

Suggestions for improved motor skills: Except for when going up and down the stairs, do not make this work. Instead, make these feel like special times they get to “play” with you. Have fun, get a little bit silly and, above all, go overboard with praise when they try; not just when they do it right!

Stairs - Most likely, going up and down stairs with both feet on each step is just a habit. Make sure they have one hand supported, either on a railing or by holding your hand. Start by going up and down the stairs with them, showing them and telling them to place one foot on each step. If they still don't understand, try tapping the leg that should move next (tap right, tap left, tap right, tap left etc.). When they get better at placing one foot on each step, have them show you “all by themselves” while you watch instead of doing it with them. Have them go up and down the stairs correctly at least once a day.
Repetition is essential to create a new habit.

Catching the Ball - Your child should prepare by placing their arms straight in front with the palms of their hands facing up or each other. Make sure the ball you are using is relatively soft in case it hits them (no basketballs or soccer balls). Encourage success by starting from a short distance and giving lots of praise each time they catch. Give a verbal cue so they know when you will throw the ball (“Ready? Catch!” or “1, 2, 3 catch!”). In some cases, you may need a second person to hug your child from behind and help them bring their arms in to trap the ball. If your child turns away from the incoming ball, try playing catch with a small pillow or other soft object.

Kicking the Ball – A fun way to start. . . Blow bubbles so your child can kick them before they land. Place a ball on the ground so it is not moving. If your child does not try to kick, hold their hand so they don't have to worry about balancing and can just think about kicking the ball. After they become more confident, have them try without holding your hand. Play kickball type games with them. Race to see who can get to the ball first, play keep away, try to steal the ball from them (you get the picture). Remember to laugh a lot and make sure your child “wins” a good deal of the time.

Throwing a Small Ball in an Overhand Manner – 3 years - Show your child how to pull their hand up and back and throw it as far as they can. **4 years** - show your child how to pull their hand up and back behind their head with the opposite foot in front then throw as hard as they can. **5 years** – show your child how to shift their weight from their back foot to their front foot to throw as hard as they can. Build towers and throw beanbags to knock them down or go outside and throw at targets such as a tree or a wall.

Jumping - If your child does not yet jump, face them and hold both of their hands then bend your knees and bounce until they start bouncing too. Other ways to encourage jumping include holding both of their hands and “helping” them jump up or forward a little or a lot. Make sure they bend both knees before you help them to “take off”. Have them jump over sidewalk cracks, into a pile of leaves, or down from the curb when you are walking with them.

Hopping – For extra balance and support, have them place one hand on the wall in a hallway and practice hopping in place or forward. Challenge them to see how many times they can hop on each foot.

Running – Hold their hand and help them “go fast”. Chase them. Have races! Blow bubbles on a windy day and have them chase them.

Cindy Heinze PT, MHS

heinze_c@fairfieldcityschools.com

