Locomotor Skills

Locomotor skills move the body from one location to another. Many locomotor skills are used on a daily basis (e.g. running after a bus, leaping over a puddle), as well as in many games and sports (e.g. jumping up to catch a ball).

To move with control, your child will need good balance, as well as an awareness of the environment in terms of effort, space, and in relation to people or object. This is because body movements often occur in relation to at least one of these factors and seldom in isolation.

> **Example:** If your child spots a friend from a distance and wants to greet him, he has to walk in the direction (space) of his friend (relationship - people) quickly (effort)

Locomotor skills include (in ascending levels of difficulty for most children):

- **Walking**
- **Running**
- **Leaping**
- **Jumping**
  - off a Height
  - for Height (vertical jump)
  - for Distance (horizontal jump)
- **Sliding**
- **Galloping**
- **Hopping**
- **Skipping**

While children attempt the above locomotor skills at different pace, many would learn to walk at about one year old, progressing to run and jump at about two. From about three, they start to explore leaping, sliding, galloping, hopping and skipping. To master these skills, children need instructions at an early age and lots of opportunities to practise them... and in the course of it, have fun!

Walking

Walking is your child's first upright movement on both feet. It requires the transfer of body weight from one foot to the other, with one foot always in contact with the ground. As this takes place, a corresponding shift results in the centre of gravity of the body, bringing about the movement.

Used in almost every aspect of daily living, walking gives your child the independence and freedom to move about and explore his environment.

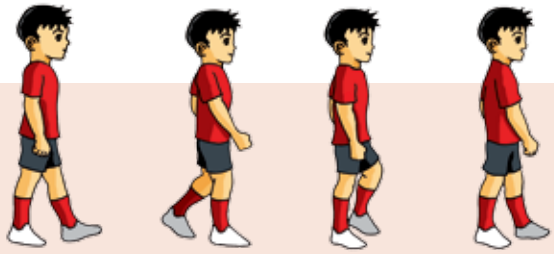
Walking with an awareness of effort, space and people or object relationship is important. Proficiency and mastery of walking techniques for difficult situations will help your child move with agility and confidence.

Developmental Phases

Walking

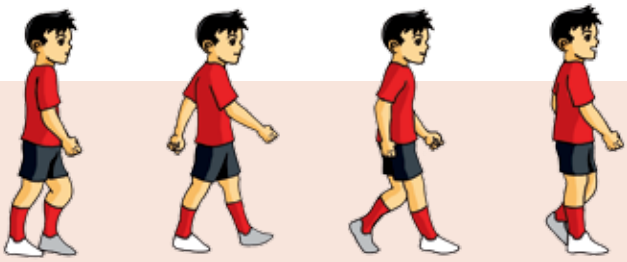
Initial

- Difficulty maintaining upright posture. Unstable and loses balance.
- Short steps and flat-footed contact with ground. Toes turned outwards.
- Feet apart to balance. Knee bends when foot contacts ground, followed by quick straightening of legs.



Transition

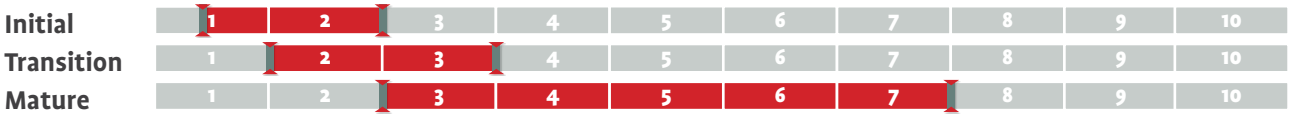
- Takes wider steps. Heel-toe contact with ground.
- Out-toeing is reduced. Upward lift (foot off the ground) is visible.
- Arms show limited swing.



Mature

- Relaxed steps. Minimal upward lift. Definite heel-toe contact with ground.
- Feet land one in front of the other roughly along a straight line. Distance between steps depends on required walking speed.
- Spontaneous arm swing in opposition to leg (e.g. when left arm swings forward, right leg steps forward).

Approximate Age of Development (in years)



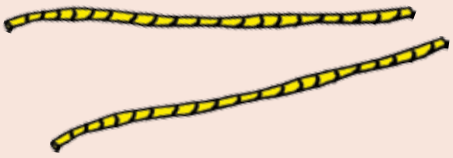
Teaching Strategies

Walking

What to do if your child...

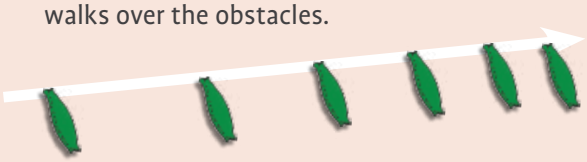
... is walking with toes pointed outward?

- Create wide to narrow pathways with cones/ropes/markers.
- Get your child to walk within the boundaries.



... is shuffling feet?

- Place ropes/markers/bean bags or draw lines on the floor with wide to narrow intervals.
- Get your child to lift each foot high as he walks over the obstacles.



... is not able to walk in a straight line?

- Place footprints or markers on either side of line.
- Get your child to walk following the prints closely.

... needs to walk more steadily?

- Draw different pathways on the floor or use court lines if available.
- Get your child to walk following the lines closely.

Variations

"Can your child walk...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• on tiptoe like a little mouse • as if he is on hot sand • as if wearing Mummy's high-heeled shoes	• quickly away from the ants • in quick-slow rhythm as if being pushed and then pulled back • quickly or slowly according to a drumbeat	• as if someone is pulling his back • in start-stop rhythm according to signal • like a robot running out of battery

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• around a hoop • without touching anyone • in between the cones	• forward or backward on his heels • following a zigzag or circular line • and turn away when he meets a friend	• tall like a giraffe • as if on ice with knees bent low • slowly like a chimpanzee

With whom/What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• holding a partner's hands • towards a partner and then away from him after a high-five • in line with a group like marching soldiers	• around the cones like busy bees • under the net carrying a ball • with bean bag on his head

COMBINATIONS

- On tiptoe quickly like a mouse to get away from a nest of ants
- Tall like a giraffe in a zigzag pathway while holding hands with a partner

Activity 1

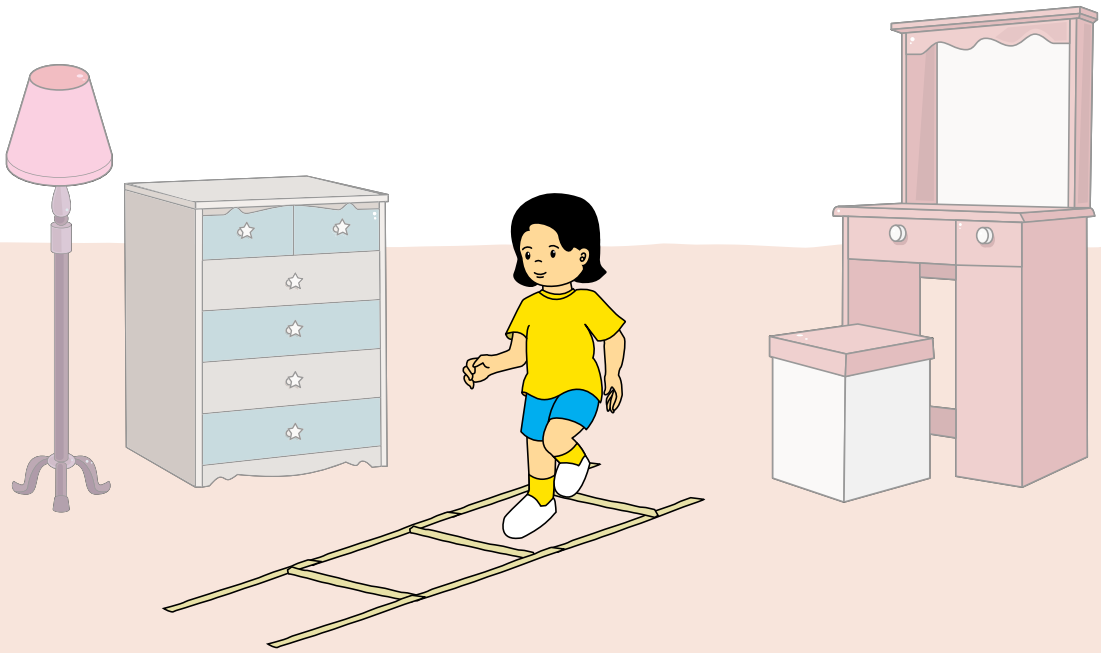
Walking

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

- **Ensure play area is dry.**
- **Play area should be flat, without slopes.**
- **Ensure child has spatial awareness when practising.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- Newspaper, cut into long strips



HOW TO PLAY

- Arrange newspaper strips to form ladder on floor. Have your child walk the "ladder" in different ways.

Ways to walk

- Walk the "ladder" by stepping in the spaces. No stepping on the "rungs" now!
- With each foot on either side of the "ladder", straddle walk to the opposite end.
- Role playing while walking. Be a tip-toeing thief when stepping in the spaces; be a huge elephant when straddle walking etc.

- Challenge your child to repeat the activity walking backwards.

BE AWARE

- Ensure your child's toes are pointed forward when walking.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity at places such as shopping malls or supermarkets where there are markings on the floor.

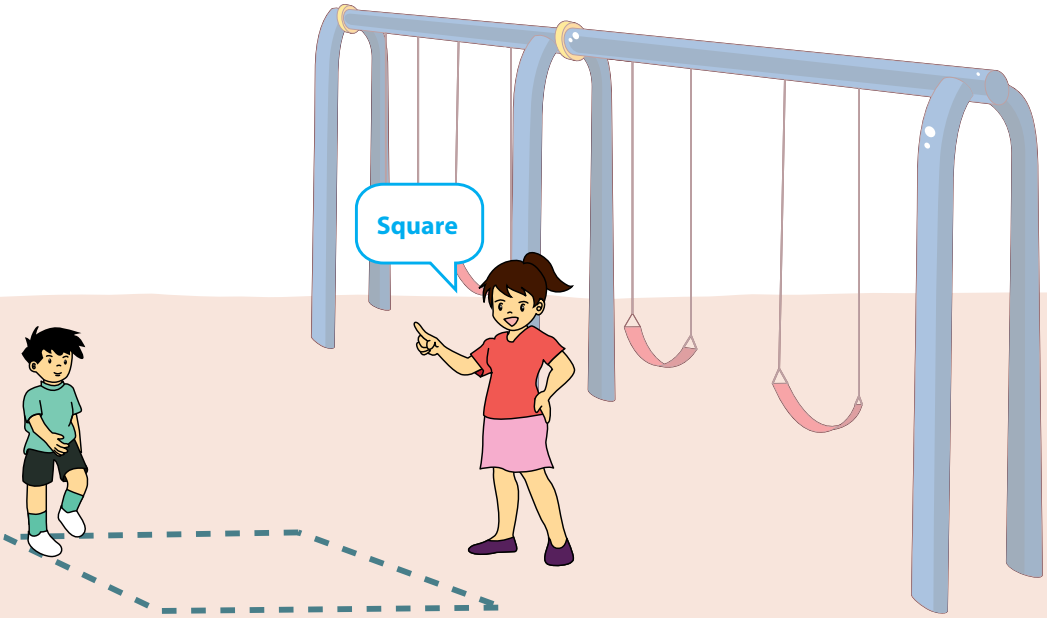
Activity 2

Walking

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **Prompt your child to look ahead to avoid collisions or tripping.**



HOW TO PLAY

- Encourage your child to role play as a robot and walk around in different ways. He can walk:
  - on heels like a penguin
  - on toes like a sneaky thief
  - with feet pointing outwards like a clown
  - by marching smartly like a soldier
- Name a shape or number – square, circle, triangle, number 8 or 6. Have your child walk its outline.
- Ask your child to count and record the number of steps he takes to walk each outline. Get him to compare and share with you the shape or number he found easiest or most difficult to trace.
- You and your child can walk the same shape or number – either holding hands; or in opposite directions, giving each other high-fives as you pass each other.

BE AWARE

- Try walking hand in hand with your child. It will help him swing his arms naturally for balance and stability.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity wherever the environment is spacious and safe.

