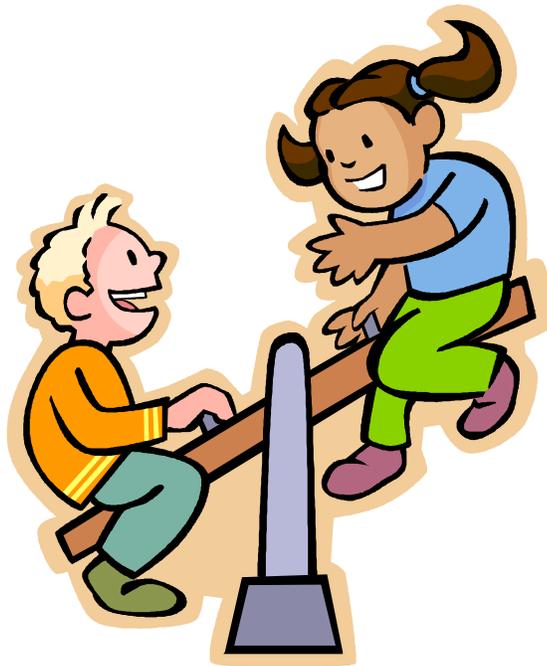


The 30-Minute Motor Skills Development Plan

*A guide to daily activities which enhance
perceptual, motor and cognitive skills.*



**By
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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
The 30-Minute Motor Skills Development Plan	4
Warm-Up Activities	5
Warm-Up Routine	6
Balance	7
Bilateral Motor Skills	11
Visual Motor Coordination.....	15
Laterality / Directionality.....	19
Progress Chart	23
Language Concepts Reinforced by This Program.....	27
A Note from Bob Sornson	28
About the Author.....	29

Introduction

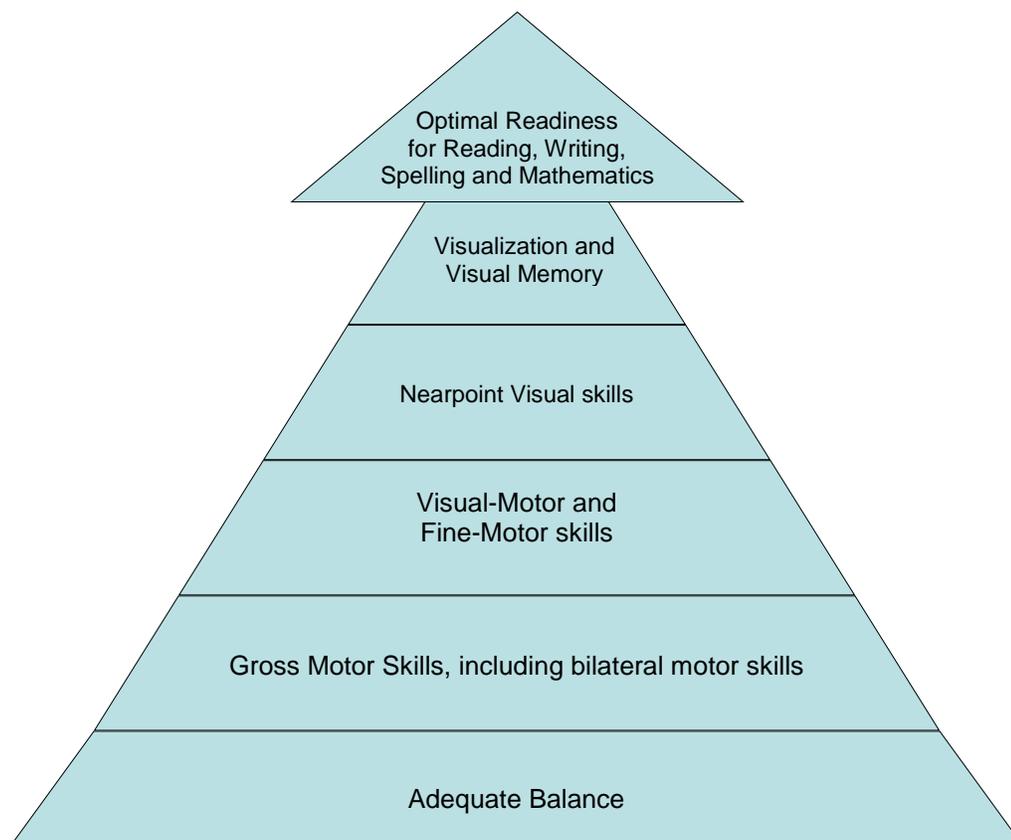
Many children today do not develop the motor skills needed for basic, much less optimal, success in the early years of school. This book is designed to help parents, teachers and children develop simple patterns of enjoyable activity which will enhance early development and get children ready for success in school.

During the early years of childhood, children engage in playful activities which encourage the development of sensory and motor skills. These activities are crucial to early brain development. They lay the neural foundation for enriched brain structures that serve us throughout life.

Unfortunately, some children experience roadblocks on the path to optimal development. Birth trauma, fever, chronic ear infections, allergy, poor diet, inactive lifestyles, or too much video entertainment time may contribute to less than optimal experience. These children may have difficulty sitting still; maintaining attention; balancing; enjoying cutting, drawing or other visual-motor activities; catching a ball; running smoothly; learning to skip; or even learning to listen and remember.

