

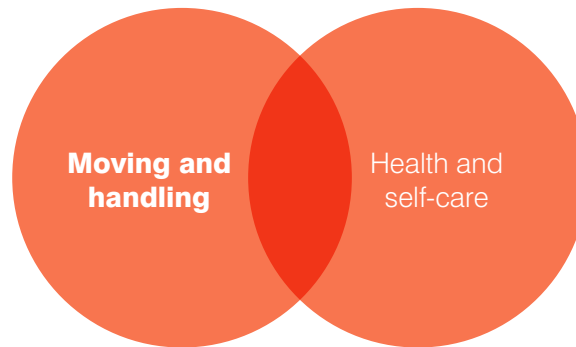


Physical Development: Moving and handling

Introduction

Physical Development (PD) is one of the **three prime areas** of learning in the EYFS framework, the other two being Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) and Communication and Language (CL). These three areas are recognised as prime because they form the basis of all other aspects of young children's learning and development. The three prime areas are regarded as particularly important for inspiring young children's curiosity and enthusiasm, laying the foundations for future success in all aspects of life and education.

In the EYFS, **Physical Development** covers two interrelated aspects:



Health and self-care covers how children can be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

The **moving and handling** aspect of physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive and to develop their coordination, control and movement.

Early Years Physical Activity Guidelines (Dept. of Health 2010)

- Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water-based activities in safe environments.
- Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.
- All under fives should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except when sleeping).

Prime and specific areas of learning

The **three prime areas** of the EYFS should be the focus for practitioners working with the youngest children, as these form the basis for successful learning and progress in the **four specific areas**.

As children get older the emphasis will shift towards a more equal focus on **all areas of learning** as children's confidence and abilities increase.

If at any time a child's progress within any of the prime areas gives cause for concern practitioners should discuss this with the child's parents and provide focused support in that area. This approach is designed to ensure that any issues are addressed at an early stage of a child's life.

Supporting young children to develop their moving and handling skills

To help young children to develop their moving and handling skills, practitioners should provide lots of opportunities for them to:

- use large muscle movements to explore their immediate environment
- develop fine motor control through manipulating materials and using tools and equipment.

Being physically active not only strengthens muscles and develops the heart and lungs, it also supports the development of the brain. As babies progressively gain control over the muscles which determine their eye movements, lift their heads, roll over, sit up, and then stand, they are able to view the world from different perspectives. This provides a wealth of information which their brains process to deepen their understanding of the world they live in.

Muscles in the neck which a baby uses when learning how to control his head are important for the development of speech and language skills. As babies grow they gain the muscle control and strength to push up, roll, and move into a crawling position, which in turn develops shoulder stability, hand strength, and coordination – important for later movement skills including handwriting.

Large muscle control develops before fine motor control, so children need lots of opportunities to make big movements with their arms before they can develop the fine motor control needed for holding a pencil. Writing requires a combination of fine motor control and hand eye coordination; skills which need lots of practise indoors and out of doors.

Progress in PD: Moving and handling

24-36 months

Children gain increasing control over their whole bodies and are becoming aware of how to negotiate the space and objects around them.

36-48 months

Children maintain balance when they concentrate. They negotiate space successfully when playing racing and chasing games, adjusting speed, or changing direction to avoid obstacles. They handle tools effectively for the purpose, including mark making.

Early Learning Goal

Children show good control and coordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing.

[Statements from Draft EYFS Framework, 2011]

The relationship between Physical Development and the other prime areas of learning

'Physical Development supports Personal, Social and Emotional Development as increasing physical control provides experiences of the self as an active agent in the environment, promoting growth in confidence and awareness of control. It supports Communication and Language because a child who can effectively use the large movements, gestures and the fine movements involved in speech is able to convey messages to others.

[Tickell Review of the EYFS, 2011]

Summary of development for two-year-olds

When a child is aged between 24 and 36 months, practitioners must review progress in Physical Development, along with the other two prime areas of learning. Parents or carers should be given a short written summary of their child's development as part of the ongoing dialogue between the setting and the family. This summary should identify any areas where the child's progress is less than expected, and should shape a targeted plan to support that child's future learning and development in the setting.