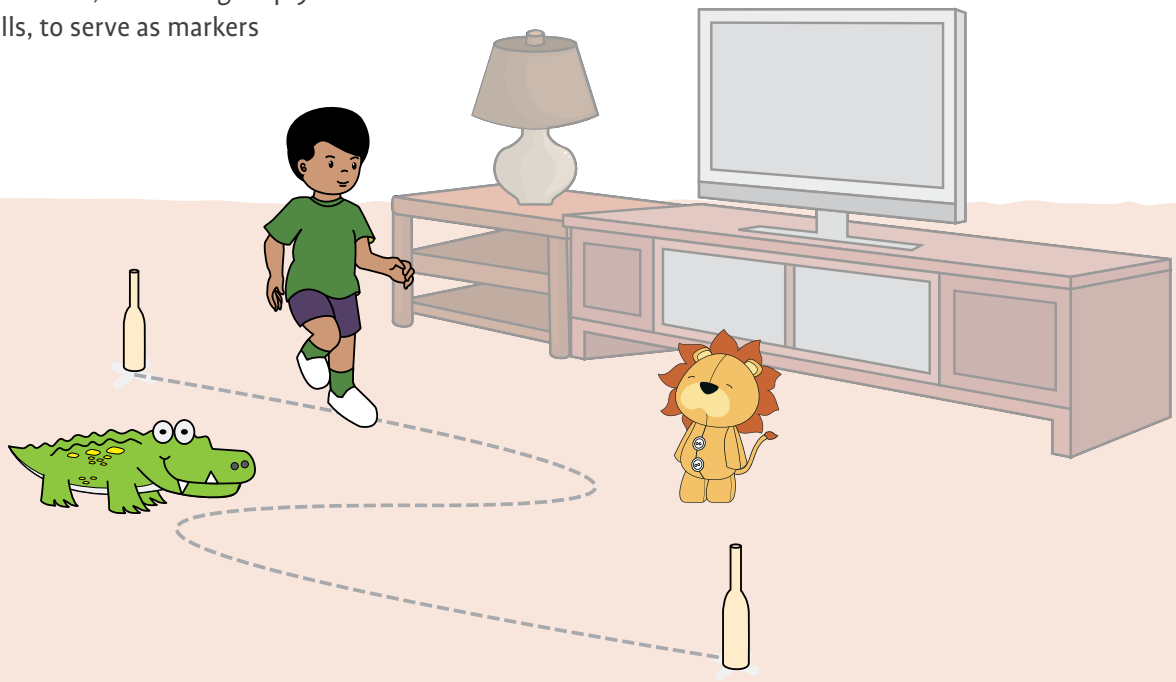
Activity 3

Walking

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Recycled materials, such as big empty bottles or toilet rolls, to serve as markers



HOW TO PLAY

- Ask your child to count the number of steps he takes to reach different parts of the house. For instance, from your child's bedroom to yours.
- Get your child to explore walking at different speeds (fast and slow), force (light and heavy steps) and pathways (straight, curved and zigzag). Have him compare and identify the fastest way to reach the destination.
- Create an indoor maze with markers forming a trail around the house. Have your child follow the markers to find the end point.

- Challenge your child to walk according to your clapping tempo (fast, faster, slow and slower).
- Play a range of music. Get your child to change his walking style with each change of music.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity while shopping. You and your child can try walking according to the tempo of the mall's piped music.

Running

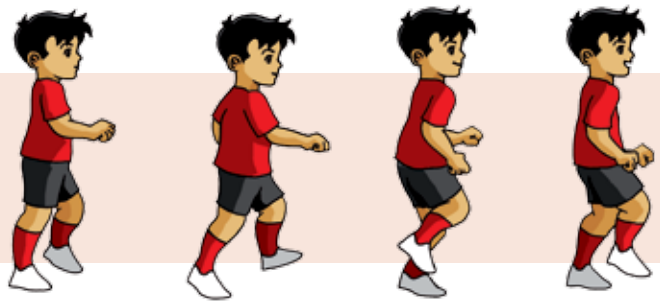
Running is similar to walking except that with running, there is a flight phase when both feet are momentarily off the ground at the same time. Variations of the running movement include jogging, sprinting, dodging, chasing and fleeing.

Running is one of the most basic movement skills required in daily activities (e.g. running because you are late for school). It is also a foundation skill required in many dynamic activities, games and sports (e.g. tag games, athletics, soccer, basketball). Proficiency and mastery of good running techniques for different situations will enable your child to move successfully and confidently.

Developmental Phases

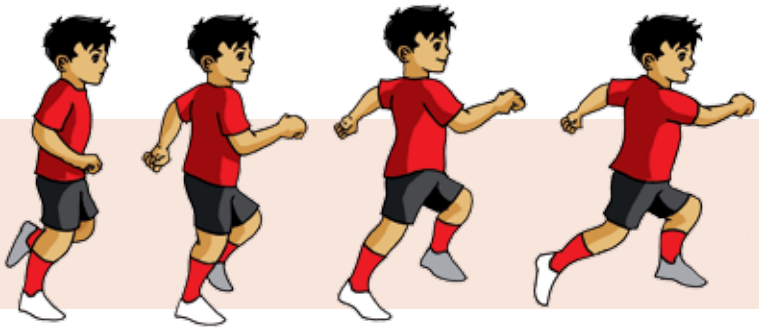
Running

Initial



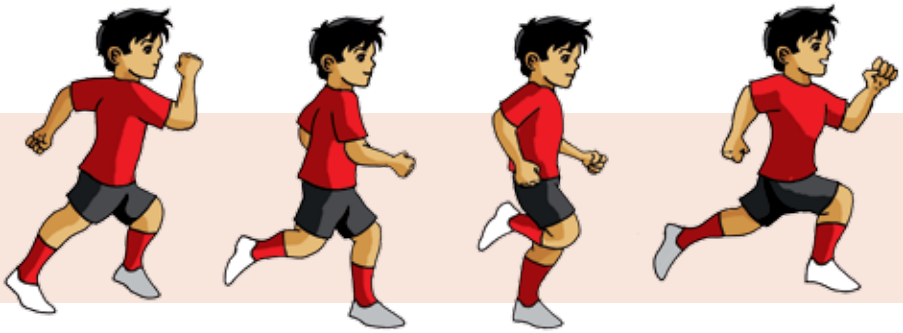
- Stiff arm swing.
- Legs appear stiff and take uneven steps. Short and limited leg swing.
- No flight phase, with at least one foot always on the ground. Wide base of support (feet apart) to maintain balance.

Transition



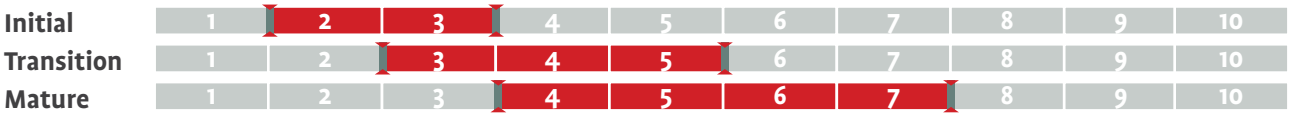
- Arms swing further from front to back.
- Wider steps and an increase in leg swing and speed.
- The support leg straightens more completely at take-off.
- A flight phase (both feet off the ground) is visible.

Mature



- Arms are bent at the elbows at about 90°.
- Arms swing close to body in opposition to leg movement.
- Wider steps and maximum flight phase when both feet are off the ground.
- Support leg bends slightly upon contact with ground, and then straightens to push body upwards.

Approximate Age of Development (in years)



Teaching Strategies

Running

What to do if your child...

... is not swinging arms naturally in alternate fashion?

- Get your child to sit on the floor, legs outstretched.
- Bend elbows at about 90°, close to body. Swing backward and forward slowly, increasing speed of swing gradually.

... is dragging feet and not lifting knees?

- Get your child to run between two lines slowly at first, then increase speed gradually.
- During run, place hands at waist level and ensure knee lifts to touch them.

... is not running fast?

- Children to race one another in an open space. Ensure ground is flat and safe.

... is not able to change directions quickly?

- Draw different pathways on the floor or use court lines if available.
- Get your child to run closely along the lines.

Variations

"Can your child run...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• heavily like an elephant • quietly without waking the sleeping giant • lightly as if on clouds	• quickly like a leopard • in quick-slow rhythm • slowly like a tortoise	• as if he is tired/energised • as if he is racing a car • at "green light" and stop at "red light"

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• to the wall and back • along the side of the court • on the spot like a hamster on a wheel	• in four different directions • along the outline of a big 'W' on the floor • in a circle as if following the outline of a clock	• and reach for the stars • and dribble a ball like a soccer player • low as if avoiding a swarm of bees

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• holding hands with a friend on each side • behind a partner as if he is the shadow • to avoid being tagged by a partner	• without stepping on the scattered bean bags • carrying a ball • between two ropes on the floor

COMBINATIONS

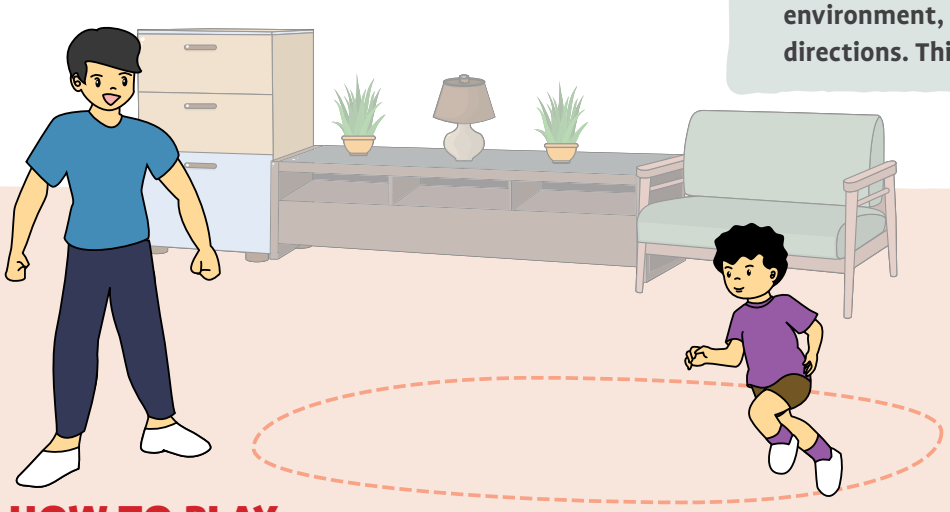
- Lightly and quickly like a race car along the side of the court
- On the spot and lightly like clouds, while holding hands with a friend on each side

Activity 1

Running

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

- **Before you begin, specify the boundary of the play area. Bottles or boxes can be used to clearly mark out the play area. This will help reduce risk and running can be done indoors safely.**
- **Remind your child to be aware of his environment, especially when changing directions. This helps to avoid collisions.**



HOW TO PLAY

- Have your child run around in a free space. When you clap once, he must change direction. When you clap twice, he must freeze.
- Get your child to explore running in different styles.

Styles of running

- Run, stooped down as low as possible, then gradually get taller and taller. Try the reverse (from standing tall to stooping down).
- Lift knees high and clap hands while running.
- Run with arms high in the air, arms behind back, arms stiff at sides, arms swinging at sides, hands on head, hands in pockets. Do the same running backwards, clockwise and anti-clockwise.

- Run alongside your child, playing "Monkey See, Monkey Do" at the same time. Run at different speeds (fast and slow) for your child to follow suit.
- Randomly place obstacles (small things found in the house) in a clear space. Your child will learn dodging as he quickly changes directions to avoid the obstacles.

BE AWARE

- Ask your child how he felt lifting his knees high while running. Explain to him that lifting his knees allows him to take bigger steps, so that he can run faster.
- Ask your child how he felt running with his arms in various positions. He would have realised that he can better gather speed and momentum by swinging his arms naturally by his sides.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity wherever the area is spacious and safe (no pillars and other obstacles) such as lift lobbies and void decks.

Activity 2

Running

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Recycled materials, such as big empty bottles or boxes, to serve as markers

HOW TO PLAY

- Role play with your child. Pretend you are the captain and he is the sailor, on a ship.
- Define running area with four objects. Each object doubles up as different parts of the ship (bow, stern, starboard and portside).
- At the captain's command, the sailor must act correspondingly.

Commands	Actions
Bow	Run to object designated as bow (front)
Stern	Run to object designated as stern (back)
Port	Run to object designated as port (left)
Starboard	Run to object designated as starboard (right)
Climb the rigging	Perform climbing action
Tilt the deck	Squat down
Scrub the deck	Get down on one knee, perform floor-scrubbing action
Captain's coming	Stand still and salute

BE AWARE

- For younger children, stick to bow and stern only. Gradually introduce other parts of a ship and variety of actions.

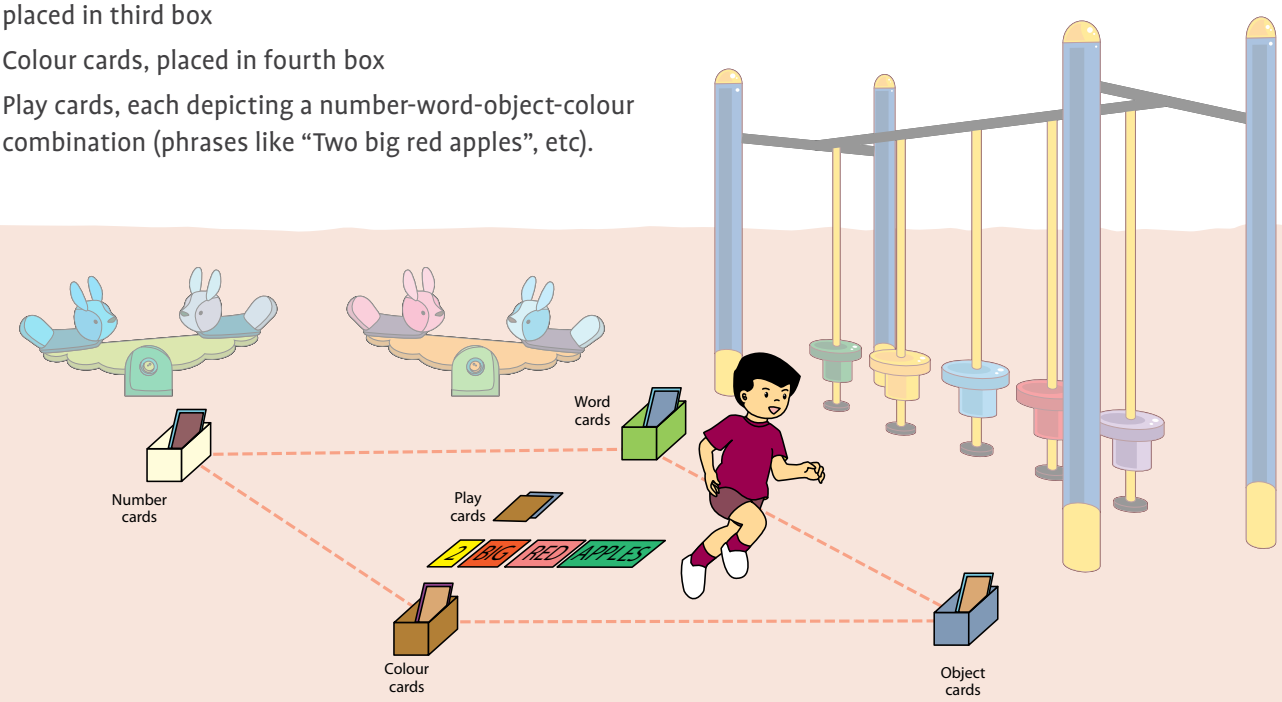
Activity 3

Running

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- 4 boxes, to serve as markers
- Number cards (numerals 1-10), placed in first box
- Word cards (words “big” and “small”), placed in second box
- Object cards (words like “apple”, “pencil”, “comb”, etc), placed in third box
- Colour cards, placed in fourth box
- Play cards, each depicting a number-word-object-colour combination (phrases like “Two big red apples”, etc).



