

Gross Motor, Fine Motor, and Visual Motor Activities

The following is a list of activities that can be done at home to increase upper body strength, hand strength, and fine motor skills. Stability and strength in the trunk, shoulders, and arms are needed before you can have good fine motor control. Try to start with a heavy activity (gross motor) that will increase strength and wake up the small muscles in the arms and the hands necessary for fine motor control. Then work on developing hand muscles. Finally, conclude with practicing forming letters in a **FUN** way!

Strengthening Activities (Gross Motor)

- Sit-ups
- Push-ups, Chair Push-ups, Wall Push-ups
- Postural Tone Exercises *See Appendix B
- Hold Different Positions (Plank, table, 3 legged tables, egg) * See Appendix B
- Jump Rope
- Obstacle Course
- Hippity Hop
- Sit and Spin
- Trampoline
- Wheelbarrow/Animal Walks * See Appendix A
- Blanket rolls (have your child roll up like a hotdog and then unroll) * See Appendix A
- Jumping Jacks, Sideways Jumping Jacks * See Appendix A
- Monkey Bars, Swing Sets
- Magic Carpet (**Materials Required:** blankets, sheets, or throw rugs. This activity requires two or more people. One child sits on the “magic carpet” and have his/her partner pulls him/her around. Then the children will switch places and the child who pulled the magic carpet will become the rider.) * See Appendix A
- Brain Gym Exercises (touch elbow to opposite knee [both sides]; touch hand to opposite ankle [both sides, in front and in back]; hook ups [arms out in front, thumbs down, cross arms, link fingers, fold hands up and under until fists are positioned above chest and do slow breathing]; lazy 8’s (in the air use index finger to draw a large 8 lying on its side. Be sure to cross the middle of the eight in the center of your body and reach as far as you can to the right and left for the top/bottom of the 8, always start up to the left) * See Appendix A
- Scooter Board (Some examples: **Materials Required:** Clothespins, Old Coffee Can/or Container. Place the clothespins in one pile and place the container about 10ft away from the cans. First, have the child lie on his/her stomach on the scooter board. Second, the child will pick up one clothespin and using just his/her arms to scooter board down to the container. Third, the child will use their dominant hand (thumb and index finger) and place the clothespin on the rim of the container. Fourth, repeat until clothespins are all one the container. **Materials Required:** Puzzle (one that fits on a board). Place the empty puzzle outline on one side of the room and the pieces on the other. Have the child lie on his/her stomach on the scooter board. Next, have the child pick up one piece of the puzzle and using his/her arms to scooter board down to the outline and place it where it should go. The child will repeat until the puzzle is complete. **Materials Required:** Sticky-tack and small pictures (place in a pile on the floor). Have the child lie on his/her stomach on the scooter board. The child will select one picture and using just his/her arms, scooter board down to the wall. Next, the child will pinch a small piece of sticky-tack, place it on the back of the picture and push the picture against the surface until it sticks. This activity requires that the child stays on the scooter board for the entire task. Have the child lie

*on his/her stomach and just using his/her arms to roll around. This will work on upper body strengthening. * See Appendix A*

- Pull a friend on a scooter board using a hula hoop or rope, wheeled chair, or wagon
- Participate in household activities (*kneading dough, carrying laundry, washing the car/windows/table/dishes, polishing, sweeping, raking, shoveling, watering plants, vacuuming, mix batters while cooking, etc.*)
- Balloon Volley Ball
- Stick Ball (**Materials Required:** *plastic tube (such as PVC pipe cut into 1-1 ½ foot lengths), small/medium soft stress/foam balls. Children should lie on their stomachs across from each other or in a circle depending on the number of participants. Each child should be given a stick. Have him/her hold it with one hand on each end. Start the game by rolling the ball to a child and then that child will pass it to his/her friend. Keep two hands on the stick when hitting the ball and try to hit the ball directly to their partner. * See Appendix A*)
- Twister
- Potato Sack Races
- Simon Says
- Toss and Catch Games
- Sports (*such as Swimming, Karate, Horseback Riding, Ice Skating, Gymnastics, Dance, Yoga*)
- Airplane Catch (**Materials Required:** *small or medium size soft ball (i.e., kickball, beach ball). This activity requires two people. Each child should lie on their stomachs facing each other about 5 feet apart. Ask the children to extend neck, shoulders, arms, and legs two inches above the ground. The child with the ball will have their elbows flexed and then pass the ball for their partner to catch.) * See Appendix A*)
- Dump Truck (**Materials Required:** *foam/rubber balls, bean bags, stuffed animals, or other small items. Place a basket/container/box in the middle of the floor with the desired objects spread around the container. Have the child lie on their back propped up on their elbows and use just their feet to pick up the objects and place them in the container.) * See Appendix A*)
- Ride bike, rollerblade/skate
- Charades