Experienced preschool, kindergarten and first-grade teachers can pick them out. They are at-risk of early school failure if they have not achieved basic-level balance, bilateral motor, visual motor, laterality, directionality and body awareness skills. **These, combined with language skills and behavior skills, lay the foundation for early school success.**

Sensory-Motor and Cognitive Skill Progression in the Early Years



It is not necessary to become a super-athlete to achieve early learning success. But educators notice that children with poor balance are less physically active. These children, along with kids who watch too much video entertainment, develop gross-motor skills more slowly. Children who can't use their large muscles with skill have difficulty sitting still and staying focused on hand-eye activities. Children who don't spend thousands of hours cutting, coloring, drawing, playing with puzzles, etc., will not develop hand-eye and nearpoint visual skills. These children usually have trouble with visual memory, an important skill for remembering the look of words, enjoying reading, printing, spelling, and understanding basic number concepts. Early experiences can build these sensory and motor skills to a level that allows academic success and joyful early learning.

The activities in this book are designed to enhance the motor-skills and neurologic development of any child who is age 3 or older. Younger children benefit most from a stimulating play environment. If your child has a significant motor delay at any age, ask your doctor to refer you to a skilled occupational therapist.

The activities here will help any child with normal skills or mild delays to improve motor skills, stimulate neurologic development, and improve readiness for the cognitive and sensory demands of school. In a 30-minute daily program, parents or teachers can have fun with a single child or a small group of children, while helping them develop crucial skills.

This book is divided into five sections: Warm-Up Activities, Balance, Bilateral Motor, Visual-Motor Coordination and Laterality/Directionality. In your 30-minute program, I suggest you always do a brief warm-up, then pick activities that are appropriate for your child from the other sections. Pick enjoyable activities that are slightly challenging, but not too much.

My rule of thumb is to pick activities that offer 93% success and 7% challenge. If you're playing catch, that's easy to figure. If the child can't catch the ball more than 1 out of 10 throws, the game is too hard. So you get a bigger ball or make a throw that is easier to catch.

A daily 30-minute program would be great for all kids ages 3 to 10, but that's not always possible. At least 2 or 3 days per week is recommended. By enhancing your child's motor skills (and fitness) you will help him/her start down a path of early learning success, which builds the foundation of learning for life! Always play safely, and consult your doctor about precautions that should be considered for a child with special needs.

The 30-Minute Motor Skills Development Plan

Many children with motor skill development delays can improve skills and have fun in a 30-minute daily program. Pick activities from each area that your child/student will enjoy (93% success, 7% challenge) and watch the progress.

<i>Warm-Up</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>Bilateral Motor</i>	<i>Visual-Motor Coordination</i>	<i>Laterality/ Directionality</i>
Neck Rolls	Balance Object on Head	Skywriting	Throw with Accuracy	Suspended Ball Activities
Belly Breathing		Footprint Patterns	Throw with Memory	Walking Variations
Rocker	Balance Board Activities	Cross-Over Walking	Ball Catch Activities	Footprint Patterns
Leg Stretches	Mini-Tramp Activities	Cross-Crawl Activities	Balloon Hits	Balloon Up
Foot Shakes	Balance Beam	Brachiation	Suspended Ball	Throw Beanbags to Arrows
Sun Salute	Walk the Line	Skipping	One or Alternating Hand Dribbling	Listening for Direction
Facial Muscle Stretches	Stepping Stones	Arm Swinging	Obstacle Course	Dribble Directions
Shoulder Rolls	One-Leg Balance	Jumping Jacks	Lazy-Eights	Mirroring
Arm Shakes	One-Leg Swings	Alternating Hand	Soccer Dribbling	Jumping Turns
	Hopping	Dribbling	Juggling	Which is more ?
	Toe Raises	Balloon Race		Flashlight
	Cross-Crawl (slow)	Tapping and Clapping Games		
	Statues	Soccer Dribbling		
	Balance Balls	Jump Rope		
	Jump Rope	Hook-up		
	Tripod	Infinity Walk		

Warm-Up Activities

A brief warm-up at the beginning of your session is highly recommended. These activities help center your attention, relax breathing and increase oxygen to the muscles.

1. ***Neck Rolls.*** Neck rolls relax the neck and shoulders. Breathe deeply, relax your shoulders and drop your head forward. Allow your head to roll slowly to the right and then the left. Avoid complete rotations to the back. Be aware of tight spots. Do neck rolls with eyes closed, then eyes open.
2. ***Belly Breathing.*** Stand for Belly Breathing. Rest your hands on your abdomen. Blow out all your air in short little puffs, then take a slow, deep breath and feel your belly fill like a balloon. Repeat several times.
3. ***Rocker.*** The Rocker helps relax the lower back. On a soft floor surface, lean back on your hands and forearms and rock back and forth slowly with bent knees, let the tension escape. Try rocking in small circles to massage the hips.
4. ***Leg Stretches.*** Now sit on the floor with legs spread like a V for gentle stretches. Hold your knee or lower leg and gently stretch, moving your head in the direction of your knee. One side, then the other.
5. ***Foot Shakes.*** Firmly pick up one ankle with two hands and shake your foot gently. Feel the energy in your ankle. Then repeat with the other foot.
6. ***Sun Salute.*** Move to your belly and assume a push-up position. With arms straight, stretch forward, lifting your face toward the sky, then push backwards so that you are looking between your legs. Repeat slowly.
7. ***Facial Muscle Stretches.*** Now standing in a relaxed pose, stretch the muscles in your face by assuming a variety of laughable grimaces and expressions.
8. ***Shoulder Rolls.*** Relax your shoulders with your arms hanging at your sides. With deep breaths, move your shoulders in slow circles, paying attention to range of motion and any tightness.
9. ***Arm Shakes.*** Lastly, let one arm hang limply at your side. Relax your shoulder and gently shake your whole arm for a few seconds. Then repeat with the other arm.

