



**Digital Magazine for Pediatric
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OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY GIFTS, PHYSICAL THERAPY GIFTS, AND TEACHERS GIFTS – TAKE YOUR PICK!

Here at Your Therapy Source we frequently get asked for suggestions for easy and frugal occupational therapy gifts, PT gifts and teacher gifts. Parents want to show their appreciation for their child or children's occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists, teachers, bus drivers, school nurse, coaches, or whoever played a part in keeping your child safe, offering guidance and educating them this year.

Now more than ever, it means so much to the therapists, teachers, school staff, and caregivers who give their all to make a difference in our children's lives. It's no small thing to be able to place your trust in someone who starts out as a stranger, hoping that each day your child will be treated with respect, taught to get along with others, inspired to do his or her best, and positively influenced in a lasting way.



But the thing is ... you're not the only person thinking about what to get the school staff as a way to say thanks for all their hard work and dedication. If you're determined not to be just another person out of 30 who sends in a mug, then take a look at these creative and unique gift ideas to show gratitude to your child's educators and caregivers.

"Best Memories" Photo Collage

If you've taken lots of pictures on class trips, at school parties, and sports events with your child and his or her classmates, therapists, teachers and coaches this year, a photo collage makes a terrific and memorable gift that your child's teacher will cherish for years to come. Keep in mind that other parents may have photo memories of the class that would look nice as part of the collage. Reach out to them via text or social media as you're putting this project together.

If you prefer to go thrifty, head down to your nearest Goodwill store or other consignment shop and pick up a gently used frame. Big Lots and other overstock and "odd lot" stores like this often have picture collage frames marked down as well.

Need to put this gift together in a hurry? An alternative to a photo collage made at home is one done completely on the computer. Head to your favorite photo printing website like Snapfish or Shutterfly, where you can upload your favorite images directly from your smart phone, computer or other device, directly to their platform. Select a collage design and frame, place your order online and you're good to go.

Potted Plant or Hanging Basket

A bouquet of flowers will surely be appreciated, but cut flowers soon wither and die. Why not take your gift one step further with a potted plant or hanging basket that he or she can enjoy all summer long and maybe even have for years to come? A trip to your local nursery, Home Depot or Lowes, or even a quick pit-stop to the grocery store parking lot could result in a beautiful and economical plant for your child's teacher. You can even write a cute message on the card like, "A special plant to match your nurturing spirit, thank you for all of your hard work this year."

Letter of Thanks

Money can't buy everything, especially when you've got a reason to express your heartfelt gratitude to someone else for going above and beyond. Sometimes the most cherished gift of all is a letter of appreciation. Take some time to write down all the ways your child's teacher, care giver, coach or bus driver has made a difference for your child as well as others in the class.

One of the most meaningful gifts I ever received was a card from a mother. I provided physical therapy for her son for several months. The words of gratitude she expressed in the thank you card have stuck with me for more than 20 years. Although I no longer still have the card, I can still picture her cursive handwriting and her words.

Was there a special project that he or she conducted with expert guidance and let the children to greater learning and success? Did your child's therapist or teacher step in with one-on-one support for a tough personal or learning challenge? Did he or she vouch for your child in some way? Pen your letter on stationery, and also type it up on email to send to this person's boss i.e. the principal if this is your child's teacher. With education jobs being what they are these days, this testament to a teacher's worth could make the difference in future employment scenarios.

Small, Homemade Gift

Are you into candle making, pouring soap, or crocheting? Does your child paint or do pottery? A small knick knack or home décor item can be a welcomed gift for the end of the school year. Just be sure to allow yourself enough lead time to get crafting or creating without turning this into a high-stress endeavor. Occupational therapists love handmade items so crafts would make great occupational therapy gifts.

"I'll Remember You" Bio

Here is a gift that's unquestionably personal, best for the therapist or teacher who has really made an impression and positive influence on your child's life. You may want to convey special thanks for helping deal with a personal challenge, guiding your child to overcome learning obstacles, going above and beyond with a school project, volunteering after hours, or otherwise helping and making a difference for your child or for the class as a whole.

Your child's therapist or teacher has likely sent them home with an array of precious memories – artwork that they personalized for your Mother's Day and Father's Day Gifts, special holiday projects focusing around your family, or other sweet keepers that you will cherish forever. Why not repay the favor and have your child spend an hour or two making the therapist or teacher feel good?

Here are some simple ideas:

- a list of the therapist or teacher's favorites (child can even interview the therapist or teacher briefly for this)
- cartoon-drawn caricature of the teacher
- photos of the teacher and class, pasted onto construction paper with various captions
- Certificate of Recognition for being a Super Awesome Therapist or Teacher.

The details will depend on the age of your child and how much of a personal connection they and/or you made with the therapist or teacher during the school year. Whatever details you decide, know that this is one of the nicest and most cherished gifts someone can receive at the end of another challenging school year!