Fine Motor Activities

- Use Play Dough, Silly Putty, Clay, or Theraputty:
 - a. Push pennies/small items into putty/clay with tips of finger. Find pennies using one hand at a time.
 - b. Using thumb and index finger pads only, pinch off small pieces of putty. Roll the pieces into small balls.
 - c. Make a hot dog. Use both hands to stretch the putty.
 - d. Form putty into a snake. Cut using scissors and/or knife.
 - e. Pull and squish putty using two hands.
 - f. Monster Putty Faces (*use an unsharpened pencil and have the child press the pencil into the putty to make eyes, nose, and mouth. Once the child has created the face, have them pull the putty in different directions to create a monster face*) See Appendix A
- Use coins to stack, sort, and put in an open slot (*piggy bank, you can make a piggy bank by slicing small slots in the lid of an empty coffee container or old checkbook box*).
- Chain/Unchain paper clips.
- Shuffle cards then deal one at a time.
- Peel off stickers to decorate pictures.
- Cut straws, these can be strung on yarn.
- String macaroni, cheerios, beads onto yarn or string.
- Use tweezers/tongs to pick up small manipulatives/toys and place in a container one at a time.
- Use a small musical keyboard to work on finger isolation

- Lite Brite, Operation, Hungry Hungry Hippos, Bedbugs
- Magna Doodle
- Jenga
- Pick Up Sticks
- Water Games * *See Appendix A*
- Stress Balls
- Use a Paper Punch, Shape Puncher, or Stamps
- Pinch clothes pins around the edge of a container such as a coffee can, shoe box, or yard stick.
- Snip strips of construction paper into small squares and paste on uncolored picture.
- Tear or crumple pieces of construction paper or tissue paper into small pieces and paste on uncolored picture.
- Spin Small Tops or Wind Up Toys
- Legos, K'nex, Bristle Blocks
- Pegs and Pegboards * *See Appendix A*
- Finger Soccer (**Materials Required:** cotton ball, 11" x 17" piece of paper with a soccer field on it. The object is to shoot the cotton ball off the paper at the opponent's end. Have the children lie on the floor propped up on their elbows with the field between them. One player shoots the cotton ball by flicking it with his/her index finger. The partner tries to catch the cotton ball when it crosses on to their side.)
- Free Elastic Figurines (**Materials Required:** plastic figures such as animals, action figures, or dinosaurs and wrap rubber bands around the small plastic figures and "free" them by unwrapping the rubber bands). * *See Appendix A*
- Feed Shark/Elephant: (**Materials Required:** Barrel shaped object or bucket, 2 large pieces of gray construction paper made into a large cylinder by stapling the paper together (this will represent the shark/elephant mouth), scrap paper. Have the child lie on their stomach propped up on their elbows. Next, have the child rip paper in 1/2, crumple tightly, and thrown the paper into the shark/elephants mouth). * *See Appendix A*
- Feed the Tennis Ball (**Materials Required:** Tennis Ball(s), pennies/small objects. *Parents should cut a slice in the tennis ball to represent a mouth. Once the ball has a mouth, have the child squeeze the sides of the mouth and place the small objects in the mouth of the tennis ball.)* *See Appendix A*
- Sit and Sort (**Materials Required:** 3'x4 1/2' sheets of paper or tag board, different small objects (such as spiny balls, cotton balls, rubber bands, erasers, pencil grips, blocks). Draw several 6" circles around the edges of paper (about 7 circles). Make sure to leave a space without a circle for the child to sit. Put the paper on the floor and have the child sit with his/her legs crossed and then sort the small objects using tweezers and tongs. Each small object should be placed on its own circle. Also, the child should only be twisting at the waist.) * *See Appendix A*