Warm-Up Routine

Neck Rolls

Belly Breathing

Rocker

Leg Stretches

Foot Shakes

Sun Salute

Facial Muscle Stretches

Shoulder Rolls

Arm Shakes

Balance

The ability to balance is essential to most complex movement. Such simple tasks as holding up your head while scanning the room, sitting on a chair, standing, and walking all require balance, the ability to make postural adjustments and maintain equilibrium while moving or stationary.

Children develop balance by raising their heads as infants, reaching, rolling, crawling, creeping, standing, toddling, walking, twirling, running, etc. What you use develops in the brain.

Balance allows children to be physically active, to explore their worlds, and to develop large muscle control that allows fine-motor and visual-motor play.

1. Balancing an Object on Head

Put a beanbag on your child's head. Ask her to stand and balance, then walk forward and backwards. Make up interesting movements. Try a ruler, book, or pencil.

2. Balance Board Activities

Balance Boards provide an easy way to stimulate balance using simple equipment in a small space. By combining balance with other activities, we can help our children develop new skills to automaticity.

A Balance Board is a rectangular board, approximately 24" x 18" with attached rockers beneath.



Try any of the following activities while standing on a balance board. Remember to pick activities that allow your child to be at least 93% successful.

For Young Children

- Play catch with a large ball while balancing
- Play bounce-catch with a large ball (variations)
- Play catch with a small ball or beanbag (variations)
- Play catch with two small balls or beanbags
- Throw with accuracy
- Throw to a color or shape, while balancing, after listening to verbal directions
- Throw to a series of 2, 3, or 4 colors or shapes in sequence

Math Concepts

- Count by 2's, 3's, 4's, etc., while balancing
- Skip count with partner
- Skip count with partner while passing one ball or two balls

Spelling And Visualization

- Recognize flashcards while balancing
- Spell words while balancing
- Spell a word from memory backwards, remembering the picture of the whole word, while balancing

Integrating Sensory Systems

- Toss beanbag with accuracy at a target while balancing
- Touch a suspended plastic ball with right hand, left hand
- Touch a suspended ball with a stick or bat using right side, then left
- Ring toss while balancing
- Play "pick-up-sticks" on a table while balancing
- Play with Legos on a table while balancing
- Balloon batting while balancing (use plastic bat or rolled up newspaper)
- Arm swinging activity
- Skywriting or Lazy Eights while balancing

Extending Thinking Skills

- Solve math story problems while balancing
- Play Visualization Tic-Tac-Toe while balancing
- Recite a poem or song while balancing
- Play Simon-Says while balancing

3. *Mini-Trampoline Activities*

Mini-tramp or re-bouncer activities give you vestibular, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic stimulation, combined with motor planning, body, and spatial awareness. That sure sounds important. Better yet, the kids love it.

- Toe Raises
- Jumping
- Running in place with cross pattern
- Quarter Turns
- Make circles with arms when jumping
- Arm patterns when jumping
- Quarter turns with arm patterns
- Play catch while bouncing
- Jumping Jacks
- Side-to-side leg movements
- Jump and Clap
- Jump and Count
- Jump and Spell

4. *Using a Balance Beam*

On a flat 2-by-4, have your child walk slowly forward from end-to-end several times. Variations include walking backwards, sideways, on tiptoe, with a beanbag on your head, etc.

5. *Walk the Line*

Same as above using 2" or 4" floor tape. A straight line or a pattern on the floor can also be used.

6. *Stepping Stones*

Plastic shapes in various colors can be placed in a walking pattern on the floor. Step from one shape to the next. Variations include walking backwards, choosing one color which is always used by the right foot only, and creating difficult stretches between shapes. Have fun! Outside you can draw stepping stones with chalk on the driveway.

7. *One Leg Balance*

Model or describe one leg poses for your child. Hold each pose for at least five seconds.

8. *One Leg Swing*

Stand on one leg and swing the other forward, backward or sideways. Model patterns and change directions. Then try the other foot.

9. *Hopping*

Using 2 feet or 1, practice hopping in place or around the room. Make it fun!!

10. *Toe Raises*

Practice slowly raising up on toes. Then try variations sequencing right, left and both feet. Model this for young children. This can be done on the ground, or on a balance board or mini-tramp.

11. *Cross Crawl Activities*

Cross crawl activities are coordinated movements so that when an arm moves, the opposite side leg moves at the same time. Smooth walking with arms loose, running, marching, swimming, and many other such movements are cross crawl activities. To facilitate balance, practice cross crawl activities to music, with eyes closed, or slowly so the awareness of body position is enhanced.

12. Statues

Model a variety of statue positions and ask your child to hold the position for a count of 3, 5, or 10. Then try movement with music. Clap or stop the music to indicate that it is time to freeze in statue position.

13. Balance Balls

Big tough balls can be used for sitting, leaning, and stretching. Model balancing positions against a large exercise ball. Find a soft floor.

14. Jumping Rope

Try all the normal variations, but make sure your child is having fun. Look for 93% success or better.