HOW TO PLAY

- Define running area with the four boxes. Place play cards in the centre.
- Ask your child to pick and look at a play card. He must then run to each box, pick the appropriate card, bring the card to the centre, and repeat until four cards have been collected from all the four boxes.
- Next, get him to arrange the four cards in the sequence depicted on the play card. For instance, if play card shows two big red apples, then the arrangement must be number card (2), word card (big), colour card (red) and object card (apples).
- Activity ends when all the play cards are picked.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- For younger children, play with the number and object cards only. The cards may depict pictures instead of words.

Leaping

Leaping is similar to running except for a longer and exaggerated flight phase. It requires taking off on one foot and landing on the other. Many children enjoy the feeling of being airborne, especially if the skill is being executed under make-believe scenarios such as, leaping over ‘rivers infested with crocodiles’ or over obstacles ‘to escape from a tiger’.

As your child masters the leaping skill and applies it to common daily encounters such as clearing water puddles, small drains and low obstacles, he will learn to move confidently. Leaping is also used in many games and sports, such as basketball, netball, badminton and soccer.

Developmental Phases

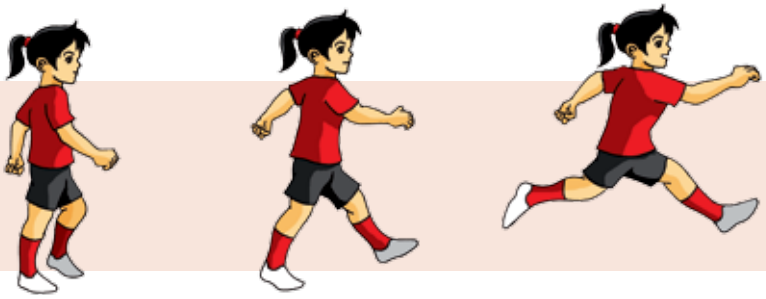
Leaping

Initial

- Arms swing at random, not alternate to legs.
- Inconsistent use of take-off leg.
- Inability to lift body up to gain distance or height.
- Movement looks like a running step.

Transition

- Arms are used for balance, not to produce body lift.
- Legs are not fully stretched when off the ground.
- Body is stiff and leans forward slightly.
- Movement looks like an elongated run. Slight lift above ground is visible.



Mature

- Arms swing in opposition to legs.
- Forceful straightening at take-off with both legs fully stretched when off the ground.
- Definite forward lean of body.
- Able to achieve distance and height.

Approximate Age of Development (in years)

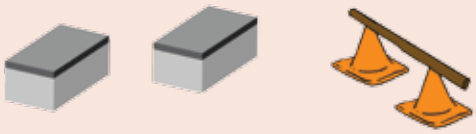
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Initial			3	4						
Transition				4	5	6				
Mature					5	6	7	8		

Teaching Strategies

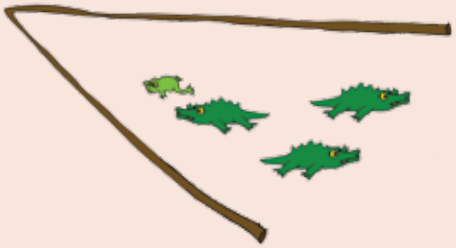
Leaping

What to do if your child...

... does not look up when leaping?



- Create an 'electric wall' of obstacles from low to medium height (e.g. shoeboxes, cones, alphabet foam mat pieces, stacked up juice cartons). Be sure to use objects that are safe.
- Get your child to leap over obstacles.



... lacks confidence to clear a wide distance?

- Create 'rivers' for leaping over by using picture cards or toy crocodiles/fishes.
- To build confidence, get your child to clear 'rivers' of different widths.

... does not use arms to assist the lift?

- Get your child to hold a ribbon or small towel in one hand. Tape a small piece of ribbon on alternate foot.
- Encourage your child to stretch hand with ribbon or towel to touch alternate foot when leaping over the obstacle.

... is not lifting knees and feet during a leap?

- Create low barriers (by drawing lines on floor or using bean bags/milk or juice cartons/shoeboxes) and hang objects in front above eye level.
- Get your child to look up when leaping over the obstacles.

Variations

"Can your child leap...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• and land gently like a fly • and land like a dinosaur without swinging your arms	• quickly/slowly • stay in the air as long as he can • continuously, following a drumbeat	• and freeze upon landing • after a short run-up • with hands on his head

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• over the markers as if they were water puddles • over different objects around the room • over the playground tiles/ foam mats	• diagonally to the left/side of the court • with left/right foot leading • continuously around a big circle	• and touch front knee with one hand • clap in the air • with high knee-lift

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• and touch his knees upon landing • over his partner's outstretched legs • after his partner has his turn	• from one lily pad to another (marked with chalk) • and touch a ball hanging overhead • over the shoebox/newspaper roll

COMBINATIONS

- Lightly over a 'tree trunk' (e.g. newspaper roll) and land gently like a fly
- Continuously from one lily pad to another with higher knee-lift

Activity 1

Leaping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **Alphabet foam mats or yoga mats help absorb landing force, minimising the risk of injury to your child's knees.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- Alphabet foam mats

HOW TO PLAY

- Randomly place foam mats to serve as lotus leaves around the play area. Have your child squat on one. Ask him to spring forward like a frog, and land back in a squat on another "lotus leaf".
- At every sound of "Ribbet!" made by the parent, the child has to leap to next "lotus leaf". Make it more challenging by increasing or decreasing the frequency of saying "Ribbet!". Child has to leap according to your tempo.

- Challenge your child to give a little run before landing on each "lotus leaf".

BE AWARE

- Encourage your child to spring higher by pushing off and stretching the front of his foot.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity while you and your child are strolling in a park, or when you both encounter a pond or a river.

Activity 2

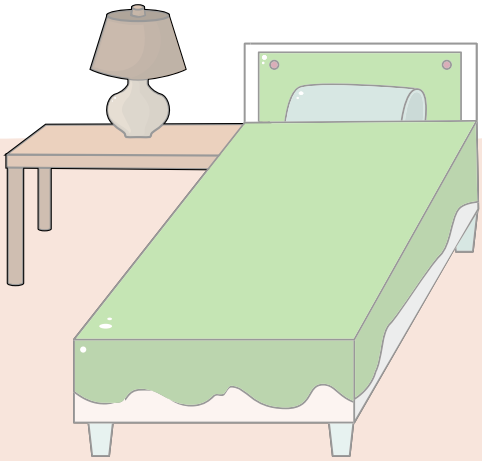
Leaping

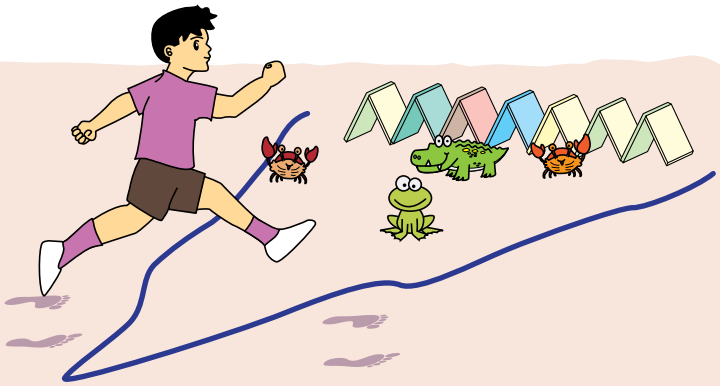
LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

- **Make sure there are no objects, such as furniture or walls within or too close to the designated play area, that your child may collide into.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- Rope or tape
- Safe objects, such as toy snakes, toy fish and soft sponges, to serve as things found in rivers





HOW TO PLAY

- Arrange the rope or tape to form a giant "V" on the floor. This serves as a river. Read your child the tale of "Little Red Riding Hood". Have him dramatise the journey "Little Red Riding Hood" takes to his grandmother's house. Ask your child to think of a safe way to cross the danger-filled "river".
- Encourage your child to add a run before his jump over the "river". He will discover that this increases his leaping distance, allowing him to cross the wider part of the "river".

- Populate the river with sea creatures and foam mats. Your child must now leap higher to clear the "river".

BE AWARE

- For younger children who are still learning to leap, start them off from the narrower end of the "river". Gradually progress towards the wider end when they are ready.
- Lay cut-outs of footprints to help younger children know which foot to take off and land on.
- Prompt your child to swing and reach out his arms while calling out for "grandmother". This will help him propel his body and maintain balance.

Jumping off a Height

Jumping skills are challenging for your child as it requires arm, leg and body coordination as well as controlling a flight phase when both feet are not in contact with the ground. The jumping movement is usually divided into three components: the preparation or take-off, the flight, and the landing.

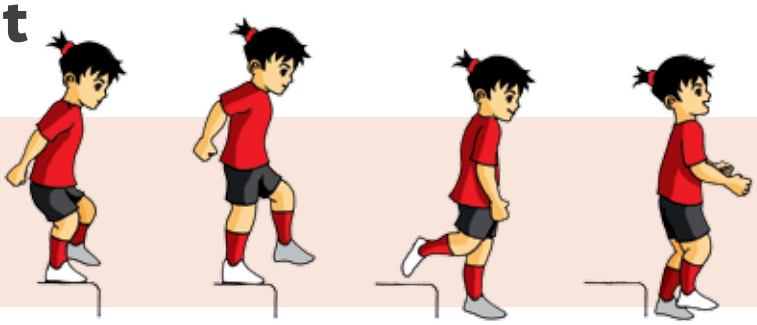
When jumping off a height, your child first takes off on two feet into the air and then land on both. This skill is used when he jumps from chairs, sofas, stairs and playground equipment. Jumping off a height is a great thrill for children – just watch your child's face as he jumps off from a staircase or a playground block to flee a tagger.

To land with knees slightly bent is an important safety consideration, as is landing on soft, non-concrete surfaces. Also, your child should always have his shoes on when jumping.

Developmental Phases

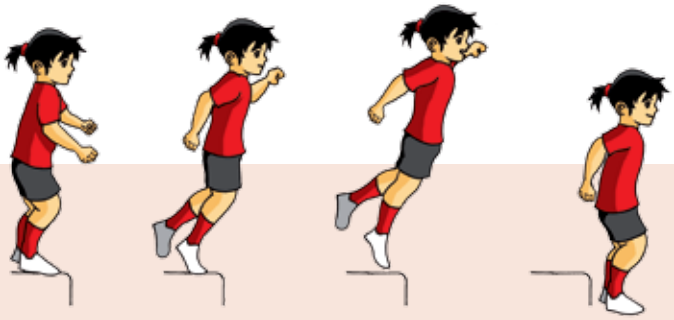
Jumping off a Height

Initial



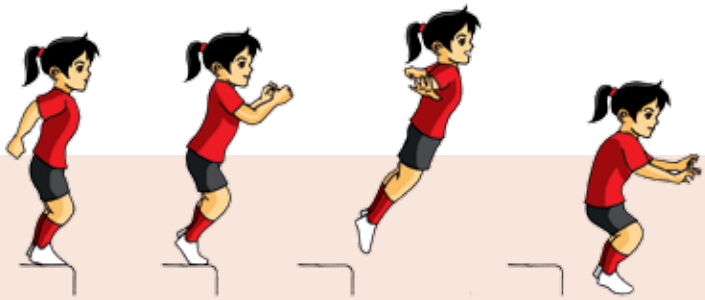
- One-foot take-off, with take-off foot contacting ground first before other foot leaves surface (like stepping down).
- No flight phase visible.
- Heavy dependence on arms for balance.

Transition



- Two-foot take-off with one foot leading in front.
- One-foot landing followed by immediate landing of other foot, resulting in minimal flight phase.
- An uneasy bending at knees and hip upon landing.
- Awkward use of arms for balance.

Mature



- Smooth two-foot take-off to give a controlled flight phase (both feet in the air).
- Both arms used efficiently for balance.
- Upon landing, both feet contact ground simultaneously, with toes touching first.
- Feet land shoulder-width apart.

Approximate Age of Development (in years)

Teaching Strategies

Jumping off a Height

What to do if your child...

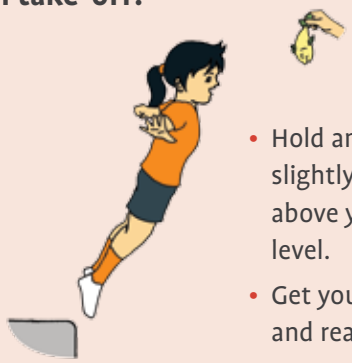
... is afraid/unwilling to jump off a height?

- Place your child on a low height and get him to bend knees. Facing him, hold him on both shoulders.
- Count to three and gently lift him up.
- Gradually reduce physical help, from shoulders to elbows, then to hands, and finally just verbal cues.

... is unable to take off with both feet?