Motivational Poster for the Room

Walk into any school and you will see many encouraging posters on the wall. How about providing your child's therapist or teacher with some wall art? Whether it be to promote OT or to encourage students for \$5 you will have a unique gift. Check out these posters:

[Pediatric OT Collage](#)

[Practice Makes Progress Not Perfect](#)

["Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn" – Benjamin Franklin](#)

DIY Play or Craft Kits

Why not try creating your own play or craft kits to give to the therapist or teacher to use with their class next year. Just like the craft stores sell all of those kits to create anything that you can think of, how about creating some fun playtime kits on your own. [Read ideas here.](#)

Gift Cards

If all else fails and you can't think of any occupational therapy gifts, how about a simple gift card? This is my personal go-to gift every year. Mostly because I forget until the last minute...

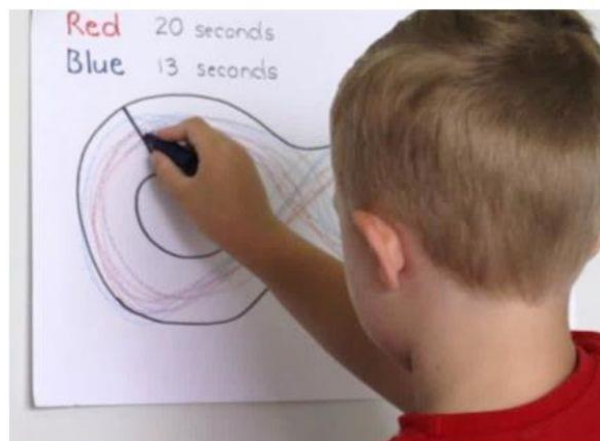
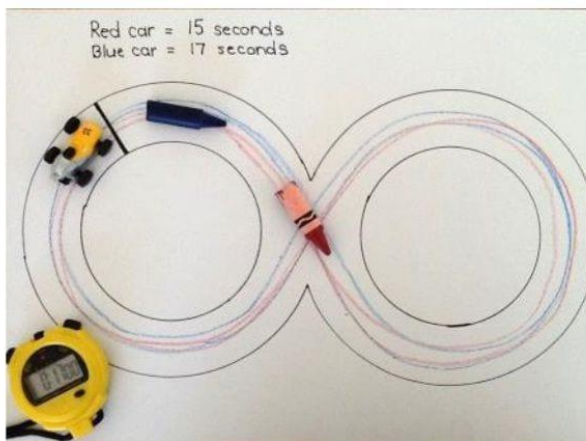
School staff loves a hot or cold cup of their favorite caffeinated (or even decaf) beverage. Even just a \$10 gift certificate yields 2 or 3 cups of coffee or tea, or 2 cups of coffee and a muffin, donut or small cup of munchkins. Don't underestimate the power of coffee to deliver a hearty "thanks for keeping my kid alive, sane and happy at school this year!" Throw in a box of donut holes for the class to enjoy, and you've got an end-of-the-year gesture of thanks that will surely be appreciated.

LAZY EIGHT HANDWRITING GRAND PRIX FINE MOTOR SKILL BUILDER – FREE PRINTABLES

FREE PRINTABLES



Lazy Eight Handwriting Grand Prix Fine Motor Skill Builder



If you want to practice pre-writing skills, crossing midline, and fine motor skills, check out this FREE printable packet – Lazy Eight Handwriting Grand Prix Fine Motor Skill Builder. You can download it for free at the end of this post. Children can work on improving the flow and control of arm movements, develops eye-hand coordination, and directionality which all are important building blocks to develop hand skills. After you print, it is a super easy activity to send with children for carrying over fine motor skill practice at home or in the classroom.

This freebie is from [Fantastic Fingers® Fine Motor Skill Builders Level 1](#).

Why Do the Lazy Eight Handwriting Grand Prix Fine Motor Skill Builder?

Every child should have the best possible opportunities to develop skilled hand function, so essential for all life tasks. Children also use their fine motor skills in order to learn how to learn.

Remember, children spend up to 60% of their class time engaged in fine motor activities. Good fine motor skills are vital, being one of four main predictors of early academic success.

In order to quickly develop skilled hand function for life and literacy, activities should build specific performance components or foundations. In addition, it is important to show children how to do these activities in the most beneficial way. This includes correct positioning, the right techniques, making the activities more challenging and developing skill levels systematically.

This Lazy Eight Handwriting activity encourages children to practice the following skills:

- visual motor skills
- wrist extension

- tripod grasp
- hand and finger strengthening
- shoulder strengthening
- visual spatial skills
- pre-writing skills
- Kinaesthesia & tactile awareness in hand
- flow and control of arm movements
- eye-hand coordination
- directionality

How to Use the Lazy Eight Handwriting Grand Prix Fine Motor Skill Builder

You will need the following materials: several large sheets of paper (or use the FREE printable Figure 8 Loop), Blu Tack (or similar to secure paper to vertical surface), felt marker, thick crayon pieces about 2 inches (4.5 cm) long, and a timer.