15. Tripod

On a mat, kneel on the ground. Put your head on the ground in front of your hands. Slowly walk your feet toward your hands. When your knees are close to your elbows, place one knee on your elbow with your foot off the floor, then the other. Practice with a friend so you don't fall over. After you can do it yourself, teach it to your child.

16. Childhood Games and Activities to Improve Balance

Bicycling

Skiing

Hopscotch

Twister

Snowboarding

Skateboarding

Rollerblading

Ice Skating

Dancing

Gymnastics

Martial Arts

Running

Swinging

Bilateral Motor Skills

The development of bilateral motor skills is an important milestone in the maturation of a young child. Children who struggle to run gracefully, throw a ball with accuracy, or learn to skip may be labeled awkward or clumsy. More important, they are often the same children who struggle with nearpoint vision, hand-eye activities, visual memory and social skills.

Learning to coordinate the two sides of the body reflects the ability to coordinate the right and left motor cortex, usually in combination with visual, auditory, and vestibular input. Children develop bilateral motor skills as they learn to crawl, walk smoothly, cross midline with hands or feet, catch and throw balls, skip, march, swing, skate and play with joy! Children with adequate bilateral motor skills are better prepared for early school success.

1. Skywriting

Extend your arm and hand, then write in the sky using big letters. Make sure to start on the left side and move across your field of vision toward the right. By using your hand in both visual sides, you connect the motor experience with both visual sides of the brain. You cross midline. And you create a kinesthetic awareness of the shape of a word. This is a wonderful way for early readers to get to know the “feel” of a symbol.

Variations of skywriting include drawing huge shapes in the air (□, ○, △, □, ○○), or numbers or math facts. Make sure to cross the midline. Some teachers ask students to say the word or letters out loud while printing in the air. Some parents ask children to skywrite while standing on a balance board.

2. Footprint Patterns

Using plastic right and left footprint patterns or using chalk footshapes on an outside surface, make a pathway for your child to follow. Ask your child to step on the right-foot shape with the right foot, etc. Make some steps farther than others so she has to stretch.

Consider placing some footprints across the midline, so she must stretch in front of one foot to reach the next print.



Variations include using spaces where a student must make a one or two foot jump, and walking backwards on the pathway. Make it fun!

3. *Cross-over Walking*

Draw or tape a line on the ground and ask your child to walk cross-over style, with right foot on the left side of the line, and left foot on the right side. Try forward walking, then backwards. Try walking with a beanbag on your head.

4. *Cross-crawl Activities*

The basic cross-crawl activity is walking slowly in place, being conscious to use the right and left sides together in a fluid pattern. Slow movement requires more fine muscle involvement, balance and motor planning. Marching, running, swimming (backstroke or crawl), cross-country skiing and many other activities use a cross-crawl motion.

Variations include touching your elbow to the opposite knee while walking or marching to music, cross-crawling on hands and knees on the floor, cross-crawling from a sitting position, or performing a cross-crawl motion with eyes closed.

5. *Brachiation*

This is a fancy term for swinging from arm-to-arm on an overhead ladder or monkey bars. Brachiation requires strength, hand-eye coordination, depth perception, and a coordinated use of right and left sides.

6. *Skipping*

A smooth skipping motion requires coordination of left and right sides, body awareness, and motor planning. Skipping develops cardiovascular strength and general agility. The ability to skip smoothly often indicates a readiness for sustained nearpoint visual and visual-motor activities.

7. *Arm Swinging*

Standing with your feet apart at shoulder's width, extend your arms straight out to the sides and relax your vision. Swing your arms slowly to the right, letting yourself pivot at the waist. As you swing your arms allow your head and vision to swing to the farthest point your right hand can point toward. Swing slowly back towards the left. Let your eyes relax, unfocused as you swing your head and vision to the farthest point your left hand can point toward. Continue slowly for 1-3 minutes.

This activity relaxes vision while integrating balance and body awareness. Variations include doing this while standing on a balance board or mini-trampoline.

8. *Jumping Jacks*

This standard exercise is a great tool for enhancing body awareness, coordination, and even fitness. Remember to use each exercise with students who can be successful with this activity. Many four, five, and six year olds will not be able to do a smooth jumping jack. Try something different until they are ready.

Smooth, slow jumping jacks create a conscious awareness of body position. Practice 10, 20, or more repetitions with children who are ready.

9. *Alternating Hand Dribbling*

Dribbling a basketball or activity ball with one hand, then the other requires motor planning and coordination of right and left visual and motor functions.

Variations include dribbling while standing still, walking, running, or moving along a winding path or large figure eight.

10. *Balloon Race*

Hitting a balloon in the air requires visual-motor coordination. By hitting the balloon with alternate hands, the activity uses bilateral motor skills.

Variations include standing still, walking, striking the balloon with a plastic bat or paddle, or racing through a course while keeping the balloon in the air.

11. *Tapping and Clapping Games*

Using two hands, model a tapping sequence on a tabletop or drum for your child to imitate. Make sure your child is at least 93% successful. Variations include using simple to complex patterns, sing along with the pattern, and just having fun.

Childhood clapping games also develop bilateral awareness and skills. Two children typically face each other and clap hands in pattern while singing a song. Remember, kids will only do this if it is fun.

12. *Soccer Dribbling*

Dribbling the soccer ball from one foot to the other develops bilateral skills and foot-eye coordination. As with all skills, start slowly. Variations include walking and running slowly, and passing it back and forth to a friend.

