

Supporting Your 3 - 4 Year Old Child in

Strength and Movement

Parent Advice Booklet

What Is This Guide?

What do we mean by 'strength and movement'? In early childhood development, there are some generally expected milestones and stages of progress in how children move around and gain control of their bodies. This guide can help you understand what that development might look like for your child and how you can help them.


This guide breaks down strength and movement into sections and statements, providing you with explanations of what it might look like for your child at this stage of their learning. Each area has ideas for supporting your child through fun and engaging activities, whether your child is only just beginning to experiment with moving in different ways or they are becoming increasingly independent with using simple tools effectively.

Rather than a list of must-do activities, you can dip in and out of these prompts and ideas based on your child's current interests and appropriate stage of development.

You can visit the [parent section](#) of the Twinkl site for even more resources to support your child in physical development, as well as all other areas of learning. Either search for keywords used in this guide or explore more in the Early Years section.






Strength and Movement is a core part of early childhood development, and is split into two aspects: **moving and handling** and **health and self care**.



Moving and handling refers to the skills that enable children to have good control and coordination of both small and large movements, as well as handling tools and equipment effectively and with increasing control.



Health and self-care teaches children the importance of a healthy lifestyle and promotes making healthy choices in relation to food and exercise. It also highlights the importance of independence in regards to toileting and getting dressed.



Read this guide for practical ideas and advice on how you can further support your child within the different aspects of physical development at home.

Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are the movements a child makes with their entire body, such as their arms and legs. These are big movements such as running, jumping and throwing. While many of these skills come naturally as your child grows, you can encourage them with games and obstacles.

At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...

To support this, you could...

moving freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways, such as slithering, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping and hopping.

model moving in different ways to music, showing your child the different ways in which we can express ourselves.

mounting stairs, steps or climbing equipment using alternate feet and walking downstairs, two feet to each step while carrying a small object.

encourage your child to walk up and downstairs, holding on to the rail to support them, progressing to having a toy or teddy in one hand.

running skilfully and negotiating space successfully, adjusting speed or direction to avoid obstacles.

play chasing games such as tag or stuck in the mud to encourage changing direction and speed.

standing momentarily on one foot when shown.

have a balancing competition to see who can stand on one leg for the longest.

catching a large ball.

get a large blow up ball and play a simple throwing and catching game together.

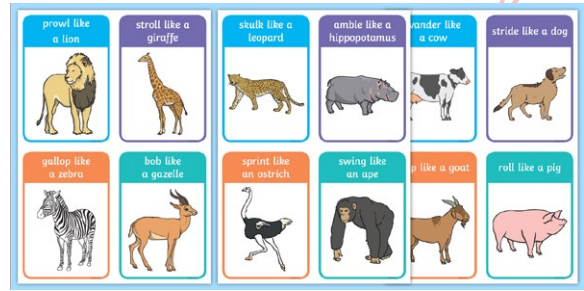
drawing lines and circles using gross motor movements.

use paintbrushes and large pieces of paper or chunky chinks on the pavement to practice drawing big lines and circles to develop arm muscles.

Gross Motor Skills



How is your child progressing with their gross motor skills?



Animal Movement Cards

Encourage big arm movements by creating art on large paper (wallpaper or butcher's paper work well); your child could lie on their tummy and make big circles and zigzags with paint, pencils or crayons.



Outdoor obstacle courses provide practise for your child to move in interesting ways and problem solve, perhaps crawling through tunnels, leaping between hoops and jumping over blocks.



Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?



Outdoor Gross Motor Skills Cards


Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills are the precise movements a child makes with their hands, often involving their thumb and index finger. These are small movements which refer to the grip and control of tools such as scissors and pencils. Throughout their day, your child may be encouraged to take part in activities which increase the use of the kinds of movements.




At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...


To support this, you could...




Using one-handed tools and equipment, like making snips in paper with child-friendly scissors.




model how to snip paper using scissors and then provide your child with some child-friendly scissors, supporting their hands if they need it.