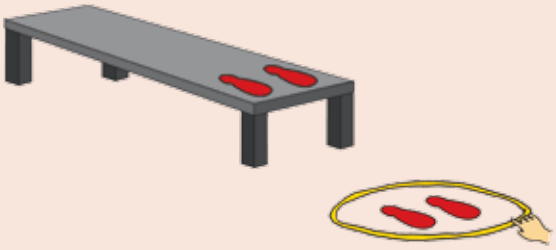
- Make a 2-cm wide newspaper band to wrap your child's feet near ankles (staple or tape ends of the newspaper together). Get your child to imagine his feet are now glued together.
- Place two footprints at end of raised platform and a matching pair on ground.
- Get your child to jump off, keeping his feet together.

... is not swinging both hands to help in take-off?



- Hold an object or target slightly in front and just above your child's head level.
- Get your child to jump and reach for the target.

... is not gaining distance with jump?



- Place a hoop near raised platform and get child to jump off and into hoop.
- Progressively move hoop further away.

Variations

"Can your child jump off...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• and stamp the ground with his feet • with hands stretched out like a star • lightly to land in a bowl of 'jello'	• and clap before he lands • and turn in the air before he lands • and touch his knees before he lands	• with a bean bag in each palm (palm facing up) • and wave a towel held in his hand • with hands 'glued' to his sides

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• into a hoop • and land near the marker/ line • from different stools or benches around the space	• towards two footprints on the floor • and reach for the sky before landing • and turn clockwise before landing	• from a low crouch position • like a tall rocket taking off

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• and land with hands touching tip of toes • and land on one foot • and turn to face a partner standing on his right/left	• holding a scarf • and land across a rope placed on the floor • onto a gym mat

COMBINATIONS

- Lightly like rain from a stool waving a scarf before landing with hands touching knees
- From a stool, turn in the air and clap before landing in an 'electric' hoop

Activity 1

Jumping off a Height

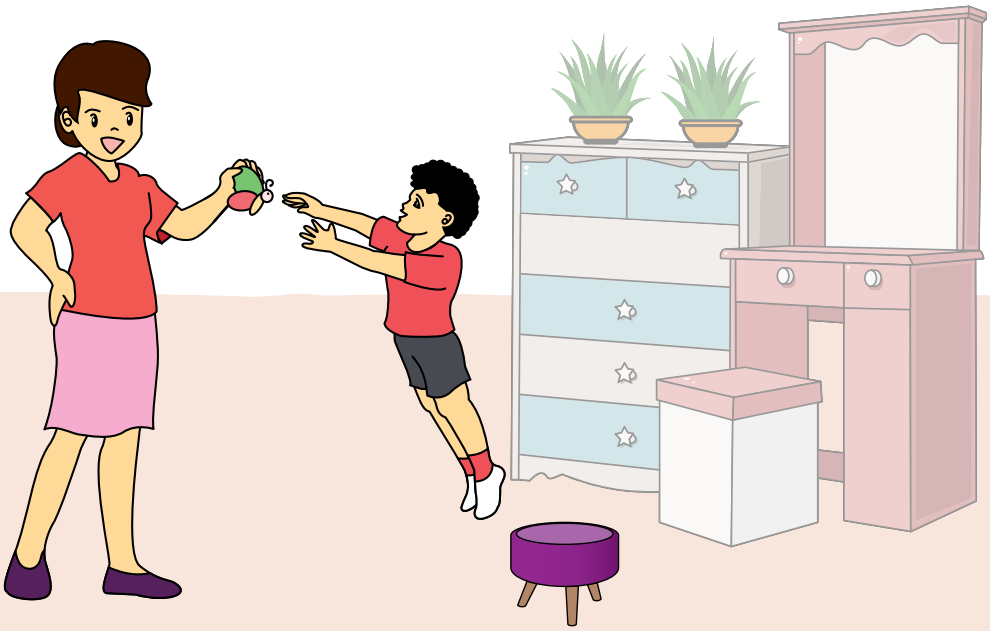
LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **Ensure the stool is stable and not easily toppled.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- A stable stool
- A stuffed toy



HOW TO PLAY

- Have your child stand on a stable stool. Let him practise jumping off the stool.
- Hold a stuffed toy in front of and above your child's head. On the stool, from a low crouching position, he must spring forward, swinging and stretching his arms forward to touch the stuffed toy.

- Encourage your child to jump and touch the stuffed toy 10 times. Count the number of successful attempts together.

BE AWARE

- Dangling the stuffed toy is to promote swinging of the child's arms as he reaches forward for the stuffed toy.
- Swinging of his arms forward will aid in lifting his body upwards and forward.
- Encourage your child to start from a low crouching position by telling him to pretend he is a small round ball. Bent knees will help his body gain greater take-off power as he jumps off.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- This activity can be done any time and does not require much space.
- Do this activity with your child in the living room during TV commercial, or use the stairs at the lift lobby while waiting for the lift.

Activity 2

Jumping off a Height

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

- **Remind your child to lift his legs upwards when "bouncing" off. This will help him maintain his balance and prevent falls.**
- **Remind him to bend his knees on landing. This will help absorb the landing impact, minimising the risk of knee injury.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- A ball

HOW TO PLAY

- Show your child how a ball can bounce freely. Then ask him to imagine that he is the ball.
- Get him to "bounce" off a short flight of steps or kerb by crouching low, jumping and crouching again.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity while out with your child. Instead of the lift, take the stairs to let him practise jumping off a height. Have him jump off a kerb at the playground or park.

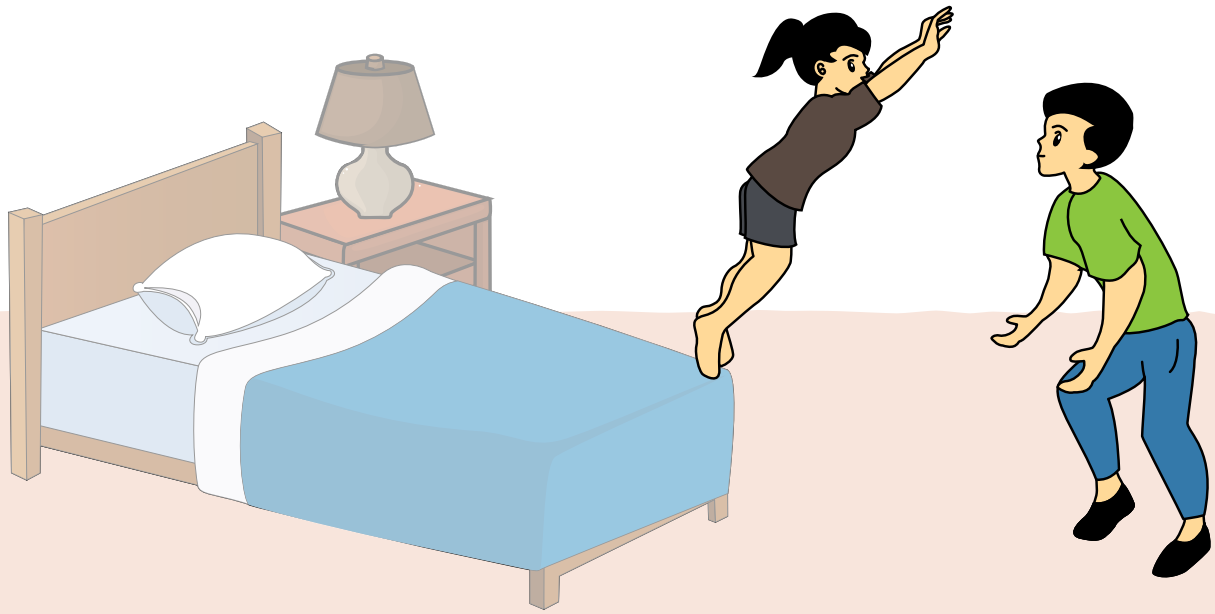
Activity 3

Jumping off a Height

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **Be alert and get ready to catch your child when he jumps towards you.**



HOW TO PLAY

- Get your child to stand at one end of his bed. Stand a distance away from your child and his bed. Your child must jump forward and off the bed towards you. You must catch hold of him as he does this.
- Make your usual good night kiss different. Get your child to jump and give you a hug.

- Depending on your child's ability, increase the challenge by standing further away from your child and his bed.

Jumping for Height

The vertical jump for height requires a one- or two-foot upward take-off to gain height. To achieve a good jump, your child needs to bend both knees at the preparatory stage before pushing the body up forcefully from the balls (front) of the feet while using strong arm swings to lift the body upwards.

A beginner generally would not know how to precede his jump with a preparatory crouch. Nor would he know how to generate force with the lower limbs, or how to use the arms to lift the body up.

The vertical jump is used extensively in ball games (e.g. basketball, volleyball, soccer), badminton, gymnastics, athletics and skipping.

Developmental Phases

Jumping for Height

Initial

- Preparatory crouch (body bend) is unstable, hence difficulty in taking off with both feet.
- Poor body stretch at take-off with little or no head lift.
- Arms not coordinated with body trunk and leg action. Tendency to swing backward when taking off.
- Little height is achieved, making it look like a forward jump.

Transition

- Incomplete preparatory crouch: knee-bend exceeds 90° and body leans forward too much.
- Two-foot take-off. Body does not stretch fully during flight phase.
- Ineffective use of arms for balance during jump.
- Landing point is noticeably different from take-off point.

Mature

- Body crouched with knee-bend of between 60° to 90°.
- Knees straighten and arms lift upwards. This pushes body upwards into a full body stretch.
- Head tilts upward with eyes focused ahead or on target.
- Controlled landing on both feet very close to take-off point.

Approximate Age of Development (in years)

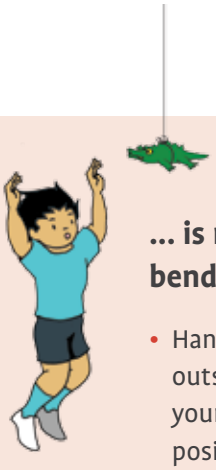
Teaching Strategies

Jumping for Height

What to do if your child...

... is unable to take off with both feet?

- Get your child to bounce up and down on both feet like a kangaroo, bending knees to take-off and to absorb impact on landing.
- When bouncing upwards, get your child to raise both hands as if he is netting a basketball.



... is not looking up or bending knees?

- Hang a target just above your child's outstretched hands. Encourage your child to bend his knees (crouch position) and jump up to touch target.
- If your child needs help, hold him at the waist and gently lift him up on count of three.

... is not swinging and lifting arms to assist jump?

- Find a wall clear of obstacles.
- Get your child to hold a piece of chalk in one hand.
- Standing sideways to wall, encourage your child to jump, stretch his hand with chalk as high as possible to mark the wall.
- Determine the highest level achieved after a few tries.

... needs to improve jump?

- Hang interesting targets at different heights (low to high).
- Get your child to jump and reach for the targets, moving from lowest to highest.

Variations in

"Can your child jump for height...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• like fireworks shooting into the sky • to pluck rambutans from a tree • like a dolphin jumping out of the water	• in slow motion • and clap his hands above his head • and spin in the air	• and land in a pool of 'super glue' • like a puppet being pulled up and down by someone • and stop for five counts before jumping again

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• and land at the same spot • and touch the wall with hand raised above his head • and move to a different hoop according to drumbeat	• and turn clockwise/ anti-clockwise • and reach to the left/right • and reach with both hands upwards	• like a small ball shot upwards by a racquet • starting with both hands on bent knees • starting with hands behind at waist level

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• with his hands 'tied' to the side • at the same time with his partner • together with a group according to signal	• and peep over a net (above head level) • and touch a hanging target • and toss a small object into a hanging hoop

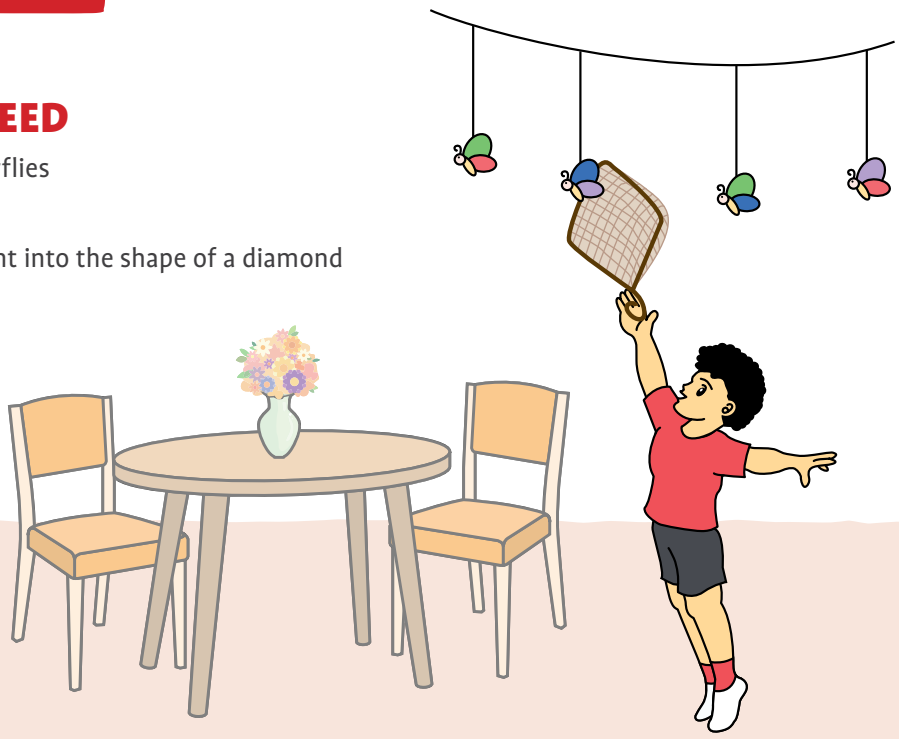
COMBINATIONS

- Lightly on the same spot continuously as if he is a puppet on a string being pulled by someone
- Slowly from a low crouch position and turn in the air at the same time with a friend

Activity 1

Jumping for Height

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS



WHAT YOU NEED

- Many cut-out butterflies
- A hairnet
- A clothes hanger bent into the shape of a diamond

HOW TO PLAY

- Draw and cut out butterflies with your child. Hang these butterflies at different heights all around, just above your child's immediate reach. Wrap the hairnet around the bent clothes hanger to form an insect-catching net.
- Ask your child to skip around while catching butterflies with the net. Start with the lower-hanging butterflies before proceeding to the higher-hanging ones.