13. *Jump Rope*

Try all the normal variations, with an emphasis on fun.

14. *Hook-Ups*

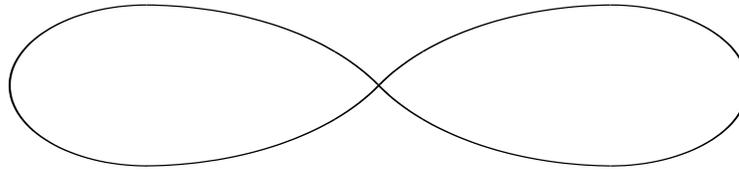
This exercise was developed by Paul and Gail Dennison ([Brain Gym](#), EduKinesthetics, 1989). Begin hook-ups by crossing one ankle over the other in a standing position. Then stretch your hands out in front of you with the backs of the hands together and thumbs pointing down. Now cross one hand over the other, interlocking your fingers with palms together. Then roll your hands down and in toward the body so they rest on the chest with the elbows down.

This sounds more complicated than it is. This complex pattern mixes sensory feedback to the brain while exercising balance and body awareness.

While in this position, rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth behind the teeth. Hold this position for 1-3 minutes. Variations include doing this while sitting, resting on the floor, or standing with eyes closed.

15. *Infinity Walk*

Draw or tape a figure eight on the floor, approximately 12 feet long.



16. Walk this pattern using a smooth gait, with arms loose and swinging for 1 to 10 minutes. This pattern causes you to focus on balance, visual thinking, and bilateral motor coordination.

Variations include tapping your upper thigh as it comes up with your opposite hand as you walk, listening to music, conversing with a friend, singing a song, walking with hands on hips, and walking backwards. A detailed explanation of the benefits of this exercise is in a book by Deborah Sunbeck ([Infinity Walk](#), Infinity Press, 1991).

17. *Childhood Games and Activities to Improve Bilateral Motor Skills*

Swimming	Cross-country skiing
Angels in the Snow	Walking
Running	Rhythmic Movement
Marching	Ice Skating
Rollerblading	Gymnastics

Visual-Motor Coordination

The ability to coordinate vision and movement is important in so many ways. Children who skillfully use vision with gross-motor activity can move across a classroom without stumbling, race through a playground, or fully enjoy games and sports. Children who practice using their hands and eyes develop the ability to draw, color, cut, manipulate small objects, drink water without spilling, handle small tools, and learn about shape, size, weight and texture.

Children need thousands of hours of visual-motor activity to develop the ability to move smoothly in response to visual information, and to learn how to think in pictures and use visual memory.

To be good at mathematics, children need to have a kinesthetic awareness of number value and patterns, which precedes a visual image of number value and patterns. To be good at reading or writing, children need to have many stored “pictures” of words in their memory which can be quickly accessed so that reading is easy and enjoyable.

1. Throw with Accuracy

Standing on the ground or on a balance board, throw beanbags or non-bouncy balls into a bushel basket or plastic tub. Ask your child to use an underhand throwing motion to maximize body awareness and motor control. Gradually move the target to more difficult positions, maintaining 93% success. Let your child choose her preferred throwing arm.

2. Throw with Memory

After establishing some basic throwing skills, you may wish to try these variations.

Place, draw or tape three or more shapes on the floor (  ,    , ). Make each shape big enough to use as a target (12 to 24”).

Ask your child to stand on the floor or balance board and toss beanbags in sequence to the shapes you indicate. Work on 2 throws until memory and control are coordinated, then gradually move to 3, 4, or even 5 throw memory tasks.

Let your child identify her own targets, i.e., “Square, circle, triangle.”

Variations include using letters or numbers on the floor as targets. A number line on the floor could be used to practice addition facts, i.e., “Two plus three equals five,” while throwing to the appropriate squares on the number line. Have fun!

3. Ball Catch Activities

Throwing and catching games develop visual-motor skills along with depth perception. Begin with a soft playground ball big enough for a child to catch with two hands. Throw to the child’s chest so he can “feel” the ball when first beginning. Your child may not yet be

able to rely on depth perception. Gradually vary your throws to the right and left. Maintain 93% success.

Variations with big balls include bounce passing, throwing higher, and standing on a balance board.

After skill with a big ball is achieved, move gradually to smaller balls or beanbags. Remember that having fun is far more important in the long run than rapid skill development.

Variations include standing on a balance board, catching with one hand, catching with one hand across midline, using two balls at the same time so that each player releases a ball at the same time, and moving while throwing and catching.

4. Balloon Hits

Hitting a balloon into the air requires visual-motor coordination. Hitting the balloon with alternate hands requires bilateral motor coordination.

Variations include standing still, walking, standing on a balance board, striking the balloon with a plastic bat or paddle, hitting the balloon back and forth to a partner, and keeping two balloons up in the air.

5. Suspended Ball

Suspend a plastic or rubber ball on a string to the level of your child's head. Let your child practice striking the ball when it becomes still with an open hand.

Then stand opposite your child and let the ball swing directly towards him, allowing him to hit it back in your general direction. Catch the ball and repeat.

Gradually practice to the point where you can gently tap the ball back and forth between you.

