

7 Super Brain-building Gross Motor Activities for Kids

When I first became a new parent, everything was an experiment. I might as well have thrown on a lab coat and bought my own lab with all the bottles I tested and experiments with nightly feeding methods, nap patterns, and eventually tactics to help my child crawl, roll over, grasp objects, and walk. By child number two, I thought I had all the answers and was an expert. Boy was I wrong! I suddenly realized that my two children not only had different ways of doing things, they learned completely differently and at different stages. Raising boys from girls brought on new challenges I didn't expect.



Where I really noticed a difference in development, was in their gross motor skills. At the time, I didn't worry as much about this development stage because they were actively involved in dance, gymnastics, soccer, and football so I thought we had that part covered. However, had I known the impact gross motor has on how they learn in the classroom, I would have dedicated more time at home to activities that would further this development.

Why Gross Motor is Important

Back when I was raising my kids, I didn't have to worry as much as parents do now with all the new electronic devices and endless video gaming. Now days, our children too often sit in front of the TV and play games for hours, which results in kids being less active and hinders their brain activity and cognitive development. While some video games and apps can be great for critical thinking and problem solving, there is nothing like movement to get the brain working and prepped for school.

If gross motor skills aren't fully developed between the ages of three and 12, children can experience developmental delays. While kids can begin developing these skills on their

own, some never become skilled in this area without parental help. Preschool age is the perfect time to get started with gross motor activities that will channel your child's energy and is directly related to how they attend and behave in class and at home. No matter if your child is two or 10 their gross motor skills can be developed into their teen years and should be worked on daily.

Gross Motor activities are especially important if your child shows signs of ADHD, Dyslexia, Autism, or Sensory Processing Disorders (SPD). Certain types of movement and activity can help calm these symptoms and improve their mood, anxiety, depression, hyperactivity, focus, and memory.

Ready to Roll

When choosing activities to strengthen your child's gross motor skills, select ideas that incorporate the right and left feet, legs, and arms. Eventually, your child will establish dominance as they grow older, but actively engaging the weaker sides of the body will strengthen the weaker sides of the brain.

The hard part may be finding new fun activities to activate their gross motor skills so we've put together a few great ideas for you to try out. As your child masters each activity, incorporate new objects and different motions to keep it challenging and fun. We tried out a few of our favorites with Ruby and Carlie. Try these out with your kids!



1. Lily Pads

"Lily pads" is just another fancy term for frog leaps. The good thing about this activity is you can do it inside or outside if you have enough room in your house or apartment. Have them start at one end of the room and jump across the floor starting in a squat position and then jump as high as they can. They may get tired after a while, but this activity is worth it. You can even put objects underneath them to jump over if that makes it easier. Your child may want to speed through this activity, but help them slow down during each jump for accuracy and control. It will help them strengthen their legs and their core.



2. Bean Bag Toss

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Now, in this activity Ruby is using a ball, but you can also use a beanbag. Have your child stand in place and throw the ball or beanbag in the air then catch it with their other hand. Your child should repeat this activity with both hands to improve their dexterity and strengthen both arms and hands. The movement from one hand to another helps the weaker parts of the brain and improves cognitive development. After they have mastered the exercise while standing still, have them toss the beanbag or ball while walking in a straight line, which gives them an extra challenge. This activity also serves a dual purpose. It is a great way to help your child strengthen the muscles in their eyes. Why is this important? Training and strengthening the eye muscles makes it so your child can track words and letters on the page. Have your child follow the beanbag with their eyes as they toss the bag up and down and side to side. Try not to let them move their whole head, only their eyes.

3. Hula Hoop



Kids absolutely love to hula hoop so why not incorporate it into our gross motor exercises? When kids hula hoop they develop greater balance and coordination. It also strengthens their core. This may not seem important, but balance and coordination helps stabilize the brain and will help your child solve math problems, develop critical thinking skills, and organizes their thoughts for writing essays and reports.



4. The Hokey Pokey

This game isn't quite the Hokey Pokey, but it's close. Use that same hula hoop or a small object (in this case a small box) and place it on the floor. Have your child hop in and out of the hula hoop or over the box. Again, have them switch from their right and left sides to



strengthen both sides of the body.

5. Hop on One Foot



You'd be surprised how many kids cannot do this exercise and how important it is to develop their gross motor skills. Have your child hop on one foot for at least five seconds and then instruct them to switch legs. Your child's first instinct may be to do this exercise quickly, but have them slow down and control each hop.

6. Dance till You Drop



Dancing is not only fun, but it's a great way to get your kids moving. These girls have some great dance moves that integrate cross-patterning and they don't even realize it! What we mean by cross-patterning is incorporating movements that have the right and left arms and right and

left legs cross over each other. This is another activity to help the left and right hemispheres of the brain work together to improve mood, attention, focus, stress, and creativity. Teach them the grape vine while they line dance, the scorpion to improve flexibility, or the crab walk during a disco song. Ruby taught me a great move she learned in dance class. To improve flexibility and to add the cross-over movement, have your child sit down and stretch out their legs in a V shape. Then have him or her reach out their arms

so they almost touch their toes and start crossing their right arm over their left arm and

vice versa all the way to their other foot like a tiger from one side to the next. They will love pretending to be a tiger!



7. Riding a Bike

Riding a bike does more for a child's gross motor than any other activity. Think about how much they need to use their hands and legs while keeping balance and coordination. The other important part of riding a bike is how it forces them to turn. When riding a bike, have your child turn right around a corner and then left around a corner. If they are having any type of trouble learning in school, this will help strengthen the weaker parts of the brain. This exercise is especially important if your child had torticollis as a baby (meaning they weren't able to turn to the left or right side). It may have caused weak neck muscles or a flat head, which can result in learning disabilities or delays in school. These are just a few great activities you can do with your kids at home. For more great ideas, click [here](#).