The child sits on a suitable chair with their feet flat on the ground, and knees just touching a smooth vertical surface e.g. indoor wall. Secure the paper sideways in line with their middle and at face height.

Draw for the child a large doubled lined, lazy eight racing track or download your FREE copy below with a start/finish line across the top left side.



Using your index fingers, take turns going from the start line around the track, crossing over the middle to make diagonal lines, and back. Once the child can do this motion (use arrows to help if needed), both choose crayon pieces which will represent your racing cars.

Take turns drawing laps with the crayon 'cars' held in your preferred hands in the tips of your 3 Friends (thumb, index and middle fingers).

When you are ready, have a race where you time and record how long it takes for each crayon car to do a certain number of laps e.g. 5.

Tips and Suggestions for the Lazy Eight Handwriting Grand Prix Fine Motor Skill Builder

Aim to not stop while drawing the lazy eight patterns, and don't press too hard or too softly. Try using other colors, and take turns racing several cars around the track. See if the child can draw the initial lazy eight handwriting track.

Just for fun, also drive little toy cars around the track. Instead of calling it a racing track, make it a butterfly, and use many colors to make rainbow colored wings, draw in a head and body. This shape could be turned into google eyes with a mask or glasses.

Use chalk pieces on a large chalkboard instead. By writing with chalk, the child receives different proprioceptive and tactile feedback as they write compared to crayons.

Want More Fine Motor Skill Builders?

Fine Motor Skill Builders

Develop hand function in children for everyday life skills.



Busy OTs, teachers, and parents will love these [*Fantastic Fingers® Fine Motor Skill Builders*](#) to develop hand function in children. Three levels of fine motor activities are ready to go!

We all understand that children need practice time to develop hand function that is essential for life skills. But it can be a real struggle to find the time to create graded levels of activities to complete at home or in the classroom.

Developed by an experienced OT, Ingrid C. King, the *Fantastic Fingers® Fine Motor Skill Builders* includes 54 pages total of 3 levels of fine motor activities (18 pages each) plus an introductory letter in Word format (you can edit it!). [FIND OUT MORE.](#)

[Download your FREE Lazy Eight Handwriting Grand Prix Fine Motor Skill Builder here at the bottom of the post.](#)

PLAY QUOTES TO REMIND US WHY PLAY IS SO IMPORTANT



As professionals and parents, many of us are strong advocates for educating others of the importance of play in children's lives. Over the past thousands of years, famous people have been so wise about the power of play. Here are 25 play quotes to remind us why PLAY is so IMPORTANT in the life of a child.

Remember play can be simple. It doesn't require elaborate preparation, materials or toys. What it truly requires is TIME. We must provide children with the opportunity of open-ended play with family and friends. This is where fine motor, gross motor, visual perceptual, cognitive, social, emotional, and self-regulation skills can all be developed and nurtured.

Play Quotes

Here are 25 play quotes from a range of viewpoints. Of course, I have to start off with my favorite from Fred Rogers! It is so simple but so powerful. To me, play provides children with a strong framework of internal motivation to practice what they are learning. They can be self-driven and will practice higher levels of self-regulation to accomplish a task during play time. It is a basis of what many pediatric pediatric therapists do – teach skills through play!

"Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning." -Mr. Rogers

"Play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold." -Joseph Chilton Pearce

"It is paradoxical that many educators and parents still differentiate between a time for learning and a time for play without seeing the vital connection between them." -Leo F. Buscaglia

"Play is the exultation of the possible." -Martin Buber

"Play keeps us vital and alive. It gives us an enthusiasm for life that is irreplaceable. Without it, life just doesn't taste good" -Lucia Capocchione

"Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do." -Mark Twain

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing." -George Bernard Shaw

Play Typography Art



"Play is the beginning of knowledge." -George Dorsey

"Play is so integral to childhood that a child who does not have the opportunities to play is cut off from a major portion of childhood." -Musselwhite

"Necessity may be the mother of invention, but play is certainly the father." -Roger von Oech

"We are never more fully alive, more completely ourselves, or more deeply engrossed in anything than when we are playing." -Charles Schaefer

"It is a happy talent to know how to play." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Play is our brain's favorite way of learning." -Diane Ackerman

"Almost all creativity involves purposeful play." – Abraham Maslow

"Whoever wants to understand much must play much." -Gottfried Benn

"The true object of all human life is play." -G. K. Chesterton

"Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity." -Kay Redfield Jamison

