginning to walk along something I can hold onto, such as a couch ("cruising").
- beginning to let go of people or items to stand all by myself.
- taking steps not holding onto anything.
- using my arms to balance when walking.



Crawling

Crawling is an important time for infants. It helps them become mobile and more independent. Allow infants time to crawl, and to become expert crawlers. Research shows that crawling helps brain development.

Fine motor

- grabbing objects with one hand, and transferring them from one hand to the other.
- reaching for my cup with one hand and bringing it to my mouth.
- interested in items that move, roll, stack, open and close, or make noise.
- still using my mouth to explore objects.
- able to make silly facial expressions.

Watch for choking hazards like small toys, Legos, and coins on the floor and low tables. A new crawler loves to find small items to practice their new pincher grip skill.

My caregivers help me by:

- placing age-appropriate items on the ground that I can move my body over, under, and through: large pillows, tunnels, foam climbing blocks, ramps, etc.
- providing lots of open space for me to practice my new motor skills.
- helping me learn how to slide down the stairs on my tummy feet first, when I'm ready.
- using song and movement activities in my daily routine, especially those that represent the cultures of my family and the other children around me.

- taking me outside to play every day.
- securing chairs, tables, and shelving that can fall over while I am pulling myself up.

Stage 4 (12 to around 24 months)

I am:

Gross motor

- carrying things while I walk. I can also bend over to pick something up, then stand up again without holding onto anything.
- beginning to walk with my arms down, and even starting to run with balance and control. I will even start to walk backwards!
- excited to use push and pull toys and riding toys.
- able to roll or toss a ball.
- filling up baskets and then dumping them out.
- climbing up ladders, stairs, and climbing structures.
- able to swing and slide with help.



Some children do not enjoy climbing structures, slides, and swings. The movement is too scary and they need more time to be comfortable. Try swinging slowly or sliding with a child when they are ready.

Fine motor

- stacking large and small blocks, pillows, and books.
- practicing getting undressed. I will pull off my shoes, socks, and even my diaper if I can reach it.
- using my new grip to grab writing utensils and make marks on paper.
- ready to use the sand and water table.
- able to use large blocks, push beads, linking toys, and simple wooden puzzles.

My caregivers help me by:

- providing activities that allow for running, throwing, kicking, pushing toys, and climbing on low climbing structures.
- allowing me to explore fat crayons, markers, and chalk to make marks on paper.
- offering a sand and water table to play with regularly. Adding different textures, tools, materials, and colors to the table for me to explore.
- providing different materials for me to stack, put together, and take apart.
- providing board books for me to explore and practice turning pages.
- allowing me to feed myself with child-sized utensils at mealtimes.
- supervising me closely as I move and explore my world.

Stage 5 (24 to around 36 months)

I am:

Gross motor

- using my body in new ways to explore. I can now act on my ideas, like climbing up a chair or structure to be “king of the mountain.”
- running and changing directions and speeds without falling.
- starting to throw and kick items in an intended direction.
- starting to jump in place. At first, I will jump without leaving the ground, and then I will jump forward with both feet.
- able to walk up and down stairs while holding onto a rail or an adult’s hand by placing each foot on the same step one after the other.



Provide a lot of opportunities for toddlers to explore through movement. Use pillows, soft blocks, large open boxes, and sheets to create new spaces for them to crawl over, under, and through.

Fine motor

- stacking large and small blocks to build a simple structure and then enjoying knocking it down.
- interested in writing and drawing, even imitating circles and lines.
- ready to use play dough and simple play dough tools.
- able to complete simple board puzzles.
- feeding myself with utensils by scooping and spearing food and bringing it to my mouth.

My caregivers help me by:

- placing items on the ground that I can move my body over, under, and through: large pillows, tunnels, foam climbing blocks, etc.
- taking me outside to play and learn every day, even when it’s cold or rainy.
- incorporating songs and movement activities into classroom routines, especially those that represent the cultures of my family and the other children in my class.
- providing activities that allow for running, jumping, throwing, kicking, riding toys, and climbing structures.
- allowing me to explore fat crayons, markers, and chalk to make marks on paper.
- providing different materials for me to stack, put together, and take apart.
- providing board books for me to explore and practice turning pages.
- allowing me to serve and feed myself with child-sized utensils at mealtimes.

To learn more about moving, view the Resources and References found at the end of these materials.