- Challenge him to try touching each butterfly at least three times.
- Challenge him to complete touching all butterflies within a specific time frame.

BE AWARE

- Guide your child to reach for the butterflies. He should take off by pushing off with the balls (front) of his feet, and stretching to lift his body.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity in a park. Your child can even try catching real butterflies with his DIY net!

Activity 2

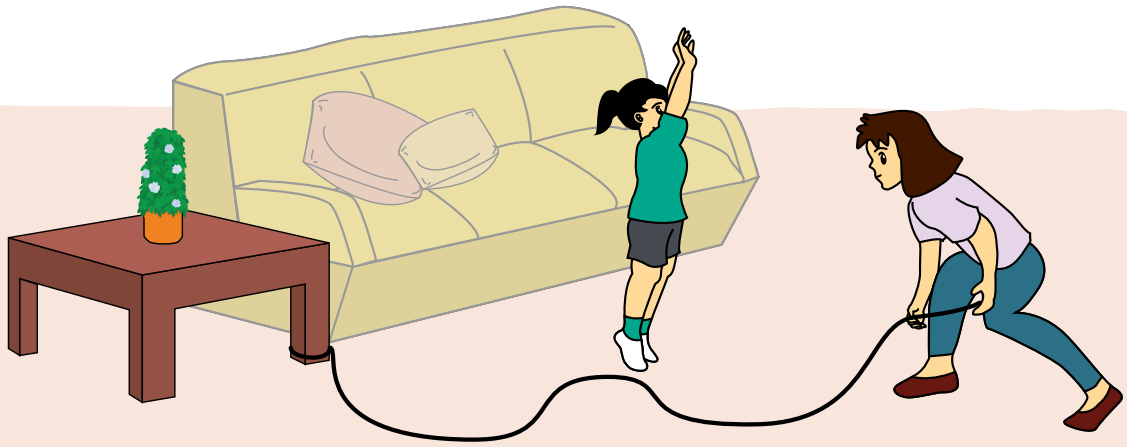
Jumping for Height

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

- **Remind your child to bend his knees on landing. This will help to absorb the landing force, minimising the risk of injury to his knees.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- A rope
- A stable table or chair



HOW TO PLAY

- Tie one end of a rope to a stable table or chair. Hold the other end of the rope. Have your child jump across the rope.
- Dramatise a beach scene, with the rope representing waves. You should call out the sea condition and shake the rope accordingly. Your child must jump over the moving rope.

Sea condition	Variations of shaking the rope
The sea is gentle	Shake the rope sideways to make waves
The sea is choppy	Shake the rope up and down to make waves
The tide is low	Hold the rope a short distance above the ground
The tide is high	Hold the rope high above the ground

BE AWARE

- Encourage your child to bend his knees before take-off. Bent knees will help his body gain greater take-off power during a jump.

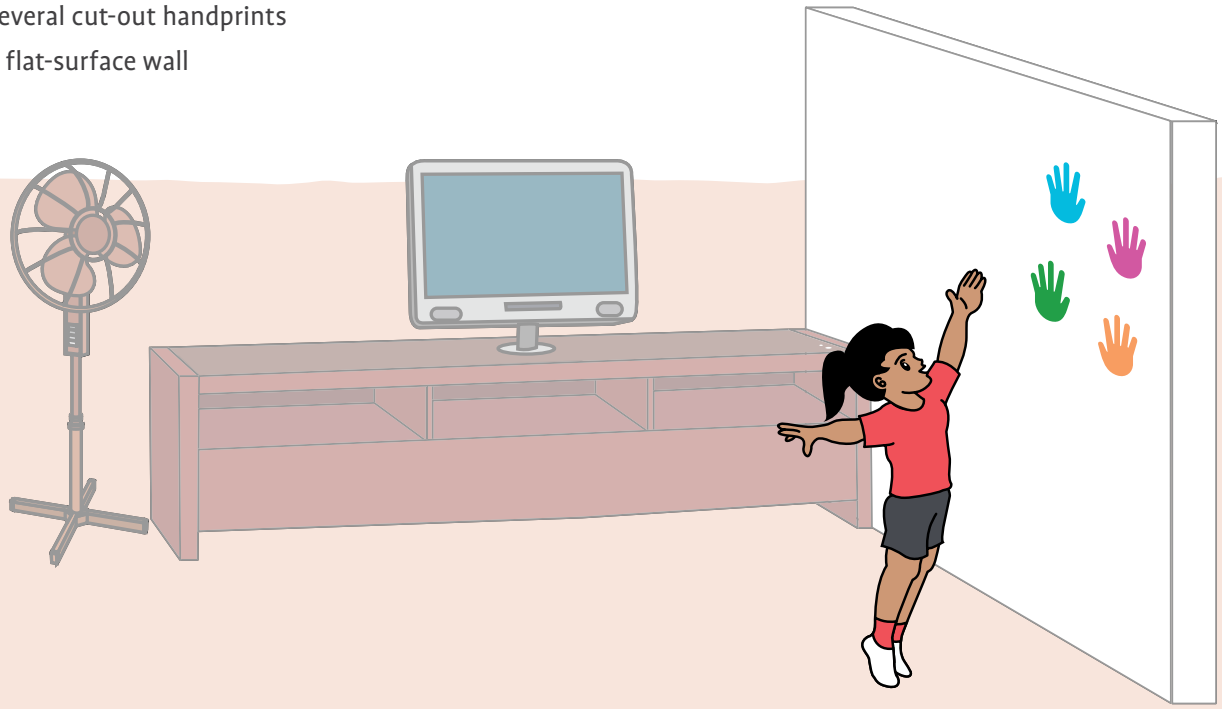
Activity 3

Jumping for Height

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Several cut-out handprints
- A flat-surface wall



HOW TO PLAY

- Draw and cut out handprints with your child. Stick these handprints at different heights along a wall. Have your child jump and give the handprints high fives.

- Challenge your child to give every handprint a high five, all within a specific timeframe.

BE AWARE

- Encourage your child to swing his arms forward and extend his legs. This will help him achieve really good high fives.

Jumping for Distance

The horizontal jump can be executed by taking off either on one foot or two, but landing on both. When taking off on one foot, children usually run up to the point of take-off. This method is most common in sports like long jump, or gymnastics when jumping over a vault. In many ways, the one-foot take-off is similar to the leap, except that with the horizontal jump, the landing is more stable as it is on both feet.

Mastering the two-foot to two-foot horizontal jump is required in standing long-jump tests which is a component in many fitness assessments. To achieve distance in a jump requires good arm swing with a preparatory crouch and full straightening of the knees.

Developmental Phases

Jumping for Distance

Initial

- Inconsistent degree of knee-bend at preparatory crouch.
- Difficulty using both feet simultaneously to take off and land.
- At take-off, legs are not completely stretched.
- Body is pushed upwards with little emphasis on the length of jump.
- Limited arm swing.

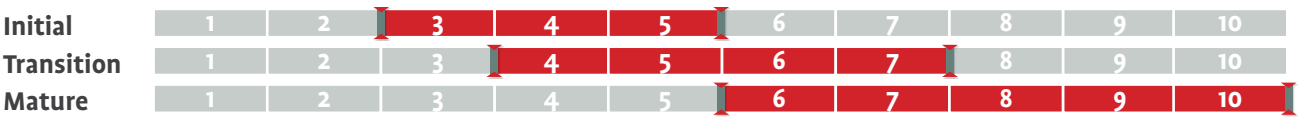
Transition

- Preparatory crouch is lower and more consistent.
- Fuller stretching of the legs during take-off.
- Greater use of arms to assist jump: a backward-upward swing at take-off and then to the side to provide balance during jump.

Mature

- Preparatory crouch is low and consistent.
- Arms swing to back and above waist level. During jump, arms swing forward and are held high.
- Full stretching or extension of legs at take-off.
- Body at take-off is kept at about 45°, with full emphasis on achieving distance.

Approximate Age of Development (in years)



Teaching Strategies

Jumping for Distance

What to do if your child...

... is looking down and not swinging arms forward to lift body?

- Hold an object a short distance in front of your child at about head level.
- Get your child to jump and touch the object with both hands. (Tip: Move object a little forward as your child jumps to reach for it.)

... is unable to jump continuously on both feet?

- Scatter hoops each a short distance apart.
- Get your child to jump (two-foot take-off) from one hoop to another, be mindful not to land outside the hoops where the 'traps' are.

... is not lifting knees to jump far?

- Set up a low obstacle in front of child.
- Get your child to jump with two-foot take-off to clear obstacle.

... needs to coordinate eye, arm and knee movements?

- Set up low obstacles on the ground and hold a target in front for your child.
- Get your child to focus on both when jumping: to touch the hanging target as well as to clear obstacle.

Variations

"Can your child jump far...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• and lightly like a grasshopper • and heavily like a bull frog • and land quietly on his toes	• and slowly as if carrying a heavy bag • in quick-slow alternate rhythm • quickly but quietly	• continuously like a kangaroo • like stepping on hot charcoal • following a hopscotch pattern

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• from one end of room to the other • within the square boundary • over the river (drawn with chalk)	• following a straight line • create a zigzag path with his jumps • forward, turn around and jump back to starting position	• like a tall 'ice-block' • like a frog trying to catch an insect • to catch a high ball

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• and tap knees before landing • and land with hands on top of toes • at the same time with two other friends	• carrying a bean bag • in a sack • over a distance that is about his height

COMBINATIONS

- Continuously like a frog catching an insect while creating a zigzag pattern on the floor
- Lightly and quietly like a grasshopper from one end of room to the other

Activity 1

Jumping for Distance

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Recycled materials, such as empty bottles or boxes, to serve as markers

HOW TO PLAY

- Define a play area with four markers. Ask your child to imagine he is a corn kernel being heated up. He should start from a squat position, and jump only when the pot is finally heated.
- Your child must then jump around to touch all four corners of the play area to fully turn into a popcorn.

- Join in as someone who loves popcorn. Your child must jump away from you to avoid being eaten, and still try to touch all the four corners of the play area.

BE AWARE

- Teach your child to jump around with his feet together for better balance.
- Be sure he pushes off with the balls (front) of his feet. This will help him jump higher and further.

Activity 2

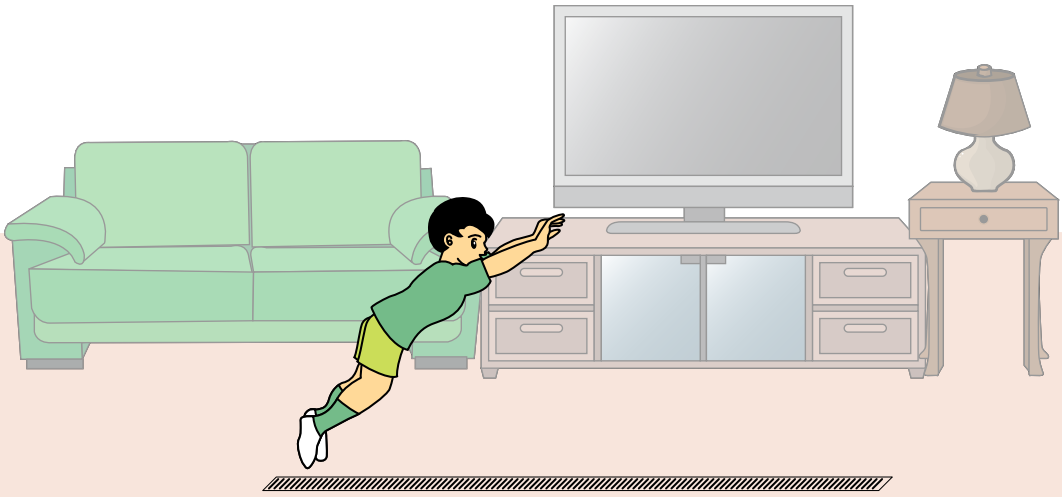
Jumping for Distance

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

- **The measuring tape or chart must be firmly affixed to the floor. This is to prevent slips when landing on it.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- Measuring tape or chart



HOW TO PLAY

- Lay the measuring tape or chart on the floor. Stand your child on it. Get him to jump along its length. Measure the distance jumped.

- Measure and record the distance your child jumps every week. This will challenge him to break his own weekly record. He may even be motivated to practise jumping without being prompted.

BE AWARE

- Engage your child. Explain to him that he must swing his arms more and lean his body forward with hands stretched out. This will help him jump further and break his own jumping record.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Use suitable opportunities and allow your child to jump over things that he comes across, such as a puddle of water.

