



# Gross Motor: Suggested Toys and Activities

According to a recent study by NCBI, children in the process of developing motor skills may have numerous positive health outcomes late in life. These may include positive self-esteem, good cardiorespiratory fitness, and sharp cognition. Children with cognitive and behavioral disorders can particularly benefit from the development of motor skills in a school-based therapy program. Students can build these skills while using gross motor toys and participating in therapy-led activities.

In summary, the more children move, the better the outcomes will be. Gross motor skills enable young students to walk, run, skip, climb, and play sports. Children in need of gross motor development assistance can gain strength, endurance, and confidence from school-based occupational therapy. In order to successfully care for students and their gross motor needs, occupational therapists must be equipped and prepared with the right tools.

PTS knows that students benefit the most when therapists have an abundance of resources and onsite and offsite clinical support from an experienced team. Below are several PTS-approved gross motor ideas to help children achieve their functional goals.

## Indoor Gross Motor Toys and Games

- **Activity cards and games:** Try games that specifically encourage student movement, such as PTS' Power Moves. This fast-paced game can support students' balance, coordination, and sensory motor skills.
- **Simon Says:** A fan favorite! This game encourages body awareness and the ability to plan your movements.
- **Unstable Surfaces:** Quite the exciting challenge. These activities may be executed either inside or outside. You build the unstable surface (for example, a stack of pillows) for your students to either walk or climb over. This helps them build strength using muscles they may not normally use.
- **Catching and Balancing:** Have access to balance pods? Students can stand with one foot on one of these pods and attempt to catch a ball tossed to them. This activity gets them familiar with the concept of balance and helps them improve this specific skill.
- **Large Balls:** Consider this a regular game of catch, without having to balance. Playing catch motivates students to use hand-eye coordination skills and increase their focus. Once students master large balls, they can move on to throwing and catching a smaller-sized ball.
- **Dancing!** This just might be the students' favorite activity. Dancing helps kids develop their coordination and motor sequencing skills. It also introduces them to the concept of rhythm. The good news for you: all you need is music!

## Outdoor Gross Motor Activities and Games

As an occupational therapist, you may not always have access to an outdoor environment for your therapy sessions. Nevertheless, the following activities are good to keep on hand when the sun's out. You may also consider recommending these activities to parents who want to engage their child at home:

- **Playground play:** This can include climbing and swinging on monkey bars, climbing stairs, and a host of other activities that get students moving.
- **Hopscotch:** Students can directly practice the skill of hopping and jumping during this fun outdoor activity.
- **Swimming:** Assuming many school districts do not have pools, therapists can recommend this activity to parents with their own pool access. Students should swim only if they have the endurance and have previously received lessons.
- **Obstacle Courses:** Students can combine a series of gross motor skills to complete the course. Overcoming these fun obstacles will give each student confidence and a sense of accomplishment.
- **Tricycles or Scooters:** Riding one of these youngster-powered vehicles can serve as a stepping stone to riding a bicycle.