"Do not keep children to their studies by compulsion but by play." -Plato

"The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct." -Carl Jung

"Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn." -O. Fred Donaldson

"The opposite of play is not work. It's depression." Brian Sutton-Smith

"Those who play rarely become brittle in the face of stress or lose the healing capacity for humor." -Stuart Brown, MD

"In every real man a child is hidden that wants to play." -Friedrich Nietzsche

"If you want to be creative, stay in part a child, with the creativity and invention that characterizes children before they are deformed by adult society." -Jean Piaget

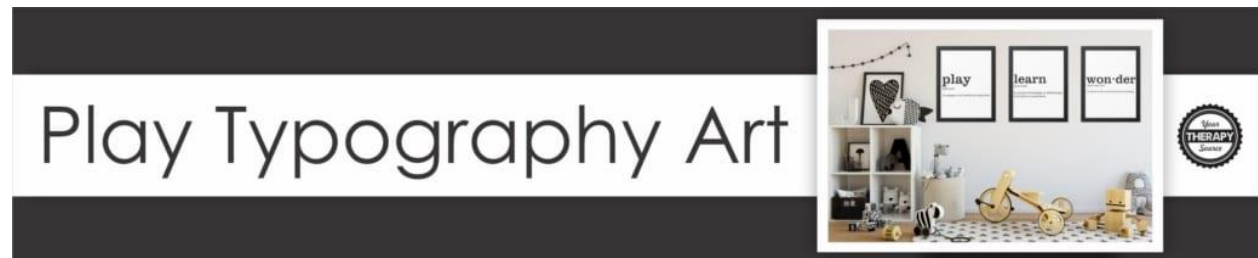
"The playing adult steps sideward into another reality; the playing child advances forward to new stages of mastery." -Erik H. Erikson

How to Give Children the Gift of Play

Rather than overscheduling today's children, here are 5 tips to help give children the gift of play:

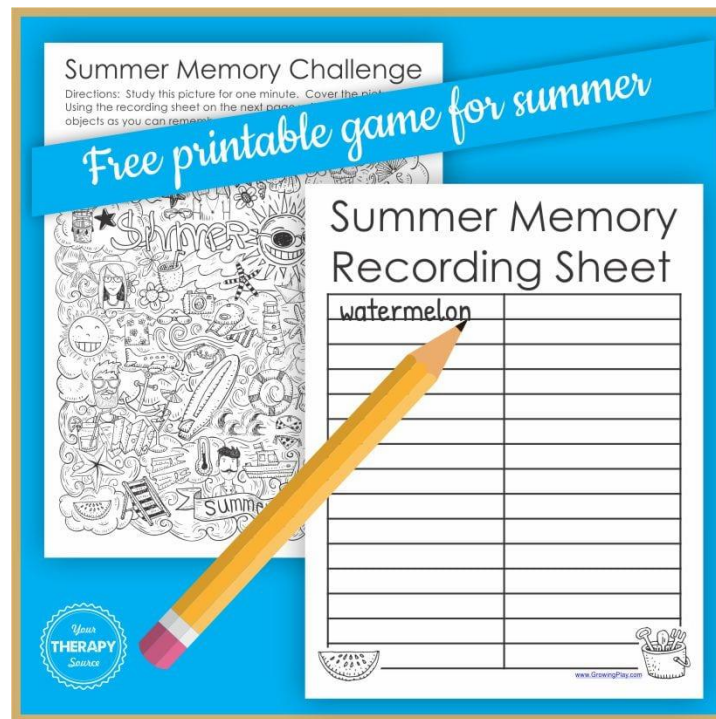
1. Make play a priority. Sometimes we have to say no to certain outings, events or activities. Family life is challenging enough but downtime, where kids can just be kids, is a necessity for children.
2. Allow for independence. If your children are old enough, leave them alone. Don't hover. This will help you and them. They will argue and settle it without you ever even hearing it all! They will fail and succeed and you will only hear about the success stories.
3. Provide some lead in activities. Sometimes, children need a little guidance and direction so you can set the stage. For example, print off some pages from the [Doctor and Hospital pretend play packet](#) and leave them on the table with a clipboard and a pen. The kids can then continue to play from there to create an imaginative world.
4. Make yourself busy but with nothing too exciting. If you are busy completing a task, most likely the kids will occupy themselves with play. If you are busy watching videos on your phone, most likely the kids will surround you (Murphy's Law). Choose wisely.
5. Schedule it! I know that may sound ridiculous to some parents but since there are 6 kids in our house and 2 adults with insane schedules if we didn't set aside time for play my kids would lose out.

Need Visual Reminders About the Importance of Play?



[Play Typography Art](#) digital download includes 16 words related to play and the definition for simple decor that makes a statement. Play is powerful as is this typography art. Make a statement in a clinic, classroom, playroom, or child's bedroom to remind educators, parents, and children of the importance of play.

VISUAL MEMORY GAME FOR SUMMER



This visual memory game for summer requires zero preparation and is FUN to play. All you need to do is print the game at the bottom of this post.