Sliding

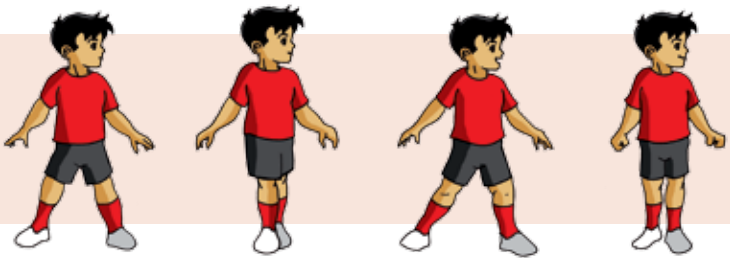
Sliding is a sideway movement where the lead foot takes one step to the side, followed by the other foot stepping next to it closely, without it crossing over the leading foot. Both feet are kept close to the ground with the lead foot always on the side of the direction of travel.

Sliding is one of the most common skills used in games like tennis, badminton, basketball and soccer where players make anticipatory side to side moves to dodge opponents or to change movement directions. Good dynamic balance and body control is crucial when sliding. Sliding is also used in many dances.

Developmental Phases

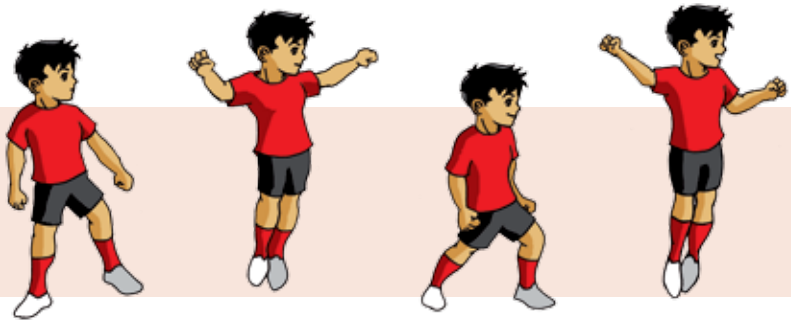
Sliding

Initial



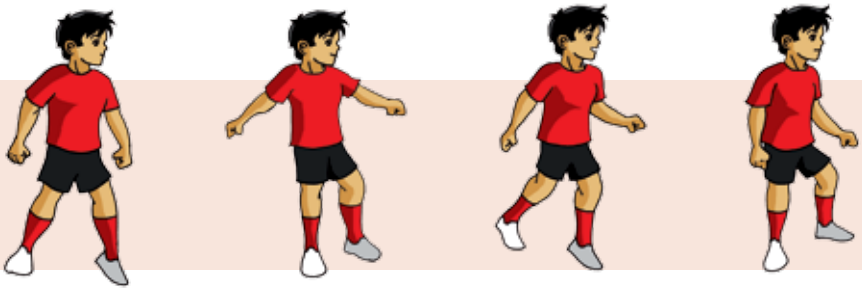
- Irregular pace.
- Both feet do not travel side by side, but cross over during flight phase.
- Feet land flat on the ground.
- Ineffective use of arms to balance or to produce body lift.

Transition



- Movement gains moderate speed but still appears stiff and awkward.
- Trailing leg may lead during flight phase but lands next to lead leg.
- An exaggerated upward lift (feet off the ground) can be seen.
- Contact with ground is made with either heel-toe or toe-toe combinations.

Mature



- Able to slide smoothly and rhythmically with a moderate tempo.
- Trailing leg lands next to lead leg which takes off just before trailing leg lands.
- Both legs bend slightly at the knees. A low-flight phase can be seen when both feet are off ground.
- Contact with ground is made with front of the feet.
- Arms are not needed for balance; they may be used for other purposes (e.g. holding a ball, bean bag).

Approximate Age of Development (in years)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Initial			■	■						
Transition				■	■	■				
Mature					■	■	■	■		

Teaching Strategies

Sliding

What to do if your child...

... has difficulty coordinating the sliding movement?

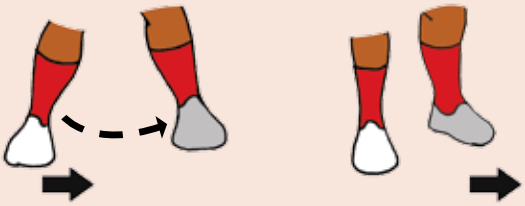
- Demonstrate with verbal cues: “Step, together, step, together”. Child to follow accordingly in both directions.
- Increase speed progressively.

... is not able to change directions quickly?

- Introduce ‘triangular tag’. Three children hold hands, one has a sash tucked behind his shorts.
- Fourth child (Tagger) tries to tag designated child by snatching his sash.
- No running is allowed.

... needs to slide smoothly?

- Play ‘crab in the mirror’. Slide like a crab alternating between slow and medium speeds, while your child mirrors accordingly.



... does not lift feet during slide?

- Introduce ‘foot tag’. Lead foot springs off as other foot steps next to it and tries to catch up. Do this continuously. No crossing of feet.

Variations

"Can your child slide...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• flat-footed as if wearing heavy boots • like a penguin • like a floating balloon	• quickly as if on ice • with alternate small and big steps • according to fast-slow signals	• three steps like a dancer and three steps like a robot • keeping his hands behind body • around space and stop on 'freeze' signal

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• around a hoop • in between the cones • around a table	• left to right, right to left • as if he was a merry-go-round • like a crab which doesn't want to be caught	• like a grumpy old crab • with knees bent and hands on waist • on tiptoe like a tall ballerina

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• with his feet apart • with left/right foot leading • facing a partner in the same/opposite direction	• waving a scarf/towel • while dropping and catching a ball • around a hoop

COMBINATIONS

- Quickly like a runaway crab, with his hands behind body
- As if wearing heavy boots with knees bent and hands on your waist

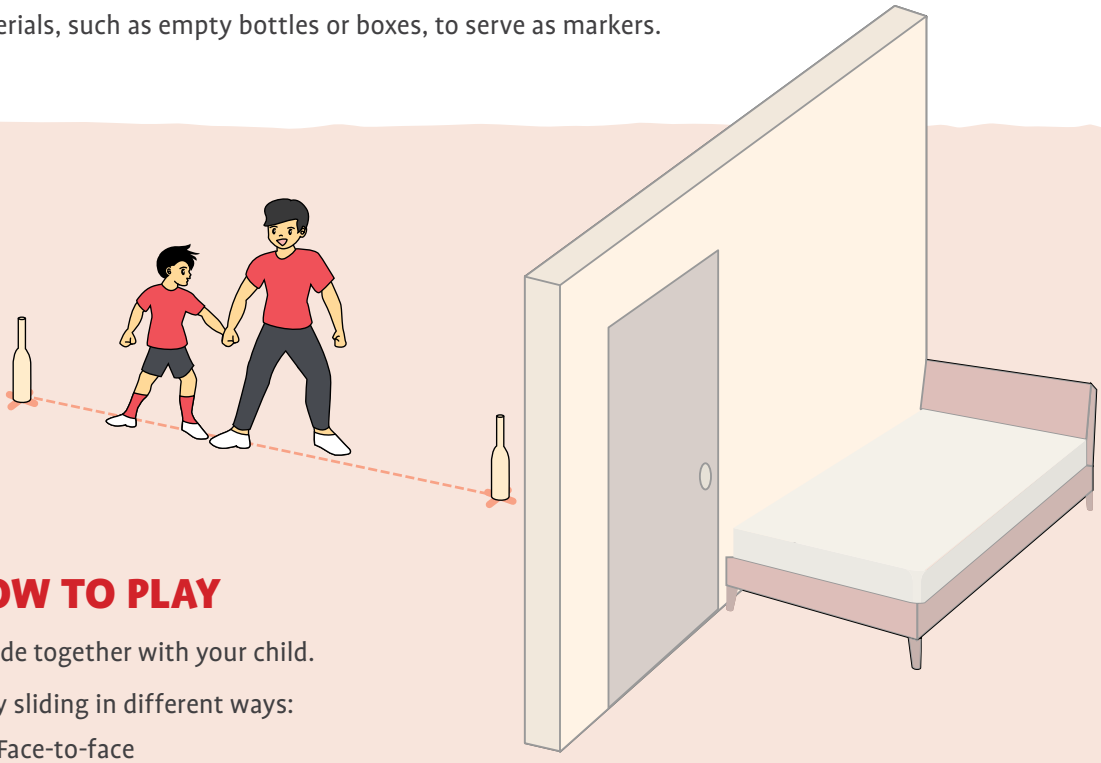
Activity 1

Sliding

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Recycled materials, such as empty bottles or boxes, to serve as markers.



HOW TO PLAY

- Slide together with your child.
- Try sliding in different ways:
  - Face-to-face
  - Back-to-back
  - Holding hands
  - Clapping
  - Try a combination of the various ways of sliding at different speeds.

- Count the number of slides needed to reach a destination, such as the bedroom. Parent and child can record findings and make a comparison.

BE AWARE

- Open and close legs to travel sideways first. Gradually increase the speed. Eventually, the sliding movement will happen.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Consider doing this activity just before you put your child to bed.
- Instead of routinely walking your child to his bedroom, slide there together.

Activity 2

Sliding

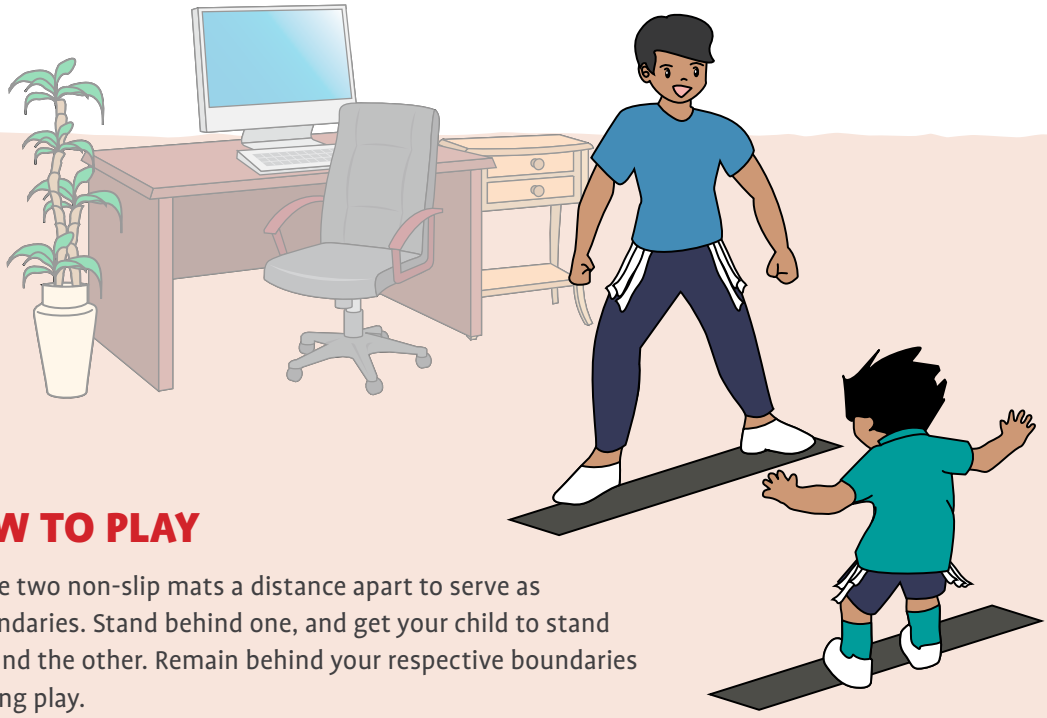
LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **Ensure shorts worn are not too loose and will not drop off easily when tugged.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- Materials, such as a pillowcase, a handkerchief or strips of paper, to serve as tail
- Two non-slip mats, to serve as markers



HOW TO PLAY

- Place two non-slip mats a distance apart to serve as boundaries. Stand behind one, and get your child to stand behind the other. Remain behind your respective boundaries during play.
- Tuck the 'tail' at both sides of your child's shorts, making sure at least half of each is visible. Do the same for yourself.
- As the grabber, your child must slide sideways in his attempts at grabbing your 'tail'.
- As the avoider, you must slide sideways in your attempts to prevent the 'tail' from being taken.
- Switch grabber and avoider roles.

BE AWARE

- For your child to reach for your tail, he will need to slide with speed. Encourage him to push off with the ball (front) of his lead foot. This will help with a quick take-off and maintain momentum of the movement.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Is your child bored with the playground equipment? Then do this activity with him there! The ample space allows ease of movement.