Activities to Improve Visual Motor Skills

- Mazes, Puzzles, Word Searches, Dot-to-Dot Sheets
- Hidden Picture Activity Sheets
- Tracing and Stencil Activities
- Design Copy
- Geoboards
- Target Games
- Balloon/Ball Toss
- Lacing Activities

Appendix A

Examples of Gross Motor Activities:

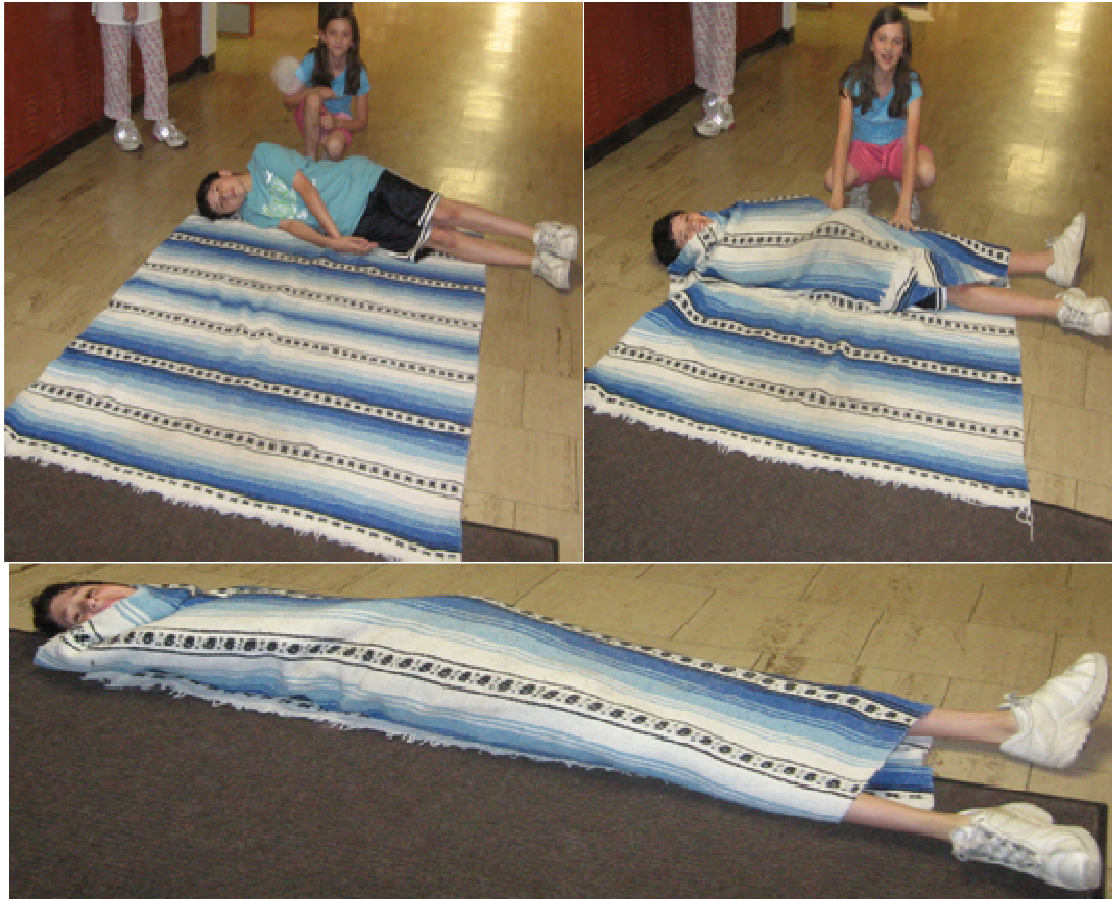
1. Magic Carpet



2. Wheelbarrow/Animal Walks



3. Blanket Roll



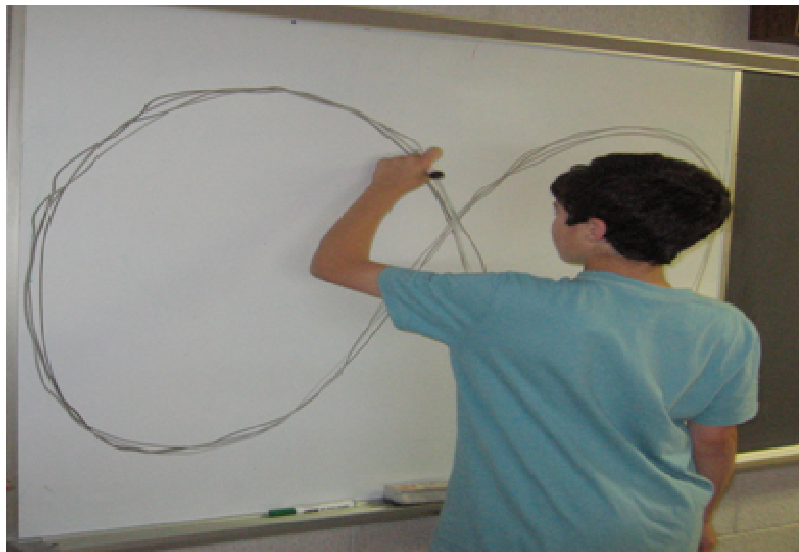
4. Brain Gym



Elbow to Opposite Knee (cross crawl)



Hand to Opposite Ankle
(Front) (Back)