There will be no standard format for this developmental summary – instead it should reflect the culture and ethos of the setting and the particular needs of the child and/or parental preferences.

What quality looks like in practice

The scenarios below describe practice in a day nursery situated on the edge of town with a large outdoor space.

Under twos

The baby room is set out so there are lots of interesting things for the babies to notice, look at and reach out for. There is space for adults and children to move around easily and the rug in the centre of the room has large cushions that help to support the babies as they actively explore their environment. For babies who are not yet able to sit up, the practitioners have created a sturdy frame from which dangle a selection of shiny kitchen tools, and there are several baskets containing interesting things to touch, hold and wave around.

Low down on one side of the room is a long mirror with a pull-up bar in front of it to encourage babies to stand up, and large mirrors have been placed in a corner of the room to create an interesting den area.

Practitioners sit on the floor talking to the babies as they play, noticing what they are interested in. They encourage the babies to move and occasionally place toys and resources just out of reach to facilitate this. They are aware of the importance of 'tummy time' to enable babies to develop their sensory, visual, and movement control, helping to strengthen muscles in the legs, arms, back and neck.

The toddler room has lots of clear space so children can move about easily. Resources are stored at a low level so children can access them independently. There are lots of interesting manipulative toys available, and heuristic play sessions take place regularly throughout the week.

Babies and toddlers go outside every day and enjoy being barefoot to experience the different textures and surfaces they can crawl, walk, and run over.

Two- to three-year-olds

Children have access to a wide range of malleable materials that they can squash, stretch, poke, and bend. As well as mixing and manipulating playdough, the children enjoy exploring the properties of clay. This is available in large lumps that require real effort to push and squash into shape, with the emphasis being on the process of manipulating the clay rather than on trying to produce an end product.

Manipulative toys and games are freely available and the sand and water areas have lots of resources for filling, emptying, moving, and shaping. The children also enjoy moving and dancing to a wide range of different types of music and story times can often become very active sessions as children act out the stories they hear.

Outdoors there is a large sandpit and a wide selection of tools, buckets and containers which children use for filling, emptying, and moving sand from place to place. In one corner of the garden there are child-sized garden tools and a patch of soil where children can dig to their hearts content. The outdoor area also has slopes to run or roll down and a large tree trunk on its side – an ideal place to practise climbing and jumping, or to make a den.

The scenario below is a snapshot of how the environment of a large nursery unit has been set up to encourage young children's movement and handling skills.

Four- to five-year-olds

Practitioners equip the indoor and outdoor environment to give children opportunities to practise large muscle movements as a precursor to developing fine motor control. Indoors the back of one of the room dividers has been painted with blackboard paint to create a place for large scale mark making. There are easels and powder paints that the children can mix themselves and a selection of different sized brushes and mark making resources. Reclaimed and natural materials are positioned beside mirrors and light panels to encourage manipulation and fine motor control when making pictures and patterns.

Mark making is encouraged in all areas of the setting by making resources available in ways that will encourage the children to use them – clipboards, pens, pencils, and paper in containers featuring superheroes or fantasy characters. Practitioners model mark making in different situations, helping children to see the connection between the spoken and the written word.

Practitioners are creative in how they use the outdoor environment and encourage the children to move equipment and resources around to change the spaces. Den making materials and large construction blocks are stored in containers that the children can carry around without adult help. A large outdoor blackboard encourages outdoor mark making, and there are also opportunities to use brushes, sponges, squeeze bottles and water to practise large motor movements by creating patterns.

Children are encouraged to build obstacle courses that involve crawling, balancing, swinging, climbing, and jumping and to challenge themselves to develop their individual skills. There is space for children to engage in vigorous fantasy play, and the value of this type of creative expression is understood and appreciated.

How to help young children develop their moving and handling skills

Use these reflective questions to think about how you provide opportunities for young children to develop their moving and handling skills.

Under twos

- How cluttered is our environment, and do the children have enough open space to move around in?
- Do we need a bigger range of interesting things around the room that would encourage children to move around and explore?
- Have we enough large cushions for climbing over, tunnels to crawl through, and bars to pull up on?
- Do we spend time each day interacting with each of the children and encouraging them to be active?
- How effectively do we use Treasure Baskets and heuristic play to encourage babies and toddlers to manipulate objects and explore materials?
- Could we make more use of music to encourage movement; indoors and out of doors?
- How can we make sure babies and toddlers can enjoy the different surfaces and textures there are to explore out of doors?
- Could we do more to help parents understand the value of daily physical activity?

