

Get Moving

Gross Motor Activities in Storytime

During storytime, we can help children learn in both mind and body. Early childhood is an important time for learning motor skills, in addition to reading and other skills. Connecting movement with verbal learning will help children develop cognitive skills as well. Additionally, children will be better able to listen and pay attention if quiet, still activities are broken up by activities that allow children to move their whole bodies. Look for activities that require children to move their arms and legs in big motions, like running, jumping, skipping, throwing, and catching.

Things to try

- Songs and dances that let children use their whole bodies are fantastic additions to storytime. Try classics like “The Hokey Pokey” and “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes.” Encourage children to put their whole bodies into the activity.
- Save time at the end of storytime for open-ended play that encourages gross motor development. Have children walk a masking tape “balance beam” or throw balls into a basket.
- When children are getting restless, use a gross motor activity to help children “get their wiggles out.”
- Use activities that incorporate materials like shakers, bells, beanbags, and scarves.
- Use words for spatial relationships like, “Turn around,” “Hands up,” “Stop,” and “Go.”
- Offer activities that give children the chance to move to a variety of rhythms, some fast and some slow.
- Have children imitate animal movements. They can “wiggle like a snake,” or “hop like a rabbit.”

Book Suggestions:

There are a variety of books that give children the chance to move around. Here are a few to try:

- *Monkey and Me* by Emily Gravett
- *If You're Happy and You Know It* by Jane Cabrera
- *Jump!* by Scott M. Fisher
- *Move!* by Robin Page
- *Is Everyone Ready for Fun?* by Jan Thomas
- *Who Hops?* by Katie Davis
- *Here Are My Hands* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

Getting Started:

- Build a repertoire of songs and activities that include big movements. Repeating the activities from week to week will help children learn what to do.
- Remember to include time to transition between gross motor activities and quieter activities. Let children know what is expected of them during the different activities.
- Help all children get involved in the action, whatever their level of ability or development.