The visual memory game is a free sample activity from the [Summer Mini Activity Packet](#). It includes 25 puzzles, mazes, and more all with a fun Summer theme. No prep needed – just print and play! Perfect for indoor recess, early finishers, morning work or anytime!

How to Play the Visual Memory Summer Game

It is super easy to play this game. Print page one with the whimsical, creative, drawings that has a summer theme. Study the page for one minute.

After one minute, cover up the page so you can not see it at all. Don't just flip it over or you will see through the paper.

Using page two of the freebie, write down as many objects that you can remember from the summer drawing.

If you want to play against a friend, only allow 2 minutes to record your answers. Any answers that you both wrote, cross out. Award one point for each object remembered that was not a duplicate. Whoever has the most points is the winner!

Modification for the Game

If the child can not write words, ask the child to tell you objects he/she remembers and you can write them down.

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If you want to practice visual discrimination skills instead, play a game of I Spy with the picture. You could make it easy and say “I spy watermelon” and then the child has to find the watermelon. To make it more difficult, say “I spy something you eat with seeds” and the child has to find the watermelon.

More FREE Visual Memory Games

Looking for more visual memory games? Check out these options:

[DIY Visual Memory Box](#)

[Simple Visual Memory Game](#)

[Working Memory Practice Exercises](#)

Download your FREE Visual Summer Memory Game

You can download your [FREE visual memory summer game here](#). A new tab will open with the activity.



Don't forget to check out the complete [Summer Mini Activity Book](#) for more puzzles, printables and mazes to keep the children engaged and challenged.

SELF-REGULATION AND MATH



Many students with learning disabilities struggle to learn math concepts. A recent study on self-regulation and math explored interventions with and without an embedded self-regulation component for teaching third-grade students at risk for mathematics disabilities about fractions.

Methodology of the Study on Self-Regulation and Math

The lessons on fractions focused on magnitude understanding and word problems. The embedded self-regulation interventions were designed to support a [growth mindset](#) and help 69 students [set goals](#), [self-monitor](#), and use strategies to engage motivationally, metacognitively, and behaviorally through challenging tasks. The participants were randomly assigned to a business-as-usual control and the two versions of fractions intervention.

Results of the Study

Following data analysis the researchers determined the following:

- students who received the embedded self-regulation interventions produced significantly higher scores than control on National Assessment of Educational Progress, Ordering, Word Problems, and Multiplication but not Number Line.

Conclusion

The researchers concluded that explicit small-group interventions focused on magnitude understanding of fractions, with embedded self-regulation instruction can help improve fraction outcomes and building student's [growth mindset](#), [goal setting](#), [planning](#), and perseverance. These interventions will better prepare at-risk students to keep pace with classroom peers and return ready to succeed in general education programs.

Reference: Wang, A. Y., Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., Gilbert, J. K., Krowka, S., & Abramson, R. (2019). Embedding Self-Regulation Instruction Within Fractions Intervention for Third Graders With Mathematics Difficulties. *Journal of learning disabilities*, 0022219419851750.

Resources to Help Embed Self-Regulation Interventions



Do you work with students who struggle to be motivated, engaged, persistent, organized, or self-regulate? These are the skills that students need to achieve success in school. The [Self-Assessments and Checklists for Good Work Habits](#) help improve self-regulation skills, maintain classroom expectations, routines, work habits, and behaviors.

The **Self-Assessments and Checklists for Good Work Habits** provide 8 checklists to encourage successful students. Each checklist includes 6 areas to self-assess with written directions and picture symbols. [DOWNLOAD A FREE SAMPLE PAGE](#)

More resources for student success:

[Planning, Time Management, and Organization Skills Bundle](#)

[Self Regulation Skills Curriculum](#)

[Too Slow, Just Right or Too Fast – Visual Supports for Self-Regulation](#)

[How to Get Organized Worksheets for Students](#)

ONE SIMPLE TIP TO IMPROVE INHIBITORY CONTROL IN ADHD



Do you work with or parent a child with ADHD? Inhibitory control allows children to control their impulses and responses to stimuli. Inhibition is part of executive function skills and it can be difficult for children with ADHD. It is actually a primary cognitive deficit in ADHD.

A recent study indicated that changing sleep patterns can help improve inhibition in children with ADHD.

Methodology of the Study

Journal of Attention Disorders published a study to determine whether sleep extension improves inhibitory control. The subjects included 11 children with ADHD and 15 children without ADHD. Each child participated in a within-subject sleep extension intervention that targeted nocturnal sleep duration using actigraphy and polysomnography to assess sleep. To measure inhibition, a Go/No-Go task was used.

