

Gross Motor Skill Activities

Gross Motor Skill Activities for Special Needs Children

Most special needs children tend to have problems with their balance, body strength, and coordination. These problems are affected by gross motor skills, or skills that use the larger muscles of the body. While special needs children may be slow to develop their gross motor skills, they can still exercise and partake in daily activities that can increase their strength, balance, and coordination.

When special needs children work on their gross motor skills, their fine motor skills improve as well. Here are a few activities that any parent or caregiver can do with a special needs child to improve their development and overall well being.

Get Bouncing with Trampolines

What kid doesn't love jumping on a trampoline? A trampoline is one perfect activity for children because it helps them improve their balance and can even be therapeutic. Trampolines a therapeutic for children because the bouncing motion feels good to the child and helps them become aware of their body positions. There is no need to buy a large trampoline; a small, personalized one will work perfectly. For safety reasons, a jump bar should be used. For larger trampolines, a safety net is advised.

Fitness Balls for Balance and Concentration

Fitness balls or yoga balls are easy to find in sporting good stores or superstore. Find a small-sized one or one made for children. Allow the child to sit, bounce, and even play on it, using his legs. No matter how the child sits or lays on the ball, he is challenged to balance, and he is even strengthening core muscles.

These balls can also be used to sit on when trying to get a child to focus. If the child associates the fitness ball free movement and playtime, try using two different color balls. One ball can be used for free play and movement, while the other one is strictly for sitting. Having a child sit on a ball during a certain activity, such as for a meal or a short activity, may help with their concentration.

Bowling and Bean Bag Throws

Another set of activities for children includes aiming for targets. This practice can be done by setting up a bowling game or beanbag toss. For bowling, just set up empty bottles, such as water or soda bottles, and allow your child to practice rolling different sized balls to hit the pins.

Beanbags can be tossed through holes or used to knock over different objects. Both activities for children work on aim and accuracy, as well as perception and strength. A child will learn how much strength is too much when throwing a beanbag towards an object, as well as the importance of concentrating on the object for a more accurate throw.

Gross motor skill activities for children can be practiced at any age. The earlier the better! The best part about these activities is that they are fun and allow for bonding time between children and parents. Children can also work on their gross motor skills with other children too.

- **Animal games**

This gross motor activity is a lot of fun, especially if mom joins in.

Get your child to imitate certain ways that animals walk they can;

- Slither like a snake
- Walk like a penguin with their knees together
- Hop like a bunny
- Jump like a kangaroo
- Walk like a dog
- Gallop like a horse

- **Running after Bubbles**

Chasing bubbles is a great way for children to practice their gross motor skills. Blow bubbles outside, on a windless day and let your child run and chase them, or jump on them as they settle on the ground. If your child is in a wheelchair, you can give them either a ping pong bat, or some rolled up news paper, and they can use this as a bat to swat at the bubbles.

- **Pillow Mountain**

Take many different pillows and make them into a mountain. Cover your mountain with a blanket that you can tape down with packaging tape on the corners. Children can then climb the mountain, crawl over it or roll down the sides from the top.

- **Balls**

Hang a ball from the ceiling and encourage your child to jump up and grab it or hit it. Get a collection of balls that are different sizes and shapes, even some textured balls like koosh balls. Using either a box or a laundry basket, let your child throw these balls in, using different movements, from above the head, with one hand, over their shoulder etc

- **Songs and actions**

You can learn new songs and encourage children to do the actions to the songs with you.

- **Obstacle course**

Make an obstacle course with items from around your house. Use dining room chairs, ottomans, pillows and small tables. You can drape sheets or blankets over the items, and let your child crawl in and out, and over the various obstacles in the course.