At this point, your child is ready to begin more complex variations. Try hitting the ball in a circular pattern and letting it come around to him, then hit it again to sustain the pattern. Try hitting with one hand, then the other. Try this while standing on a balance board. Try swinging the ball in one direction, then striking it in the other direction. Try using a paddle or plastic bat.

6. One or Two Hand Dribbling

Dribbling a basketball or activity ball with one hand uses visual-motor planning. Dribbling with alternating hands requires bilateral motor coordination as well.

Variations include dribbling while standing still, standing on a balance board, standing heel-to-toe, walking, running, moving along a winding path or a large figure eight, and dribbling while singing.

7. *Obstacle Course*

An obstacle course allows us to plan how to use our bodies to move over, under, around, and through a series of obstacles. We need to know how big we are, the shape of our bodies, how to move and balance. A good obstacle course might include crawling tunnels, footprints, hanging bars, balance boards, mini-tramps, balloons to keep in the air, and other interesting props and obstacles. Be safe and have fun.

8. *Lazy Eights*

Standing in front of a chalkboard, the child draws a large infinity symbol (or figure eight on its side). Align the center of the lazy eight with a position in front of the child's eyes.

Using large, relaxed motions, draw the lazy eight 3 or more times with the non-dominant hand, then 3 or more times with the dominant hand, then 3 or more times with both hands together. Draw in a direction that lets your child's hand always move upwards when crossing the midline.

Variations of this activity can be found in [Brain Gym](#) (EduKinesthetics, 1989).

9. *Soccer Dribbling*

Dribbling a soccer ball with your feet helps to develop foot-eye coordination, timing, depth perception, and rhythmic movement.

Begin with simple dribbling while walking. Practice touching the ball with both feet. Gradually increase speed, dribble through a winding course, and enjoy other related drills. Remember to maintain a high degree of success and fun.

10. *Juggling*

Standing on the ground or on a balance board, have your child juggle one ball from hand-to-hand. Pretend the ball is a hot potato and touch it as lightly as possible with each hand for 15 to 30 seconds.

Variations include juggling while walking a line, while walking a figure eight, or introducing a second ball.

11. *Childhood Games and Activities to Improve Nearpoint Visual-Motor Skills*

Children need to spend thousands of hours playing at the table or on the floor, engaged in activities like those listed here which require integration of visual and motor skills. These thousands of hours lay the foundation for nearpoint visual skills, visual-motor skills and visual memory. By limiting young children to 5 or fewer hours per week of video entertainment (including T.V., videos, and computer games), they will be encouraged to enjoy these vital activities:

Coloring	Painting
Drawing	Tracing
Cutting	Hammering
Marbles	Pick-up Sticks
Ball and Jacks	Printing, Copying
Blocks	<i>Legos</i>
Puzzles	

12. *Specific Activities to Develop Hand-Eye Skills*

- Place clothespins around the edge of a box.
- Stack poker chips with your eyes closed.
- Make Playdoh letters and numbers.
- Remove a toothpaste cap using only one hand.
- Turn screws into wood with a screwdriver.
- Hammer nails.
- Seal zip bags with fingertips.
- Snap your fingers to music.
- Turn a flashlight on and off with your fingertips.
- Crumple paper with one hand.
- Spray plants with a squirt bottle.
- Open jars or containers.
- Put coins in a piggy bank.
- Pick up small objects with tweezers (pennies, corn flakes, bits of string).

Laterality / Directionality

In the early years of life, a child learns to locate objects in relation to herself, and becomes aware of her body in space. She learns the difference between up and down, forward and backward, and left and right. These differences are first experienced by how they feel, then observed visually, then considered as thoughts or words.

Most children learn to recognize what arrows mean, how to find their classroom, where to start when drawing a letter, where to begin reading on a page, and which side of a word to begin reading.

An awareness of laterality and directionality helps us perform the incredibly complex computations that help us know how to catch a beanbag, intercept a friend at the mall, and avoid losing our place when reading.

Like every other aspect of early brain development, an awareness of laterality and directionality develops with joyful use.

1. Suspended Ball

Suspend a plastic or rubber ball on a string to the level of your child's head. Let your child practice striking the ball when the ball becomes still with an open hand.

Then stand opposite your child and let the ball swing directly towards him, allowing him to hit it back in your general direction. Catch the ball and repeat.

Gradually practice to the point where you can gently tap the ball back and forth between you.

At this point, your child is ready to begin more complex variations. Try hitting the ball in a circular pattern and letting it come around to him, then hit it again to sustain the pattern. Try hitting with one hand, then the other. Try this while standing on a balance board. Try swinging the ball in one direction, then striking it in the other direction. Try using a paddle or plastic bat.

2. Walking Variations

Children usually learn the "feel" of a shape before they develop a visual memory.

Draw or tape a large shape (up to eight feet across) on the floor. Help your child identify the name of the shape, then walk around the edges to learn the "feel" of the shape.

Compare large shapes on the floor to small wooden shapes. Can your child match them? Name them? Draw them?

Practice walking on a straight line in a gymnasium or a parking lot. Touch the line with a portion of each foot; or straddle the line and don't let either foot touch.

Walk or march to specific directions, i.e., “Left, right, left, right,” or “Straight marching, now left turn.” Try moving to a steady beat.

Enjoy nature walks, especially on uneven terrain or with obstacles that will help your child pay attention to the position of his body in space.

3. *Footprint Patterns*

Using plastic right and left footprint patterns or using chalk footshapes on an outside surface, make a pathway for your child to follow. Ask your child to step on the right-foot shape with the right foot, etc. Make some steps farther than others so she has to stretch.