Lazy 8's

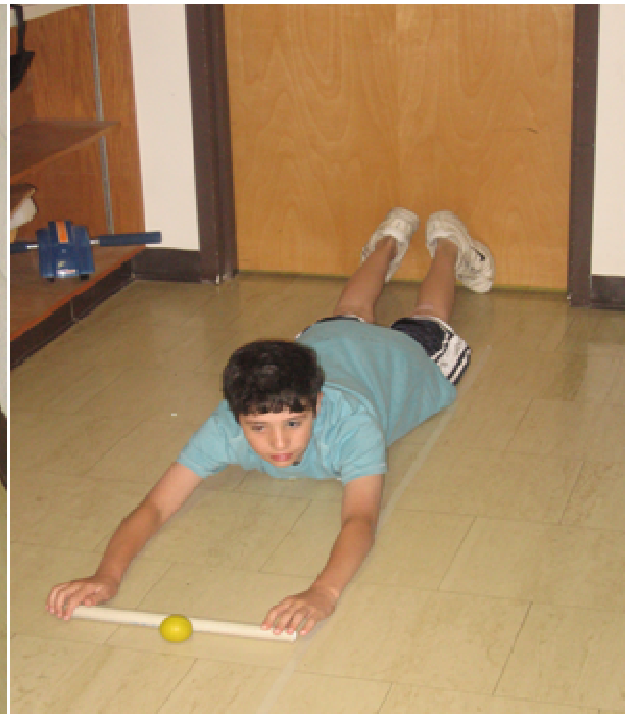
5. Scooter Board



6. Dump Truck



7. Stick Ball



8. Sideways Jumping Jacks

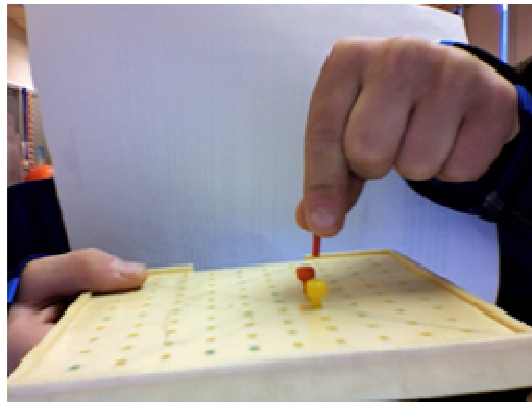


Examples of Fine Motor Activities

1. Free Elastic Figures



2. Pegboard



3. Different Types of Grabbers



4. Feed Shark/Elephant



Shark



Rip Paper



Crumple Paper

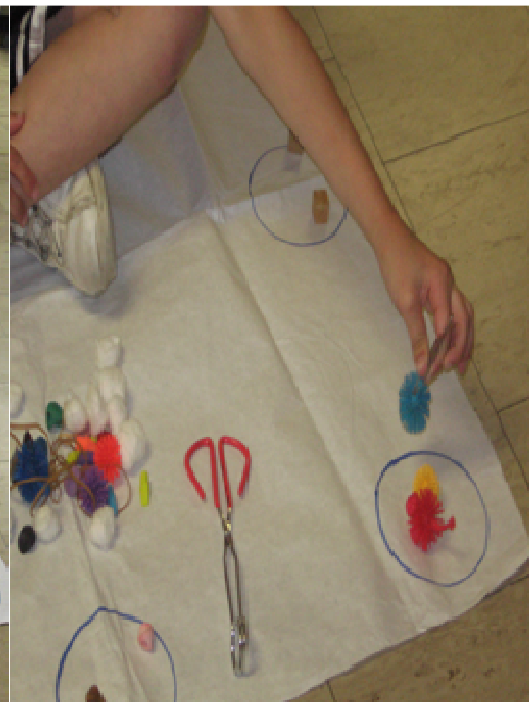


Throw Paper

5. Sit and Sort

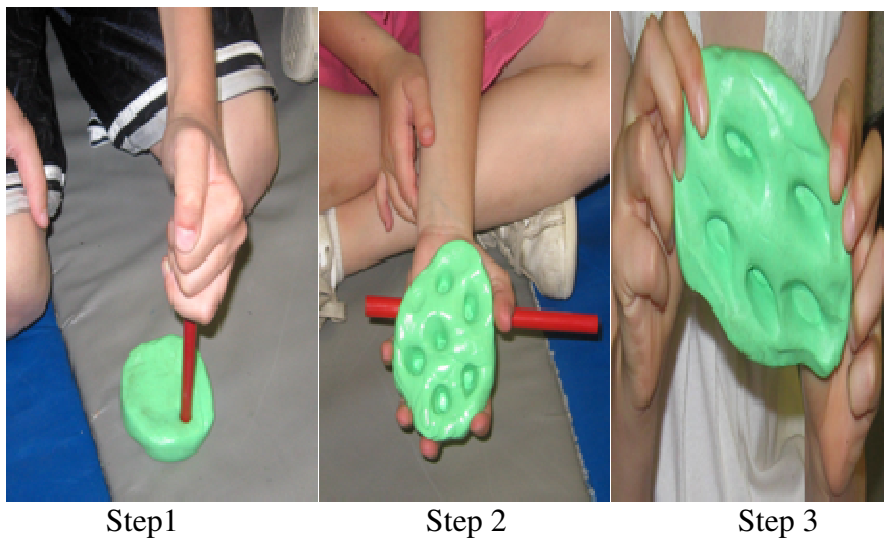