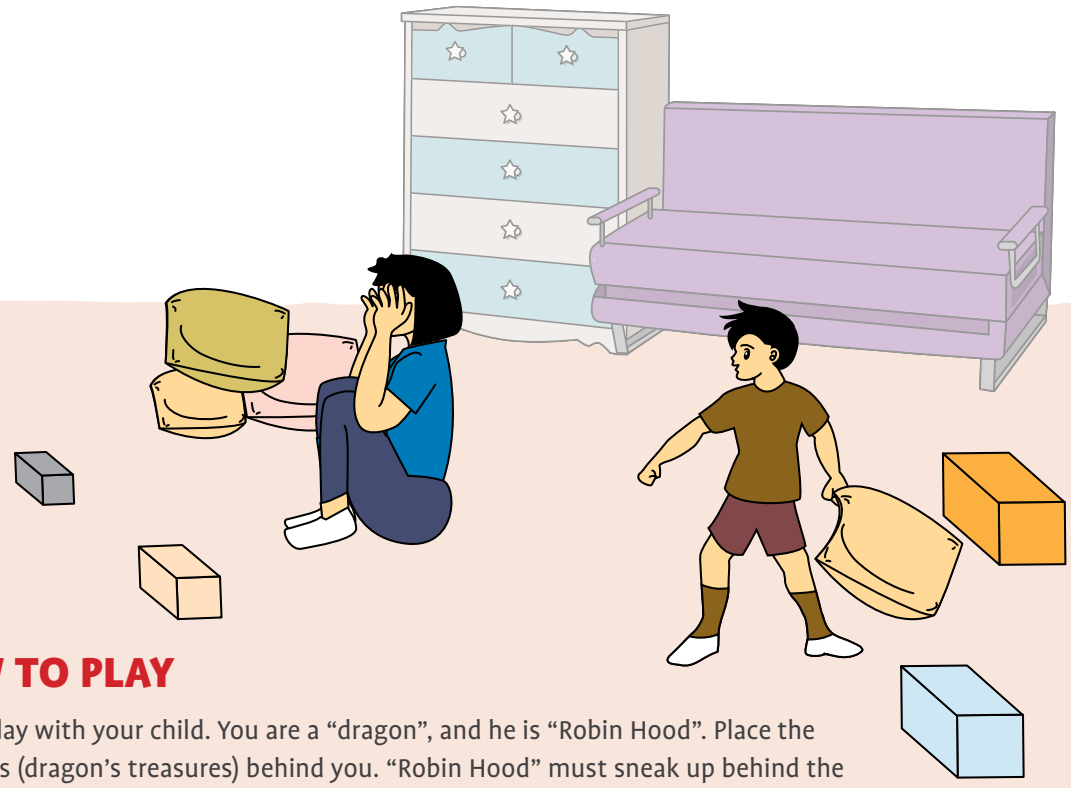
Activity 3

Sliding

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Objects found at home, such as stuffed toys, cushions or stationery



HOW TO PLAY

- Role play with your child. You are a “dragon”, and he is “Robin Hood”. Place the objects (dragon’s treasures) behind you. “Robin Hood” must sneak up behind the “dragon” and steal one treasure at a time. He must do this by sliding slowly and gently towards the “dragon”, without waking it up.
- Sometimes, the “dragon” sneezes. This means it is about to wake up. “Robin Hood” must then slide faster. Whenever the “dragon” wakes up, “Robin Hood” must freeze. If he does not freeze in time and the “dragon” spots him, he must return all the treasures and start stealing all over again.
- Activity ends when all the treasures are successfully stolen.

BE AWARE

- This activity requires “Robin Hood” to keep his eyes on the dragon as he slides to steal the treasures.

Galloping

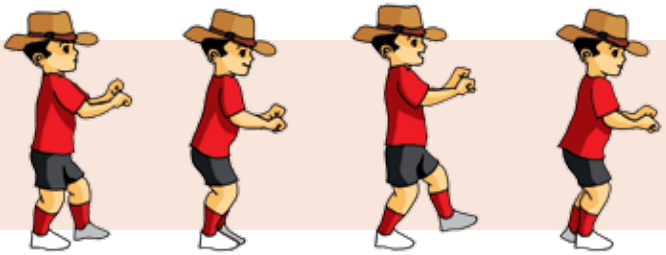
Galloping is a forward slide movement: front foot steps forward with a little spring followed by the transfer of body weight to the back foot. As the back foot receives the body weight, the front foot repeats the forward step movement. The same lead foot always stays in front throughout the gallop.

Galloping is used commonly in dances (e.g. children's, folk and line dances). Children enjoy the fun and light movement as it gives them the feeling of riding a horse.

Developmental Phases

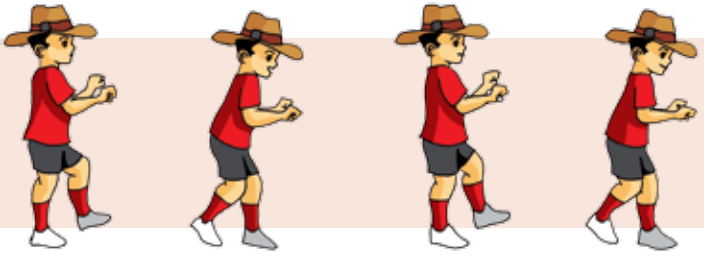
Galloping

Initial



- Back leg often comes in front of lead leg.
- Lead leg takes off only after back leg has landed.
- Contact with ground is made with flat-foot landing.
- Ineffective use of arms to balance or to produce body lift.
- Irregular pace with pauses between steps.

Transition



- Back leg may lead during flight phase but lands next to or behind lead leg.
- An exaggerated upward lift (feet off the ground) can be seen.
- Contact with ground is made with both heel-toe and toe-toe combinations.
- Movement gains moderate speed but still appears stiff and awkward.

Mature

- Back leg lands behind lead leg.
- Both legs bend slightly at the knees. A low-flight phase can be seen (i.e. both feet are off ground).
- Contact with ground is made with a heel-toe pattern.
- Arms are not needed for balance; may be used for other purposes (e.g. in front holding onto 'horse reins').
- Movement is smooth and rhythmic with a moderate tempo.

Approximate Age of Development (in years)

Teaching Strategies

Galloping

What to do if your child...

... needs practice in the movement sequence?

- Demonstrate "step, together behind, step, together behind", complete with verbal cues. Get your child to follow. Ensure correct landing and taking off with balls (front) of feet.
- Begin slowly, pick up speed gradually.

... is not able to change speed quickly?

- Get your child to imagine he is riding a horse that is going very slowly at first.
- Introduce speed changes and ensure your child responds accordingly. Narrate different scenarios (e.g. muddy ground – gallop slowly; tiger is chasing – gallop quickly).

... needs a rhythmic pattern in his gallop?

- Provide visual and verbal cues for rhythmic movement: "click-clock, click-clock..."
- Vary cue speed to suit your child's ability. Use songs or music.

... needs to gallop more quickly?

- Have a 'horse race'. Two to three children to race over a distance using only galloping movements.

Variations

"Can your child gallop...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• like a runaway horse • up or down a hill • on toes as if on a bed of hot coal	• slowly as if a heavy cowboy is sitting on him • quickly as if he is being chased by a lion • to the beat of a drum or to rhythmic claps	• as if being pulled back by a rider/jockey • as if his back leg is injured • as if racing on a racetrack

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• around the cones placed at four corners of the room/ space • within a rectangle drawn on the floor	• across the room/field • around a circle • and change directions according to signals given	• low to the ground • over a 'fence' • with an upright body

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• with right or left foot leading • as if being led by a partner jogging slowly in front • towards another 'horse' and then turn to avoid collision	• weaving in and out a row of cones • pick up an object along the way

COMBINATIONS

- Weaving in and out a row of cones, and on toes as if on a bed of hot coal
- Slowly down a hill as if his back leg is injured

Activity 1

Galloping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **Ensure play area is free of obstacles to avoid collisions, especially when changing directions.**

HOW TO PLAY

- Gallop alongside your child, playing "Monkey See, Monkey Do" at the same time. Gallop in different pathways for your child to follow.

  Pathways

  - Straight
  - Curved
  - Zig zag

- Make shapes and numbers while galloping together. Ask your child to guess what you are tracing with your gallop.
- Role play as ponies galloping together across a vast grassland. Act out different scenarios to vary galloping speed.

Scenarios	Speed
Tired ponies, heading back to the stables for the night	Gallop slowly
Thirsty ponies, rushing towards a stream for a drink	Gallop fast

- Challenge your child to change direction after every three gallops. He will need to count while galloping.

BE AWARE

- Start by getting your child to take a step forward with one foot, then have the other foot catch up. Explain to him that the duty of the back foot is to catch up with the front foot.
- Gradually increase the speed. Eventually, the galloping movement will happen.

Activity 2

Galloping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **When galloping with your child, go according to his pace to prevent tripping.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- Rope or a hula hoop
- Objects found at home, such as stuffed toys, cushions or stationery

HOW TO PLAY

- Role play with your child. He is a “horse”, and you are its “rider”. Use a hula hoop or loosely tie a rope around your child’s waist.
- Hold the hula hoop or rope and stand behind your child. Gallop around together. Switch roles at some point.
- For a younger child, you can be the horse and your child the rider first. This will put him behind you, allowing him to follow your galloping.

- Randomly place objects within the play area. “Horse” and “rider” must overcome the obstacles as they gallop around.
- Challenge your child to pick up the objects as you gallop around together.

BE AWARE

- Remind your child to hold his arms forward at shoulder level. This will help him maintain his balance and move forward.
- Teach your child to gallop lightly. Ask him to imagine he is a bullet being blasted from a pistol. He must spring off for quick take-off and land lightly.

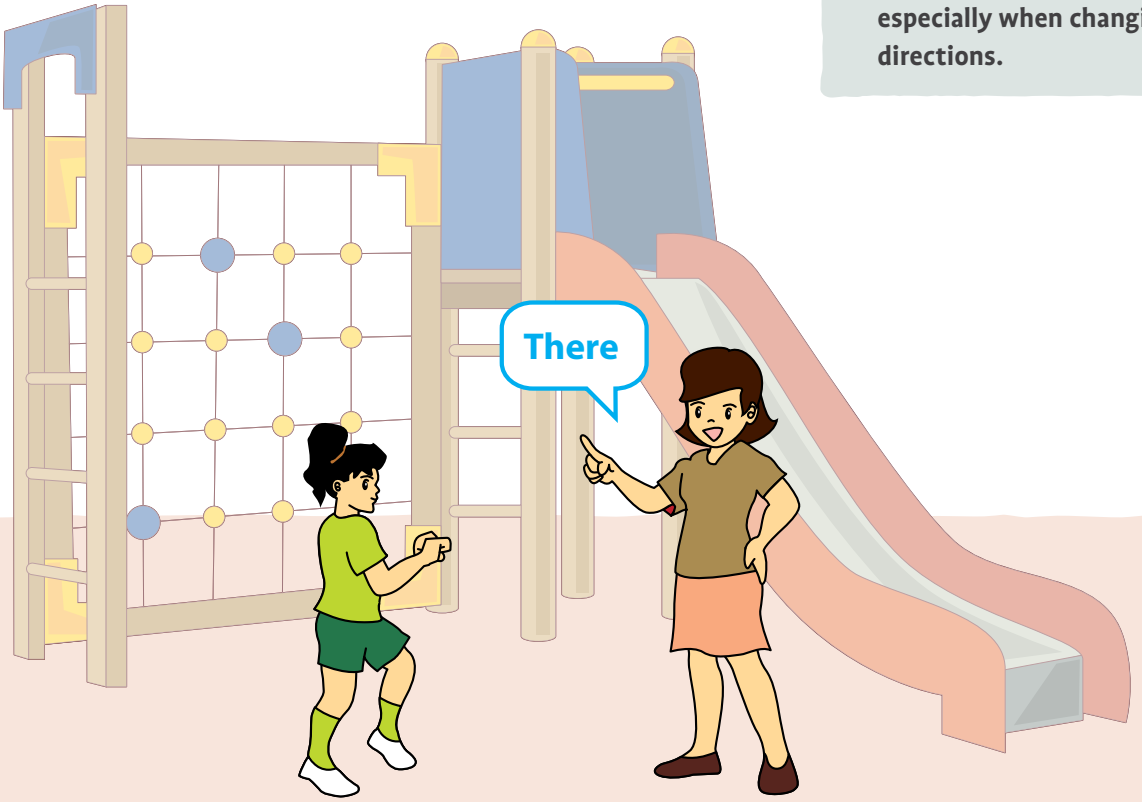
Activity 3

Galloping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **Ensure play area is free of obstacles to avoid collisions, especially when changing directions.**



HOW TO PLAY

- Have your child gallop to your cues.

Cue	Gallop
Here	Gallop towards you
There	Gallop in the direction you point
Everywhere	Gallop around randomly

BE AWARE

- Ensure that there is sufficient space in the play area and free of obstacles.
- Remind your child of the importance of staying within the play zone prior to the activity to prevent accidents from happening.

Hopping

Hopping involves taking off on one foot and landing on the same foot, usually in a continuous and rhythmic movement. Hopping is a challenging skill for many children as it requires balancing on a small base of support (on one foot), and the ability to control the body for the continuous motion.

To hop efficiently, the non-hopping side of the body has to act as a counterbalance when the body is in flight. Leg strength is also needed when covering a distance (e.g. in hopscotch) or keeping the body up and down continuously, like in rope-skipping.

Developmental Phases

Hopping

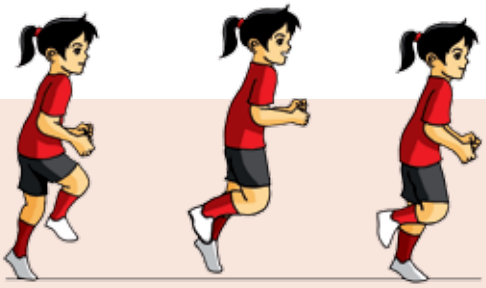
Initial

- Arms bend at elbows and are held slightly off the sides.
- Non-supporting leg lifted, with thigh roughly parallel to ground. Support leg pushes flat against ground.
- Not much height or distance is achieved in a single hop.
- Loses balance easily, managing only one or two hops at a time.

Transition

- Arms move up and down vigorously.
- Non-supporting leg is bent at knee and held in front of body.
- Support leg pushes off more on balls of feet, with slight forward body lean.
- Poor balance with a limited number of consecutive hops each time.

Mature



- Arms swing in opposition to pumping leg when support foot leaves the ground.
- Non-supporting leg bends and swings back and forth like a pendulum to help produce body lift. Support leg pushes off with ball of foot.
- Body leans forward. Greater distance is achieved with each hop.

Approximate Age of Development (in years)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Initial			■	■	■					
Transition					■	■	■			
Mature						■	■	■	■	

Teaching Strategies

Hopping

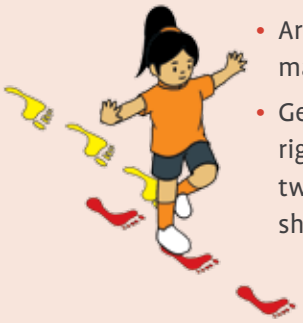
What to do if your child...