Results of the Study on Inhibition and Sleep

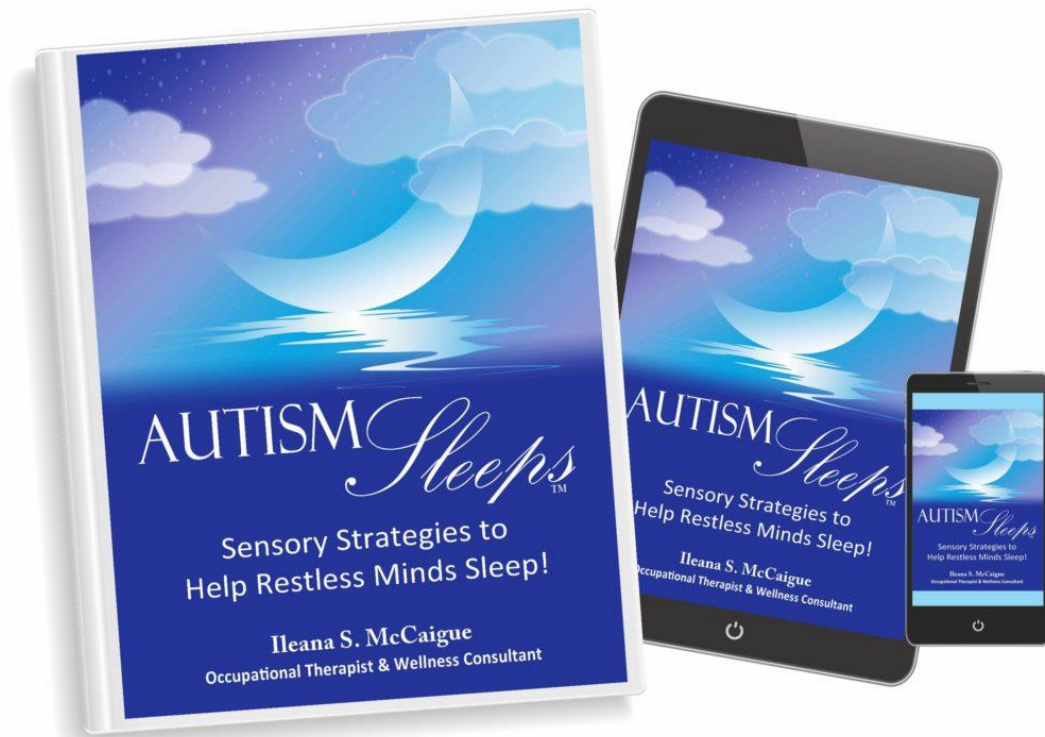
Following data analysis the researchers determined the following:

- the children without ADHD exhibited a significant main effect of time, with morning inhibitory control being 10% greater than evening inhibitory control.
- inhibition did not differ between the baseline and extension conditions in children without ADHD.
- the children with ADHD, although morning inhibitory control did not differ from evening inhibition, sleep extension improved inhibitory control by 13% overall.

The researchers concluded that a sleep extension intervention improves inhibitory control in children with ADHD.

Reference: Cremone-Caira, A., Root, H., Harvey, E. A., McDermott, J. M., & Spencer, R. M. (2019). Effects of Sleep Extension on Inhibitory Control in Children With ADHD: A Pilot Study. *Journal of attention disorders*, 1087054719851575.

Additional Resources for Sleep Interventions



AUTISM Sleeps - Sensory Strategies to Help Restless Minds Sleep!
Available for immediate download or print version at YourTherapySource.com

[Autism Sleeps™](#) is an easy-to-read manual to help people with sensory processing difficulties, Autism Spectrum Disorders or a restless mind, achieve an overall healthy sleep experience. It serves as a thorough resource for sleep sensory strategies and suggestions for preparing the “sleep environment”. Sample bedtime and wake-up routines are provided as templates, especially to guide parents of children with sleep difficulties. [Find out more information.](#)

[How to Help Children Sleep](#)

[Interoceptive sensory strategies to induce sleep](#)

[Sleep, Bedtime Routines, Anxiety and Autism](#)

[5 Interoceptive Sleep Strategies to Induce Sleep](#)

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CROSS CRAWL EXERCISES – 10 BENEFITS OF THE BRAIN HEMISPHERE SYNCING EXERCISE



What is cross crawl?

Cross crawl refers to movements in which we use opposition such as crawling, walking, running, and swimming. Opposition means that opposite sides of the body work together to coordinate the right arm and left leg, then the left arm and right leg.

Therapeutically, cross crawl refers to any intentional cross-lateral activity in which you cross the mid-line of the body, such as touching opposite hand and knee or foot. Performing this movement builds the bridge between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, allowing for electrical impulses and information to pass freely between the two, which is essential for physical coordination as well as cerebral activities, such as learning language, reading, and hand-to-eye coordination.



What are the benefits of cross crawl exercises?