Two- to three-year-olds

- How could we organise the day so there are lots of opportunities for short bursts of active play?
- How well do we plan activities to encourage large motor movements as well as fine motor control?
- Are there ways we could improve our collections of interesting resources – shiny things, natural materials, keys, small boxes – that children will enjoy exploring and manipulating?
- Can children mix their own paints and use a range of large and small brushes for painting?
- How could we give children the opportunity to enjoy playing with large lumps of clay?
- Could we improve the outdoor environment so there are more challenging possibilities for physical activity?
- How could we create spaces for climbing, crawling, jumping, and digging, as well as for running around?
- Are we convinced we act as good role models by being physically active ourselves?
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Three- to four-year-olds

- Do we feel we have a good range of appropriately sized tools and equipment which children can use independently to develop their manipulative skills?
- How well do we teach children the skills they need to use tools safely and effectively?
- Could we make more use of music and active storytelling to encourage different types of movement skills?
- Do we always make sure there are resources for mark making all around the setting, out of doors as well as indoors?
- How do we make it possible for children to move resources around out of doors, building dens, and creating obstacle courses?
- How do we demonstrate that vigorous fantasy play, particularly by boys, is valued as a learning opportunity?
- Do we do enough to ensure that the girls in our setting are physically active?
- How can we help parents see the importance of children being physically active for at least three hours every day?

Ideas for parents

Physical development

For young children, Physical Development is made up of two aspects: **health and self-care** and **moving and handling**.

- **Moving and handling** is all about helping young children to be active and encouraging them to develop their coordination, control, and movement.
- **Health and self-care** covers how to help children to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy food choices.

Guidelines on physical activity

The latest recommendations from the Department of Health are that:

- Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and safe water-based activities.
- Children of pre-school age who are walking should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.
- All children under five should minimise the amount of time spent sitting down for extended periods, except when sleeping.

Helping your child to develop their moving and handling skills

To encourage children to be physically active, and to help them learn how to use tools and materials, they need lots of opportunities to:

- move around and make big movements using their arms, legs and whole bodies
- handle smaller objects to help develop their small muscle control.

You could use the ideas below as starting points to help you to do this.

Under twos

- Place a mobile above your baby's cot so he can practise controlling his eye movements.
- Reaching out to grasp a toy strengthens muscles and develops hand eye coordination.
- Place your baby on his tummy on a rug to encourage him to lift his head and to strengthen the muscles in his arms, body and neck.
- Your baby needs lots of opportunities for free movement during the day, rather than being strapped into a baby carrier or high chair.
- Stacking things up, knocking them down, 'posting' things, and putting things into bags and boxes are activities which toddlers love, and they help to develop their coordination and control.
- Try to find time for your child to be active out of doors every day – walking, running, and playing.
- Let your child go barefoot out of doors on a warm day to experience walking on different surfaces.

Two- to three-year-olds

- Dancing is a great way to develop coordination skills.
- Read a story together and act out what is happening – this is also a good way to develop imagination and creativity.
- Poking and pinching playdough or clay helps to strengthen the fingers, hand and wrist.
- Jigsaw puzzles and toys that fit together are good ways to develop hand control.
- Threading things – pasta shapes, buttons or large beads – encourages fine finger movements.
- Helping with simple chores around the home such as sweeping, tidying up toys, and lifting things develops and strengthens muscles.
- Play throwing and catching games that involve big arm movements strengthen shoulder and arm muscles.

Four- to five-year-olds

- Help your child to learn how to use simple tools such as scissors – practice makes perfect.
- Helping with household tasks such as setting the table builds coordination and control.
- Draw outdoors with chinks or make patterns in the mud with a stick.
- Use a squeeze bottle filled with water to shoot at a target or knock down a skittle.
- Make a place to dig outside where children can develop muscle control and coordination.
- Bikes and scooters are an exciting way to get lots of vigorous exercise.
- Try to make sure your child is physically active for at least three hours every day.