Holding a pencil between their thumb and two fingers, no longer using whole-hand grasp.




encourage gripping a pencil in this way, modelling how to do this successfully and guiding your child's hand if they need support.




Holding a pencil near the point between the first two fingers and thumb with good control.



provide your child with plenty of opportunities to paint, draw and colour in to develop early fine motor skills.



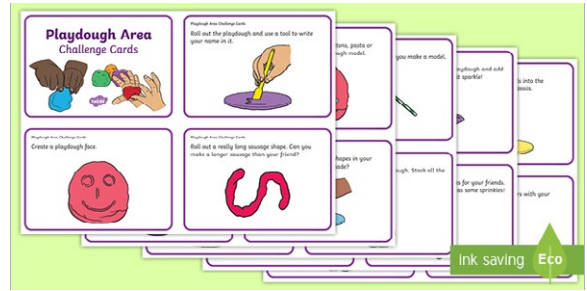
copying some familiar letters, e.g. letters from their name.



write your child's name in a light colour and get them to trace the letters.

Fine Motor Skills

How is your little one progressing with their fine motor skills?

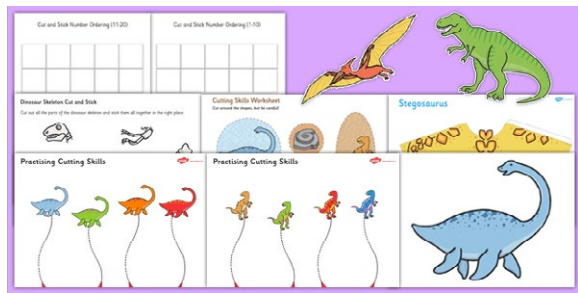


Playdough Area Challenge Cards

Building blocks and bricks are great for fine motor development, as joining the blocks together will help build your child's strength and grip.



Junk modeling uses a variety of fine motor skills as you encourage your child to think about how they can connect recyclable materials (e.g. boxes or bottles) to create something new using scissors, sticky tape or a hole punch.



Dinosaur-Themed Scissor Pack

Why not show your child how they can create different shapes and textures when they use different tools (e.g. scissors, cutlery, pine cones) with playdough or clay?

Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?



Space-Themed Pencil Control Sheets

Health and Self-Care

Health and self-care involves teaching children about the importance of good health, including being physically active and making healthy food and drink choices. As your child enters an educational setting, there will be an expectation for them to become more independent with managing their own personal needs such as toileting, eating and dressing successfully.

At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...

To support this, you could...

telling adults when hungry or tired or when they want to rest or play.

provide your child with opportunities to tell you how they feel. Rather than asking if they're tired, ask them how they are feeling.

observing the effects of activity on their bodies, explaining if they are hot or tired.

model explaining how you feel after physical activity and encourage your child to share how they feel.

understanding that equipment and tools have to be used safely.

ensure your child understands safety measures in relation to using child scissors or kitchen utensils.

gaining more bowel and bladder control, attending to toileting needs most of the time themselves.

provide your child with more opportunities to be independent during toilet times, asking you for help if they need it.

usually washing and drying hands independently.

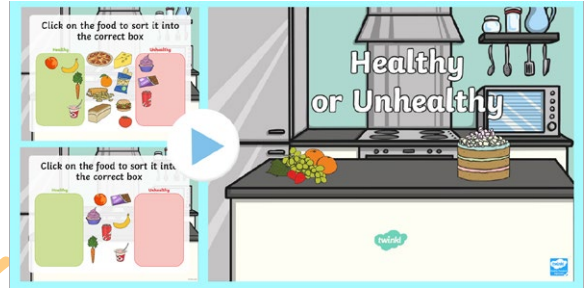
sing a rhyme about washing hands, to remind your child to do this after toileting and meals.

dressing with help.