Consider placing some footprints across the midline, so she must be aware of body position and balance to reach the next print.



Variations include using spaces where a student must make a one or two foot jump, and walking backwards on the pathway. Make it fun!

4. *Balloon Up*

Hitting a balloon into the air requires visual-motor coordination. Hitting the balloon with alternate hands requires bilateral motor planning. Following spoken directions, i.e., “Hit with the left, now right, right, left,” requires listening and awareness of the sides of your body. Calling out your own hits demonstrates the same lateral awareness.

Variations include standing still, walking, standing on a balance board, hitting the balloons back and forth to a partner, and walking an extended figure eight.

5. *Throw Beanbags to Arrows*

Standing on the ground or on a balance board, have your child throw beanbags to arrow-shaped targets. Use an underhand throwing motion. Space the targets 2 to 10 feet from your child, depending on throwing skill.

Direct your child to throw to the target as you call out, “Up, down, left or right.” Your child will learn to discriminate the position of the pointing arrow and throw to the correct target with accuracy.

When she’s ready, add memory to the task. Give her 3 or more beanbags along with the directions, “First throw to the arrow pointing up, then left, then down, now begin.” Keep it exciting. Make the activity just enough of a challenge.

6. *Listening for Direction*

Sitting on the floor with his eyes closed, ask your child to identify where you drop a heavy beanbag near his body.

Young children may point to the direction. Older children should indicate front, rear, left or right.

7. *Dribble Directions*

Ask your child to shift hands when dribbling a basketball at your direction. Dribble with the right hand, then the left.

Slowly increase the difficulty by moving from a standing dribble, to walking, running, or following a pattern.

8. *Mirroring*

Stand facing your child, and model a simple body position. Allow her to silently mirror your position. Increase complexity by adding subtle position changes (i.e., hand position), balance, facial expressions, etc. Let your child take the lead and model positions for you to imitate.

Variations include describing positions for your child to assume, and modeling two or three step position changes for her to remember and imitate.

9. *Jumping Turns*

On the floor or on a mini-tramp, practice jumping quarter-turns and half-turns. Try giving two or three step directions, i.e., “Half-turn right, quarter-turn right, half-turn left.”

Variations include taping or drawing the numbers of a clock around a center position. Ask your child to jump to a position facing four o'clock, seven o'clock, etc. Try removing the numbers and replace them with dots. Again direct her to jump to a position facing a specific hour.

10. *Which Is More?*

Ask your child to sit or stand with eyes closed, or lie on his belly on the floor. It is important that he does not peek.

Ask the question, “Which is more to the right? One or two?”

As you indicate one and two, touch two different spots on his back. Then let him respond to your question. This will be more difficult for some children than you might think.

Practice this activity several times in one session.

Variations include noticing which is more **up**, **down**, **left**, or **right**. Use the back, shoulders, arms, and legs. Vary the distance between touch number 1 and touch number 2.

11. *Flashlight*

Grab a flashlight for you and your child, find a comfortable place to rest on the floor, and turn off the ceiling lights. With your flashlight beams, play follow the leader on the ceilings and walls. Have your child keep his beam close to yours as you move the light in circles, ovals, squiggles, and lines. As this becomes easy, move the light at faster speeds. Let your child be the leader.

Variations include turning off your light and describing shapes or movement to your child. "Move right. Make a square. Now an oval. Let's try printing your name." Another variation is to picture the room before the lights are turned off, then ask your child to find various objects in the room with the beam of light.

12. *Childhood Games and Activities to Improve Laterality/Directionality*

- Simon Says
- Setting the table
- Hokey-pokey
- Drawing maps of your room, home, yard, etc.
- Tracing
- Dot-to-dot
- Mazes
- Throwing
- Printing
- Drawing pictures
- Learning to play a musical instrument

Progress Chart

Name: <i>Danny</i> Date: <i>Today</i>	Activities or Goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Improve balance.</i> 2. <i>Improve bilateral-motor skills.</i> 3. <i>Improve visual-motor skills.</i>
--	---

1	2	3	4	5
✓ 5 min. balance board activities. ✓ Skipping, jumping jacks, balloon race. ✓ 15 min. drawing and cutting.	✓ 5 min. balance board. ✓ Jumping jacks, dribbling. ✓ 15 min. coloring.			
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25

A regular routine will keep you focused on your goal. Your daily activity may be a 30-minute workout, a cognitive training program (i.e., visual memory, abacus math), or a skill development program (i.e., 20 right hand lay-ups without a miss). Show progress on your chart with a sticker, mark, or statistic. Consider rewarding yourself if you achieve a goal. Practice a newly learned skill 20 days before assuming it's here to stay.

Progress Chart

Name:	Activities or Goals:
Date:	

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25

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Progress Chart

Name: Danny

Date: Today

Statement of Goals: Improve balance, bilateral motor skills, visual-motor skills, and soccer skills.

Activity: Balance Board variations, 5 minutes.

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Activity: Bilateral Motor, activities that are fun, 5 minutes.

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Activity: Visual Motor Skills, especially cutting and drawing, 5 minutes.

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Activity: Fun soccer activities with mom or dad.

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

By consistently working toward my goals, I will: Get better at soccer and school, and have fun!