Tongs

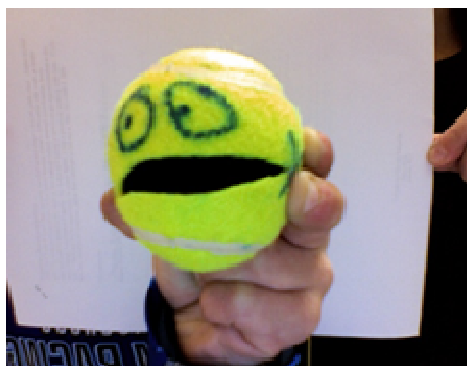


Tweezers

6. Monster Faces



7. Feed the Tennis



8. Water Games



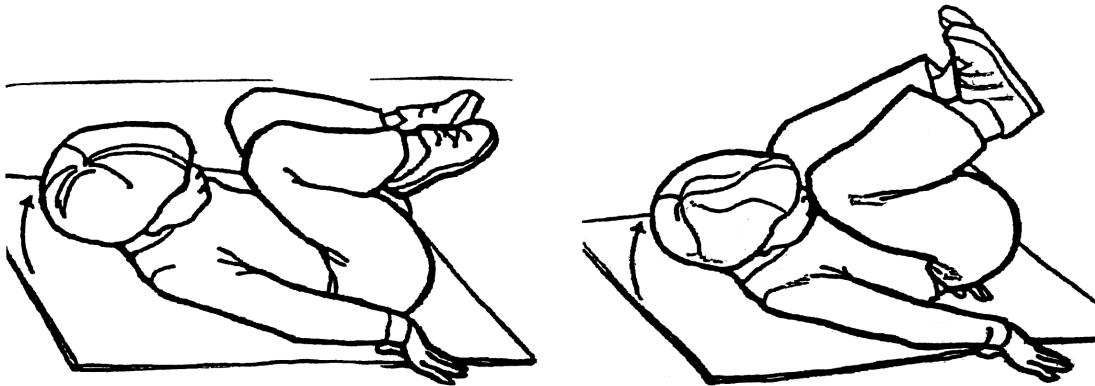
Appendix B

Postural Tone Exercises

The following exercises will benefit your child with respect to his upper body strength and postural control. They are simple positions that he should be able to adopt independently and be able to perform anywhere at home on a carpet or portable gym mat.

