

# Parents as Partners: Learning about Gross Motor Skills



## What is Gross Motor?

Gross motor skills are the abilities required in order to control the large muscles of the body for walking, running, sitting, crawling and other activities. They also include hand-eye coordination skills that develop through participating in ball activities (throwing, catching, kicking) as well as riding a bike or a scooter and swimming.

## Why is this important?

Gross motor skills are a foundation block for learning. Gross Motor develops the following areas which are important for school performance:

### Body Awareness

Awareness of your body position and its' location in the environment. Development of body awareness will assist children to perform precise coordinated movements, negotiate obstacles when walking around the room, pulling/pushing doors open, hanging on the playground, drawing and playing games such as Simon Says.

### Bilateral Coordination

This allows children to coordinate the use of both sides of their body together to perform a task. Development of bilateral coordination enables children to walk up and down stairs/ladders, climb, ride a bike, use a rolling pin and clapping.

### Motor Planning

The ability to plan and efficiently carry out a sequence of movements to complete a motor task (in response to verbal or visual information). It allows the learning of new tasks and for children to be able to follow instructions. Development of these skills enables performance in activities such as obstacle courses, ball games and sports.

### Balance

The ability to maintain the centre of gravity within the base of support is important for posture to sit, stand, balance, hop, walk along a line, riding bikes/scooters.

### Endurance and Stamina

Children with well-developed stamina and endurance, have an increased ability to maintain posture, sit on the carpet, participate in a full day of school activity, participate in physically demanding tasks or sports such as swimming.

### Shoulder Stability

This is important to be able to perform isolated movements of the elbow, wrist and hand. This allows greater control for fine motor activities such as writing.

Gross motor skills are important to enable children to perform every day functions, such as walking and running, and climbing. However, these skills are crucial for everyday self-care skills like dressing and getting into and out of a car or even getting into and out of bed.

At school, gross motor abilities also have an influence on other everyday functions including:

- Maintaining appropriate table top posture (upper body support) and posture to sit on the carpet which then impacts on their academic learning.
- Ability to navigate their space around them in the classroom, carrying their heavy school bag, walking around desks, walking up and down stairs.
- The long term benefits of gross motor ability include:
- Helps to maintain healthy weight
- Opportunities to interact with others, make friends and develop social skills while playing or participating in outdoor activities.
- Strength in bones, ligaments and joints which limits injury.
- Improved confidence
- Improvement in overall physical, mental health and well-being.

## **What does the teaching and learning look like?**

Gross Motor Skills can be learnt at MHSS through a range of activities such as:

- Outside Play – playtime outdoors provides children with the opportunity to participate in play in a variety of areas including, climbing on the fort, digging in sandpit, running, balancing, kicking the ball, throwing and catching, skipping and lunch time club games.
- Structured movement games and activities – during specialist lessons such as PE and Dance and Music.
- Painting (developing strength in arms).
- Yoga and movement games in class.
- PMP – Prep students participate in obstacle courses designed by the teachers to promote development of strength, coordination skills, movement and confidence.
- Health curriculum – in Health, children will learn the benefits of participating in physical movement and encourage healthy lifestyles for their overall well-being.

## **How do we know how our children are progressing?**

Each child will develop physical skills at their own pace and like all areas of development, each individual child will show strengths and abilities in different areas.

As Gross Motor skills progress, children will noticeably develop confidence in participation, improved strength, coordination, balance, endurance at school tasks, improved posture control and the ability to carry their own school bag.

At MHSS, students' progress of Gross Motor Skills are monitored by class teachers. Gross Motor Skills are reported on through PE reports and Dance reports.

## **What support can be provided at home?**

Supporting your child to participate in gross motor skills at home can be fun and interactive. Ideas can include:

- Tie a rope to a fence or tree and use it for jumping over or skipping.
- Fix paper to a fence and use it for outdoor painting.
- Give children a can of water and a brush to paint a fence, trees or rocks.
- Draw hopscotch squares on a path with chalk and hop or jump in or over the spaces.
- Encourage your child to move in different ways, such as walking, running, jumping, sliding, shuffling and rolling, or move in different directions such as forwards, sideways or backwards.
- Set up an obstacle course and encourage your child to balance, climb through, climb over and crawl under.
- Roll a ball to knock down homemade skittles (e.g. plastic bottles)
- Throw and catch a ball
- Throw a ball at a target on a wall or fence.
- Throw a ball into a target on the ground (e.g. a basket, box, bucket or hoop).
- Bounce a ball on the ground with two hands and catch it.
- Throw a ball in the air and catch it as it comes back down.
- Throw and catch a ball with a partner.
- Strike a large ball with a rolled newspaper to strike a target (e.g. a tree or a fence).
- Strike a small ball, hanging in old pantyhose, with a hand, bat or racquet.
- Kick a ball at a wall and stop it with a hand or a foot as it bounces back.
- Kick a ball that is hanging just above the ground (e.g. hang the ball from a tree)
- Kick a ball along between two rope lines.

A reminder that it is very important to stay safe:

- Supervise your child during physical play.
- Check the obstacles are stable and safe to climb on.
- Talk with your child about rules and safe ways to move.

<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/gross-motor-skills/strength-and-endurance/>

<https://www.earlyyearscount.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/age-spaces/get-moving-outdoors/>