As soon as we start to crawl, this cross-lateral pattern of movement stimulates more complex brain and nervous system development and integration. In addition to firing neural pathways in the right and left brain hemispheres simultaneously, a cross crawl movement stabilizes the pelvis while mobilizing the shoulders, reinforcing the skills we need for walking.

In short, any time you do cross crawl, you are re-integrating your brain and nervous system and re-organizing your mind-body connections (1). Because we are daily, hourly, being bombarded and impacted by multiple stimuli and tasks, practicing cross-crawl throughout the day is one of the best self-care activities you can do for yourself. Work on building cross-crawl into your daily schedule.

Think of it as a basic part of wellness, like drinking plenty of water. You will not only feel clearer, but you will also behave and perform better. Try it before homework, testing, or an important meeting, after anything stressful and between different kinds of activities. If you've been reading and it's time to go play soccer – cross crawl. If you're frustrated with a project – cross-crawl. You need to clear some cobwebs or recharge – cross crawl!

How do these exercises help physically and mentally?

Through mind-body science, we now understand that physical coordination precedes cognitive coordination. The ability to do cross-lateral movements with the body literally lays the foundation for other cognitive abilities, such as readiness for fine motor academic work.

Though it seems to be a fun, simple exercise, here's what cross-crawl is doing for you physically and mentally:

1. Stabilizes your walking gait coordination – builds core strength
2. Energizes your body and calms your mind – releases tension and stress
3. Improves your eye teaming skills – essential for focus, reading, and writing
4. Enhances whole brain thinking – your left and right hemispheres work together
5. Develops proprioception – your spatial and kinesthetic awareness

How do these exercises help with social-emotional skills?

Cross crawl also offers an effective way to reboot your nervous system and re-integrate mind and body. You can use it regularly to both discharge and recharge your attention and energy. It's a great break from over- focusing and it works just as well to bring body and mind online. As a stress buster or a warm-up for doing your best, cross crawl has significant social-emotional benefits:

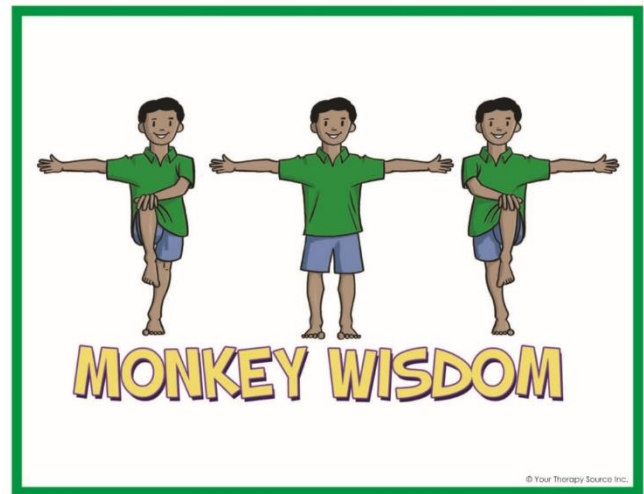
1. Increased self-awareness
2. Situational insight
3. Clarity of thought
4. Impulse control

5. Improvements in general physical coordination to help with social skills during recess, gym class, and free play.

How Do You Cross Crawl?

The Cross Crawl exercise is part of the [Adventure Skills](#) and is called Monkey Wisdom.

Stand with your feet apart and your arms open parallel to the ground. Shift your weight to your right foot, lift your left knee and touch it with your right hand. Step back to both feet and immediately shift weight to on your left foot as you lift your right knee and touch it with your left hand. Repeat this several times in a comfortable, upbeat, rhythmic way. Breathe fully and enjoy.



Self-Regulation Flash Cards

Help children develop impulse control, focus, and well-being!



When Do You Do Cross Crawl?

Any age! Most adults can do cross crawl. However, like anything, the more you practice, the easier and more fluid and embodied the coordination pattern becomes. The age when children can intentionally cross crawl varies because they develop at different speeds. Some can easily balance and cross the mid-line of the body by the age of 4 and some find it challenging up to age of 6 or 7. It is age – appropriate for children ages 5 and under to automatically bring their hand to the same knee, demonstrating a same-sided crawl (homo-lateral crawl).

Read more

[WHAT IS WORKING MEMORY AND HEMISPHERIC INTEGRATION?](#)

[BILATERAL COORDINATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN CHILDREN](#)

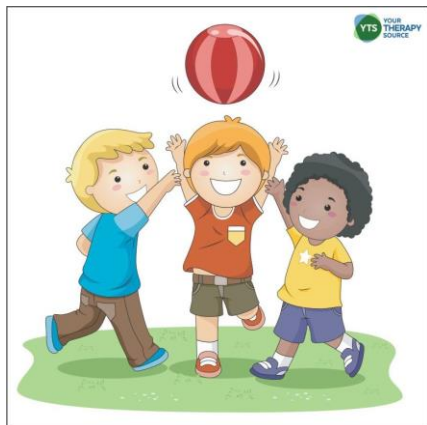
[CROSS CRAWL BILATERAL COORDINATION EXERCISE WITH VIDEO MODELING](#)

Sources:

(1) [Neurological disorganisation](#)

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MOTOR PLANNING, AUTISM, AND CATCHING SKILLS



Previous research has demonstrated common motor skill deficits associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) which may be related to decreased planning and control of sensory motor skills. A recent study examined motor planning, autism and the skill of catching a ball to determine more specific information regarding impairments.