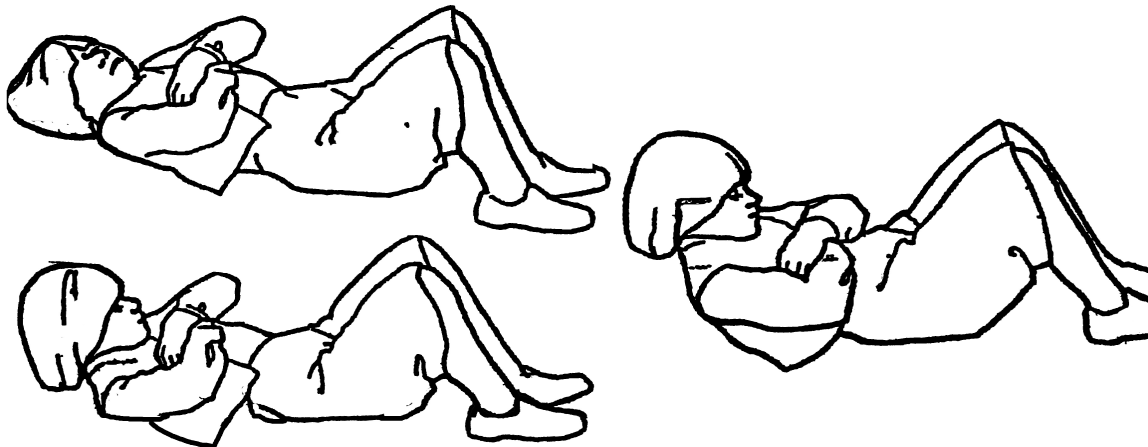
#1. Knees to Nose Purpose: To improve abdominal tone.

Instructions: 1) Your child should lie on his back, arms folded across his chest or on the floor. 2) Then he should lift his head, bring his knees to his chest, and touch his knees to his nose. Hold for a few seconds or as long as he can tolerate. 3) As your child becomes stronger he can alternate bringing the right knee to his nose and the left knee to his nose (i.e., alternate knees). The desired response will be for your child to get into this position and hold it without any assistance. Initially he may rely on using his arms to assist with bringing his knees to nose until he begins to get stronger.



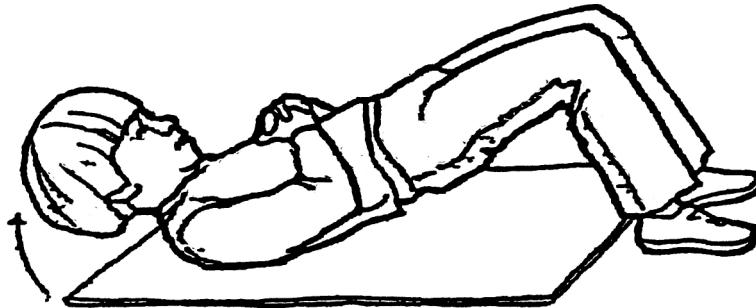
#2. Roll Up Purpose: To improve abdominal tone.

Instructions: 1) Your child assumes a position of lying on his back with his knees bent. 2) Then your child should bring his chin to his chest. 3) Your child should also lift his shoulders off the floor. 4) Your child should then start to roll back down but stop halfway while maintaining his chin to chest. The ultimate result/response of this exercise will be for your child to achieve a slow roll up and have his pelvis placed in a posterior tilt. Your child should be discouraged from performing the method of this exercise too quickly or jerky as he will be using momentum as opposed to the key muscles in a deliberate slow cycle.