Progress Chart

Name: _____

Date: _____

Statement of Goals: _____

Activity: _____

Activity: _____

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Activity: _____

Activity: _____

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 2	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 3	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Week 1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
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Week 4	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 5	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 7	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 8	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 9	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Week 10	<input type="checkbox"/>				

By consistently working toward my goals, I will: _____

Language Concepts Reinforced by this Program

- Top
- Center
- Whole
- Side
- Last
- Always
- Right
- Corner
- Before
- End
- Farthest
- Part
- Through
- Some
- Separated
- First
- Few
- Throw
- Memory
- More
- Turn
- Copy
- Every
- Bottom
- Never
- Beginning
- Second
- Front
- Widest
- Away
- Alike
- Fewest
- Over
- As Many
- Other
- Starting
- Most
- Between
- Left
- Follow
- Bounce
- Behind
- Next
- Jump
- Different
- Below
- Skip
- Forward
- Least
- Backward
- Equal
- Third
- Several
- Same
- Longest
- Shortest
- Up
- Down
- Hop
- Row
- Head
- Neck
- Leg
- Face
- Arm
- Balance

A Note From Bob Sornson. . .

Thank you for choosing the 30-Minute Motor Skills Development Plan. You have made the choice to help your child develop movement skills that are important in school and in life.

The importance of a successful early learning experience cannot be overstated. Success and joyful learning in the early years lay the foundation for lifelong learning. The following guidelines are not directly related to motor skills, but they are essential to the process of developing great learners. Please consider them.

Set a few firm limits on behavior, in a loving way.

Children want strong adults to set the basic rules, and this is a necessary part of growing calm, secure, self-confident children. Develop routines to neutralize arguing, follow through with thinking time (time-out), set limits on food choices, and get your children to help with chores for the family. (Resource: *Meeting the Challenge*, Fay, Cline, and Sornson, 2000; Love and Logic Press; 800-424-3630 or loveandlogic.com.)

Set limits on video entertainment.

Please do not allow television, computers or other video systems in the bedroom of a child! These are the brain-drains of an affluent society, and young children simply cannot afford to lose precious opportunities to speak, listen, socialize, run, draw, play, read, or snuggle in the early years. Limit all viewing time to a maximum of 30 minutes per day for pre-teens.

Allow struggle.

Out of love, some parents overly protect and gratify their children. They solve their social conflicts, carry them when they can walk, buy too many toys, and worry that their child might be a little tired, unhappy, or bored. If you would like your children to develop persistence, problem-solving skills, and self-confidence, they need opportunities to learn that success often comes from great effort.

Play with your kids.

For every 1 minute of video, your child needs 20 minutes of play. For every disapproving word, your child needs 100 loving moments. Our children require cuddling, rolling on the floor, adventures, family chores, and corny jokes. Play is an essential ingredient of your child's literacy program, numeracy program, motor program, and life program.

Bob Sornson, Ph.D.
Earlylearningfoundation.com

About the Author



Bob Sornson, Ph.D. was a classroom teacher and school administrator for over 30 years, and is the founder of the **Early Learning Foundation**. His implementation of programs and strategies for early learning success, the **Early Learning Success Initiative**, serves as a model for districts around the country. He is committed to the belief that practically every child can have a successful early learning experience.

The Early Learning Foundation is dedicated to helping schools and parents give every child an opportunity to achieve early learning success, which lays the foundation for success in life. Few things are so important to the future of our children and our society. Children who come to school without important language, literacy, numeracy, motor, and behavior skills are at a disadvantage for success in the first years of school. Children who have not developed solid skills by the end of the third grade are at a disadvantage for life.

Bob is the author of many articles, books, and audio recordings, including ***Over-Tested and Under-Prepared: Using Competency Based Learning to Transform Our Schools*** (Routledge), ***The Essential Math Skills*** (Shell), ***Stand in My Shoes: Teaching Kids about Empathy***(Love and Logic Press), ***The Juice Box Bully***(Ferne Publications), ***Fanatically Formative: Successful Learning during the Crucial K-3 Years*** (Corwin), ***Teaching and Joy*** (ASCD), ***Preventing Early Learning Failure*** (ASCD), ***Meeting the Challenge*** (Love and Logic Press), ***Creating Classrooms Where Teachers Love to Teach and Students Love to Learn*** (Love and Logic Press), ***Number Facts and Jumping Jacks*** (Crystal Springs Books), and ***Love and Logic on the Bus*** (Love and Logic Press). His assessment instruments include ***The Essential Skill Inventories, K-3 and Preschool*** (Early Learning Foundation).

Dr. Sornson consults internationally with schools and education organizations, focusing primarily on developing programs which support early learning success, building classroom and school culture to support the development of social and behavior skills, and offering parent training. He offers workshops and keynotes, and develops long-term training projects with selected organizations, and can be contacted at bob@earlylearningfoundation.com.

“It is just what parents and teachers need as a simple guide with activities that are really delightful, fun and easy to do.”

*Carla Hannaford, Ph.D.
Author: Smart Moves*

“Simple, fast, enjoyable, and easy. The 30-Minute Motor Skills Development Plan fits right in for today’s busy lifestyles. Current brain research is indicating that children need basic physical skills in order to “build” their brains. The activities suggested by Bob Sornson encompass the building blocks for this brain development. They can be accomplished easily and without expensive equipment. This is a great way to spend time together while you enhance your child’s physical and cognitive skills.”

*Thomas R. Johnson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Albion College and
President of Project First Step*