... needs help to hop?

- Find a clear wall or a stable table or chair. Get your child to place entire lower arm against wall or hold table or chair.
- Hold your child's non-hopping foot, bent at the knees. Get your child to bend knee of hopping leg and push off ground for one hop. Repeat.

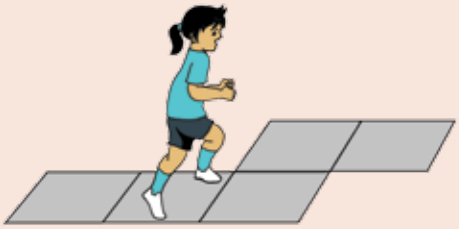
... needs support to hop continuously?

- Lend your arm as support to your child as he hops continuously.



... needs cues to hop?

- Arrange footprints or flat markers as shown.
- Get your child to hop (two left or right foot hops, rest, followed by two hops on other foot) over a short distance.



... needs to be challenged to hop far?

- Mark two lines (or two cones) a distance apart. Get your child to count number of hops needed to hop from one line to the other.
- Determine the lowest number of hops taken after a few tries. Or, play hopscotch games.

Variations

"Can your child hop...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• as if on thick muddy ground • lightly as a grasshopper • as if his shoes were fitted with springs	• slowly like a heavy dinosaur • to the beat of a drum • three times on right foot and three times on left	• like a robot • with hands away from his body • at random around the room

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• in and out of a hoop • along the side of a wall • following a line	• and turn in the air • following the hopscotch pattern • in two different directions consecutively	• over a 'log' (using a cone) • without bending his lifted knees • bending his knees and swinging his arms

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• and alternate his hopping foot every three hops • holding a partner's shoulders • after his partner reaches opposite side of the room	• on the spot holding on to a chair/table • over a low swinging rope • onto the different coloured markers (cut out anti-slip mats)

COMBINATIONS

- Lightly as a grasshopper to the beat of a drum, at random around the room
- In and out of the hoop following the hopscotch pattern as if his shoes were fitted with springs

Activity 1

Hopping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- **The foam mats will help absorb the landing impact as your child hops around.**

WHAT YOU NEED

- Number foam mats
- Small objects found at home, such as beanbags, stuffed toys or erasers
- Tape

HOW TO PLAY

- Construct the hopscotch pattern on the floor with the numbered foam mats and tape. Toss a small object onto one of the mats in the pattern.
- Have your child hop the pattern, in ascending numbers, until he reaches the mat with the object. He must then pick up the object and hop back to start, in descending numbers.
- At mats numbered 4 and 5, he must land on both feet with one foot on each mat. The same goes for mats numbered 7 and 8.

- Stick alphabets or words onto each foam mat. Have your child toss a small object onto a mat in the pattern. He must then call out the alphabet or read aloud the word on that mat before hopping onto it.

Activity 2

Hopping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

PLAY SAFE

- Ensure play area is free of obstacles to avoid collisions, especially when changing directions.

HOW TO PLAY

- Dramatise a beach scene where the sand is very hot. Have your child hop on alternating foot while yelling “Ouch! Hot! Hot!”.
- Next, have your child imagine that he has ‘water’ in one ear after a swim. Ask your child to hop and shake his head simultaneously, to expel the ‘water’.
- Finally, get your child to role play as a grasshopper. He must hop around, in search of pretty flowers to land on.

BE AWARE

- Prompt your child to avoid stepping on the hot sand, or to try hopping higher to get the ‘water’ out of his ear.
- He will have to try bending one knee and lifting the other high while hopping, to help him hop more forcefully and maintain his balance.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- Do this activity to keep your child entertained while waiting at a bus-stop or clinic.
- Get your child to dramatise different scenerios, or even come up with more innovative ones.

Skipping

Skipping is a combination of a step and a hop on the same foot followed immediately by a step and hop on the opposite foot. Skipping requires coordinating the alternate use of both sides of the body, making it a challenging locomotor skill for young children.

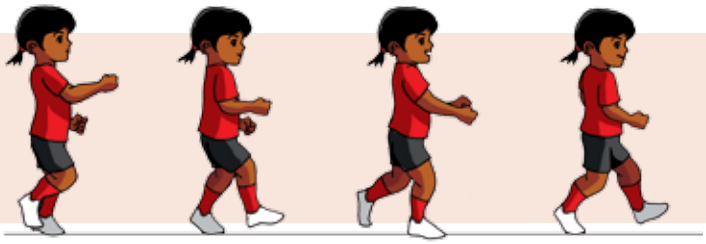
The challenge also lies in its continuous but unrhythmic movement pattern where a long spring is followed by a light hop. Hands usually 'fly' out from the sides during the step and hop. Children must often be able to hop one or two steps before they are ready to attempt the skipping movement.

Many children launch subconsciously into a skipping movement during free play when they are happy and delighted. Skipping is also a common movement in many children activities and dances (e.g. Skip to My Lou).

Developmental Phases

Skipping

Initial

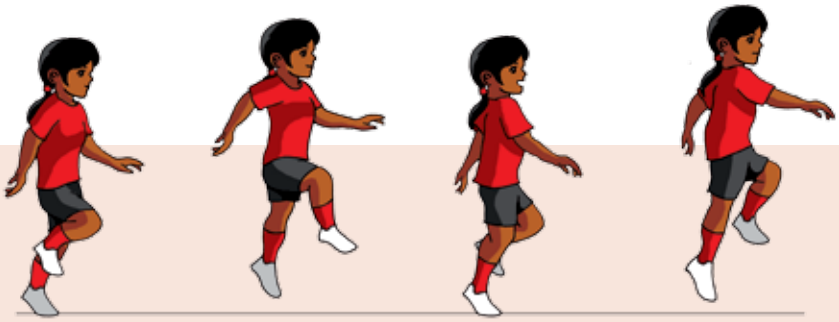


- One-footed skip. Movement appears unsynchronised due to awkward step-hop action.
- Double hopping or double stepping occurs sometimes.
- Exaggerated stepping action.
- Ineffective use of arms.

Transition

- Effective coordination of step and hop but rhythm and pace not always consistent.
- Rhythmic use of arms to help movement.
- Exaggerated upward lift during hop.
- Flat-foot landing.

Mature



- Rhythmic weight transfer throughout, shifting body weight alternately between left and right legs to provide balance.
- Rhythmic use of arms in light swinging motion.
- Lower upward lift during hop.
- Toe-first landing.

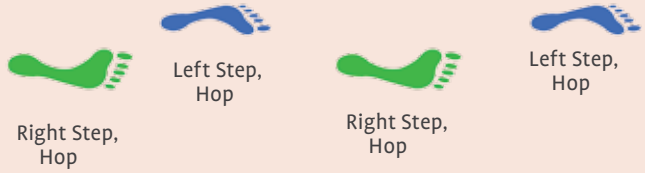
Approximate Age of Development (in years)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Initial					■	■				
Transition						■	■			
Mature						■	■	■	■	

Teaching Strategies

Skipping

What to do if your child...

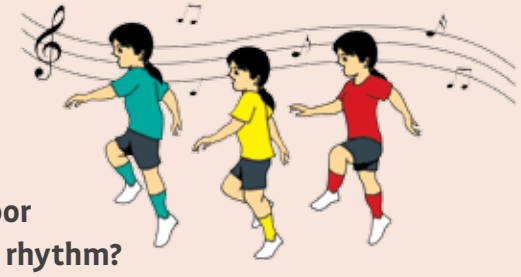


... needs practice in coordinating the skip movement?

- Hold your child's hand and skip together, providing verbal and visual cues: "Right step, hop, Left step, hop...".

... is unable to balance himself?

- Get your child to use a wall for support by placing his hand against wall. Follows teacher's verbal cues of "Step, hop, step, hop...".



... has poor skipping rhythm?

- Sing songs that provide rhythm for skipping, e.g. "Skip to my Lou...".

... needs support to skip continuously?

- Get two children to hold hands and skip together in a circle (provides support for each other during the hop phase).

Variations

"Can your child skip...?"

How the body moves

Force/Effort	Time	Flow
• as if flying in the air • as if carrying a heavy bag • merrily and lightly	• quickly and then slowly • to the sound of a tambourine • fast when going straight and slow around a hoop	• on the sound of the tambourine and freeze on the drumbeat • with hands close to body • waving a scarf

Where the body moves

Location	Direction/Pathways	Levels/Extensions
• and turn around on the spot • with his friends but without touching anyone • around the coloured shapes in the playground	• three steps forward and three steps back • clockwise and then anti-clockwise • following the outline of a triangle	• and touch his raised knee • as if reaching up to touch the clouds • as if going under a low bridge

With whom/ What the body moves

Self (body parts)/People	Objects
• and high-five a friend • beside a partner • holding his partner's hand and go around in a circle	• over bean bags on the floor • and touch the balloons hanging overhead • passing a scarf from one hand to the other

COMBINATIONS

- As if flying in the air when he hear the tambourine, and freezes when he hears the drum
- Turning around clockwise and then anti-clockwise, and touching his raised knee with his hand

Activity 1

Skipping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS

WHAT YOU NEED

- Objects like tissue boxes, cushions or stuffed toys that can be found at home, to serve as obstacles
- Tambourine or music
- Scarf, handkerchief or tissue

HOW TO PLAY

- Randomly place different objects within the play area. Have your child skip around, avoiding the obstacles.
- Get your child skip to the beat of the tambourine you play or music you put on.
- Give your child a scarf, handkerchief or tissue. As he skips, he must pass the item to and fro between his left and right hand. This will help his arms swing, for maintenance of balance and for height during take-off.

- Challenge your child with another variation to this activity:

Variation	Action
Change of music	Skip to you, and pass you the scarf, handkerchief or tissue
Next change of music	Skip to you, and retrieve the scarf, handkerchief or tissue
Music stops	Your child must freeze

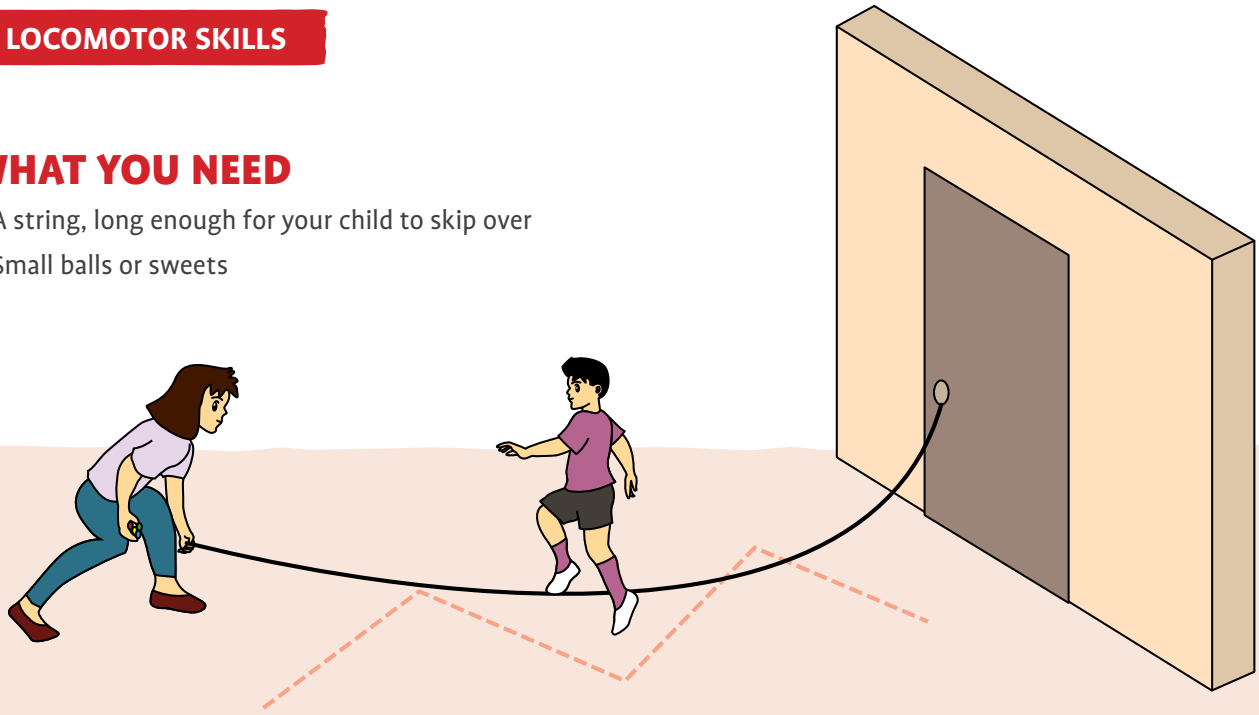
BE AWARE

- If your child is just learning to skip, get him to step-and-hop on the spot before progressing to skipping around.
- Remind your child to use the same foot for each step-and-hop movement, and to alternate feet for consecutive step-and-hop movements.

Activity 2

Skipping

LOCOMOTOR SKILLS



WHAT YOU NEED

- A string, long enough for your child to skip over
- Small balls or sweets

HOW TO PLAY

- Tie one end of the string to a door. Hold the other end of the string in one hand, and five sweets in the other.
- Keeping the string still, ask your child to skip in a zig-zag path along the string. He must do this back and forth between the door and you, starting from the door.
- As he reaches you, give him a sweet. As he reaches the door, he must put the sweet on the floor.
- Continue until all five sweets have been collected.

- For older children, swing the string to increase difficulty level. You can also prompt your child to land as a star, crayon or rocket as he reaches the door.