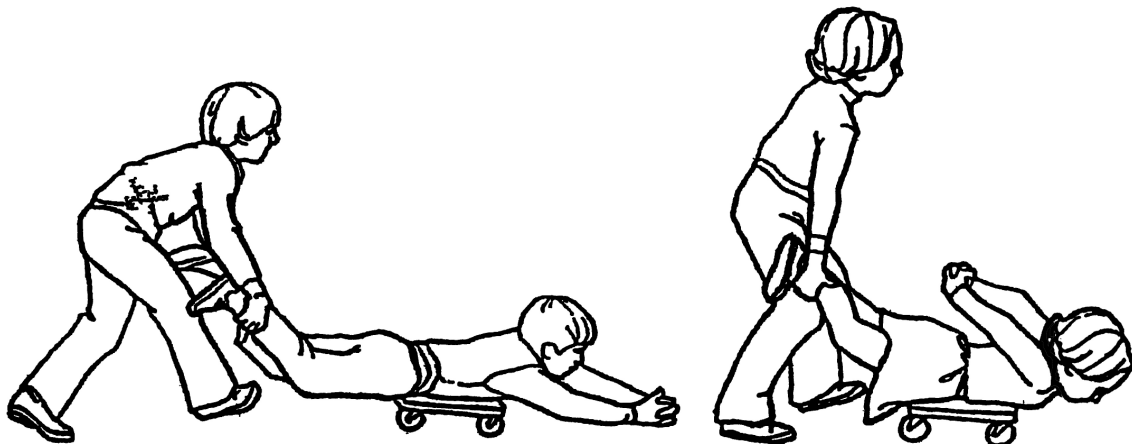
#3. London Bridge *Purpose:* To improve abdominal tone and achieve hip extension while maintaining a flexion tone throughout the trunk.

Instructions: 1) Your child should lay on his back with his knees bent and feet flat on the floor. 2) Then your child should be instructed to raise his chin to chest. 3) The next key movement is for your child to push with his legs in order to make a bridge. The head-up position should be maintained while making the bridge. The response you are looking for is good hip extension while maintaining that head-up position with the chin on the chest. Encourage your child not to perform the hip extension with his head back which increases extension throughout the trunk. It is possible your child may have difficulty with his ability to raise his bottom off the supporting surface while flexing his head.



#4. Lawn Mower *Purpose:* To improve shoulder stability and back extension which are both important for postural control, especially for maintaining an erect posture for table top tasks such as writing.

Instructions: 1) Have your child lie on his stomach on a scooter board. Someone should then be positioned behind him holding his feet. 2) The person holding his feet should push forward. 3) Your child could either hold his arms forward or behind his back. Alternatively, the use of rope held onto with both hands in front of your child could be utilized. The rope would be held taut and then your child would pull himself forward using a bilateral arm movement similar to that used for rowing a boat. The important point to be observed with either of the 2 methods is that your child should keep his head, arms, and legs raised and not touching the floor.

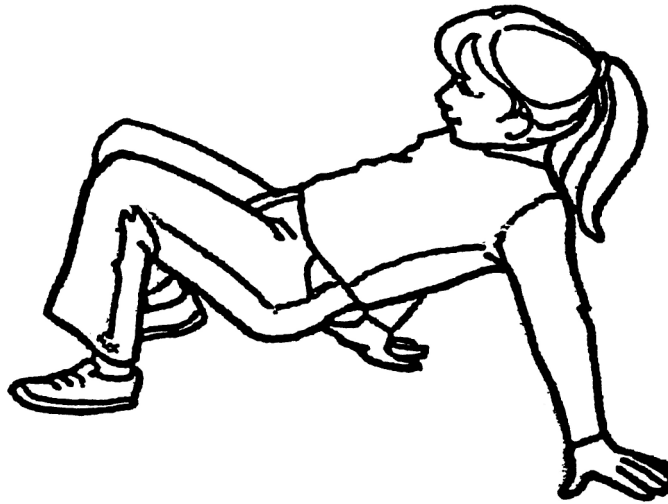


#5. Heel Walking *Purpose:* To improve abdominal tone.

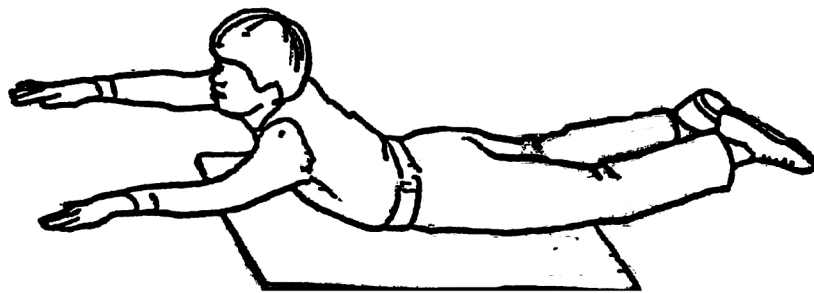
Instructions: 1) Instruct your child to simply walk backwards on his heels. The idea behind this movement is for the development of a posterior pelvic tilt with the contraction of the abdominal muscles. Your child should avoid performing this exercise with an anterior pelvic tilt.