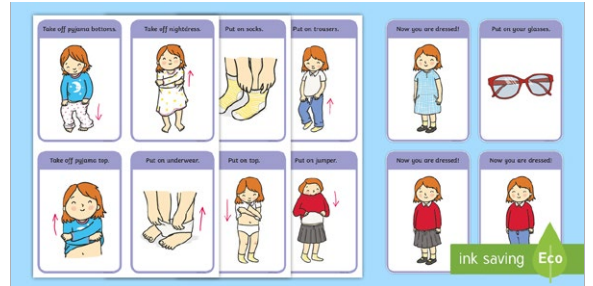
support your child with trickier things such as buttons, zips and laces, but encourage putting arms in sleeves and feet through legs independently.

Health and Self-Care

How is your little one progressing with their self-care?



Interactive Food Sorting Game



Visual Getting Dressed Cards (Girls)



Completing routine tasks alongside one another might help your child feel grown up and independent; could you brush your teeth or comb your hair while your child does theirs?



Helping you to plan or prepare a meal can encourage discussion about healthy choices; why not get your child to help you with your shopping list?

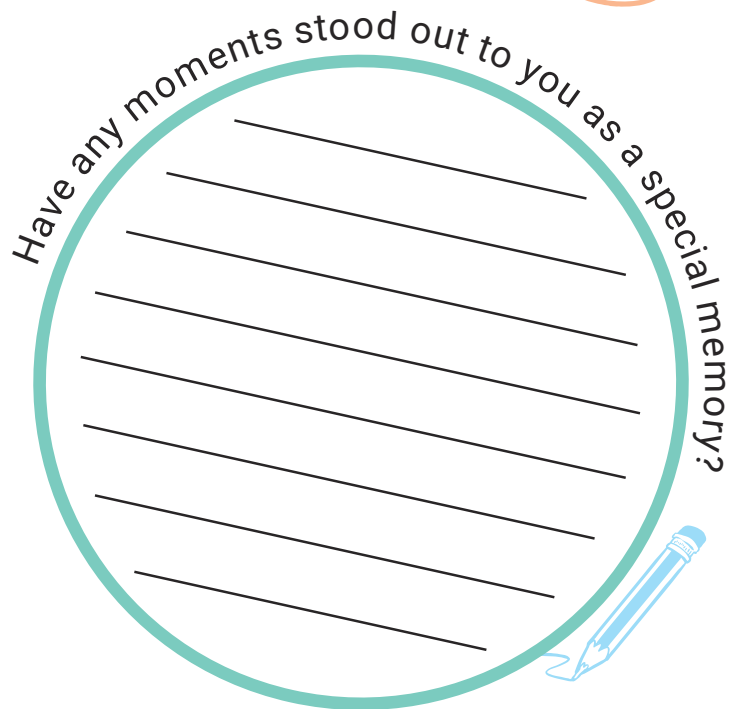


Visual Getting Dressed Cards (Boys)



How to Brush Your Teeth Posters

Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?



Support and Challenge


After reading this guide and trying out some of the activities with your child, you may find that they require more support with some activities than others. This is perfectly OK; some concepts are more difficult than others and, with more practice, your child should begin to make more progress. On the other hand, if your child is able to do most of these activities easily, then perhaps they need a challenge?

[A Parent Guide to Physical Development for Ages 1 - 3](#) may be more suitable for your child if they aren't quite ready for some of the activities in this guide. Why not take a step back and try some of the ideas listed in there first and develop their self-confidence?

If your child's abilities within physical development seem to be beyond the expectations as laid out in this guide, then why not see if you can further develop these skills by having a look at our next parent guide? [A Parent Guide to Strength and Movement for Ages 3 - 4](#) has lots of practical ideas and activities for you to explore with your child.




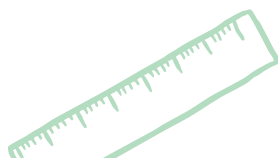

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Twinkl Originals are engaging stories written to inspire children from EYFS to KS2. Designed to encourage a love of reading and help curriculum-wide learning through accompanying resources.



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Children develop rapidly in their first five years, more so than any other period of their young life. Although these guides have been divided by age band, we recognise that all children develop at different rates; this guide should not be used as a tick list of exactly what your child should be able to do at this age, but rather as an indicator of what they may be working towards.