



How to help a child with movement difficulties

At school

- When teaching skills/activity break down skill into smaller, meaningful parts.
- Keep instructions short and be prepared to repeat them.
- Use visual prompts.
- When giving feedback use clear, specific language e.g. "raise your arm higher when you throw."
- Keep the environment as predictable as possible with little or no distraction when teaching a new skill.
- Ask questions to ensure the child understands the game rules or movements.
- Modify or adapt equipment to ensure safety.
- Reward effort.
- Encourage participation and fun rather than competition.



At home



- Encourage the child to participate in games and sports that are interesting to him/her and which provide practice in, and exposure to, motor activities.
- Physical activity and enjoyment should be emphasised rather than proficiency or competition.
- Try to introduce the child to new sports activities or a new playground on their own, before he/she is required to participate in a group.
- Try to review any rules and routines that are associated with the activity e.g. football/tennis rules, at a time when the child is not concentrating on the motor aspects.
- Ask the child simple questions to make sure they understand e.g. "what do you do when you hit the ball?"
- Private lessons may be helpful at certain times to teach the child specific skills.
- The child may prefer, and perform better at, individual sports e.g. swimming, running, cycling, rather than team sports.
- If so, try to encourage the child to interact with peers through other activities that are likely to be successful e.g. Cubs, music, drama or art.

Activities for the younger child

- Exposure to physical activities at a young age encourages fun and participation and promotes health and fitness.
- Many activities are useful to promote body awareness, flexibility, balance, strength and endurance e.g. dance, martial arts, gymnastics.
- While many of these activities can and should be encouraged for the young child with motor difficulties, these same activities can become more frustrating as children become older.



Individual sports/physical activities

- Children with motor difficulties tend to have more success with individual sports or physical activities than with team sports.
- They can concentrate on adapting their own bodies in relation to their environment without having to use the additional effort required to successfully manoeuvre around others.
- Performance in these activities is measured on an individual basis, which tends to promote individual progress, effort and participation rather than competition.



- Some examples of these types of individual sporting activities include dance, martial arts, horse riding, gymnastics.
- In contrast with the activities listed above, some individual sports require rapid adjustments that require children to position their body in response to objects that move.
- These sports are generally much more challenging for children with motor difficulties and should only be recommended if the child is really motivated to work on them, e.g. racquet sports.

Lifestyle sports/activities

- These are sports or activities that children with motor difficulties can participate in throughout their life.
- Children with motor difficulties usually have greater success with these activities because the patterns of movement are continually repeated and as a result are more easily learned.
- Some of these activities may require occasional individual instruction or lessons for specific skills.
- Some examples of these types of activities include swimming, skating, skiing, running, cycling, rollerblading, canoeing.

Further information

<https://active.leeds.gov.uk/classes-and-activities/Documents/Leeds%20Inclusive%20Sport%20Programme.pdf>
www.canchild.ca

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