#6. Crab Walking *Purpose:* Improve shoulder stability and elongate the pectoral muscles. In addition abdominal muscles will be strengthened.

Instructions: 1) Your child will adopt a sitting position on the floor leaning back on his hands. 2) Your child will then raise his bottom off the support of the floor while his feet and hands maintain contact with the floor. 3) Your child will then walk backwards with the feet leading. The desired response of this activity is for your child to develop the ability for depressing his shoulders enough to get his hips off the floor and walk in an all fours position with only his hands and feet touching the floor. The obvious tendency in this activity is for him to drag his bottom on the floor which defeats the aim of isolating the key areas of focus for strength development (e.g., the shoulder). Playing a fun competitive 10 minute game of crab soccer with his younger brother or a friend would make this exercise seem less arduous.

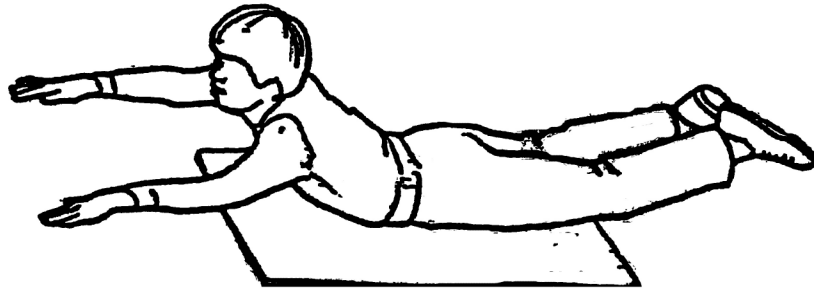


#7. Rocker *Purpose:* To improve trunk extension, scapula stability, and hip extension. *Instructions:* 1) Your child lies on his stomach. 2) Have him raise his head, shoulders, arms, and legs off the support of the floor. 3) Then instruct your child to rock like a rocking chair. This is a simple but effective exercise for contracting the back muscles (extensors), scapula stabilizers, and hip extensors.



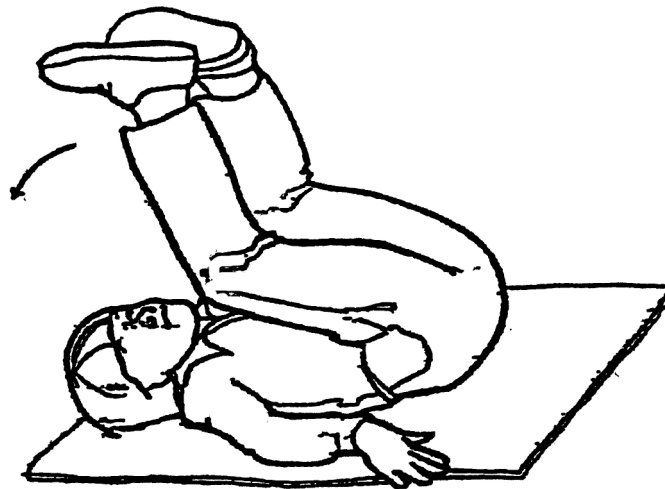
#8. Superman *Purpose:* To improve trunk extension, scapula stability, and hip extension.

Instructions: 1) Your child lies on his stomach. 2) Have him raise his head, shoulders, arms, and legs off the support of the floor and hold this position for as long as he can to fly like Superman. The goal is to hold the position for 30+ seconds.



#9. Feet Over Head *Purpose:* To improve abdominal tone.

Instructions: 1) Instruct your child to lie on his back. 2) Then tell him to bend his knees and bring his feet over his head and touch his feet to the floor. 3) As your child slowly lowers his feet to the starting position instruct him to bend his knees. The back should remain flat and not arched in the lumbar region (lower back). The desired response in this activity is for your child to contract his abdominal muscles as his hips are lifted and as the feet are brought back down. Have him avoid keeping his knees straight while bringing his feet over his head and encourage him to bend his hips.



One of the most important criteria for having your child perform these exercises is for them to be interesting. He will not like all of them, but even if he chooses a couple to workout with on a regular basis he should achieve some strength/postural control benefits.

More Postural Tone Exercises



PLANK



TABLE



EGG