Methodology of the Study on Motor Planning and Autism

The researchers compared 15 children with ASD and 15 age- and gender-matched typically developing children to determine the sensorimotor control of arm movements and postural adjustments during ball catching.

Each participant was asked to catch a ball rolling down a ramp in 6 test conditions in which visual inputs and ramp direction were changed to provide different sensory conditions and postural demands.

Results of the Study

Following the cross-section design study on motor planning, autism, and catching skills the researchers determined the following:

- children with ASD had increased difficulties catching the balls especially those from the lateral directions when compared to typically developing peers.
- children with ASD used less visual information to plan for catching motion, demonstrated less and delayed anticipatory postural adjustments, and exhibited increased corrective control.

The researchers concluded that motor difficulties present in children with ASD may result from compromised sensorimotor integration in planning and control of movements.

Reference: Chen, L. C., Su, W. C., Ho, T. L., Lu, L., Tsai, W. C., Chiu, Y. N., & Jeng, S. F. (2019). Postural Control and Interceptive Skills in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Physical Therapy*.

Resource to Help Children Learn How to Catch, Kick and Throw

Do you need help teaching children to catch, throw and kick? [Teaching Catching, Throwing and Kicking Skills](#): Help children learn how to catch, throw and kick with this packet full of information of age progression of skills, visual picture cards, tips, letter to parents and more! [FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION](#).

Read more on Autism and Motor Skills

[INCREASING ENGAGEMENT ON THE PLAYGROUND FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM](#)

[AYRES SENSORY INTEGRATION FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM](#)

[GROSS MOTOR AND SOCIAL SKILLS IN BOYS WITH AUTISM](#)

[PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND AUTISM](#)

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YOGA AND SELF REGULATION STRATEGIES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



Self-regulation strategies for middle school students and high school students continue to be essential to help children practice inhibition and impulse control. These skills have been associated with academic success and high school graduation rates. One self-regulation strategy for middle school and high school students is yoga.

Self-Regulation Strategies in Middle School Students

The *Journal of Child and Family Studies* published research on mindful yoga to foster self-regulation, academic performance and health promotion in 72 sixth graders. Students participated in mindful yoga integrated into 6th grade English Language Arts and 70 students were part of the control group. Data on self-regulation was collected using the Adolescent Self-Regulatory Inventory.

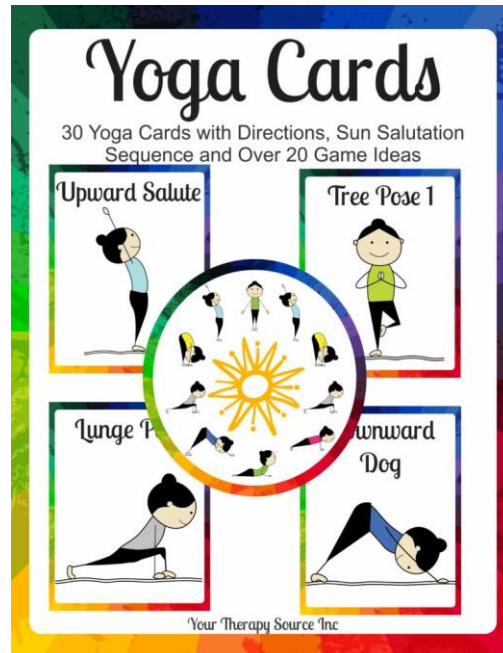
The results indicated that the **students who participated in mindful yoga demonstrated significant increases in both global and long-term self-regulation** compared to the control group of students. There were no significant changes in short-term self-regulation.

Self-Regulation Strategies in High School Students

An additional study was published by Daly et al. comparing a yoga intervention on the emotion regulation of 15-17 year old high school students as compared to physical education. Following a 16-

week yoga intervention (n = 19) or regular PE (n = 18), data analyses indicated that emotional regulation increased significantly in the yoga group as compared to the physical education group.

Do you utilize yoga as a treatment technique in your school?



[Yoga Cards](#): Download of 30 yoga cards with directions, Sun Salutation sequence and over 20 game ideas. [FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION](#)

Read more on self-regulation strategies for middle school students and high school students

[Aerobic Exercise Improved Self-Regulation and Behavior](#)

[Free handout on self-regulation](#)

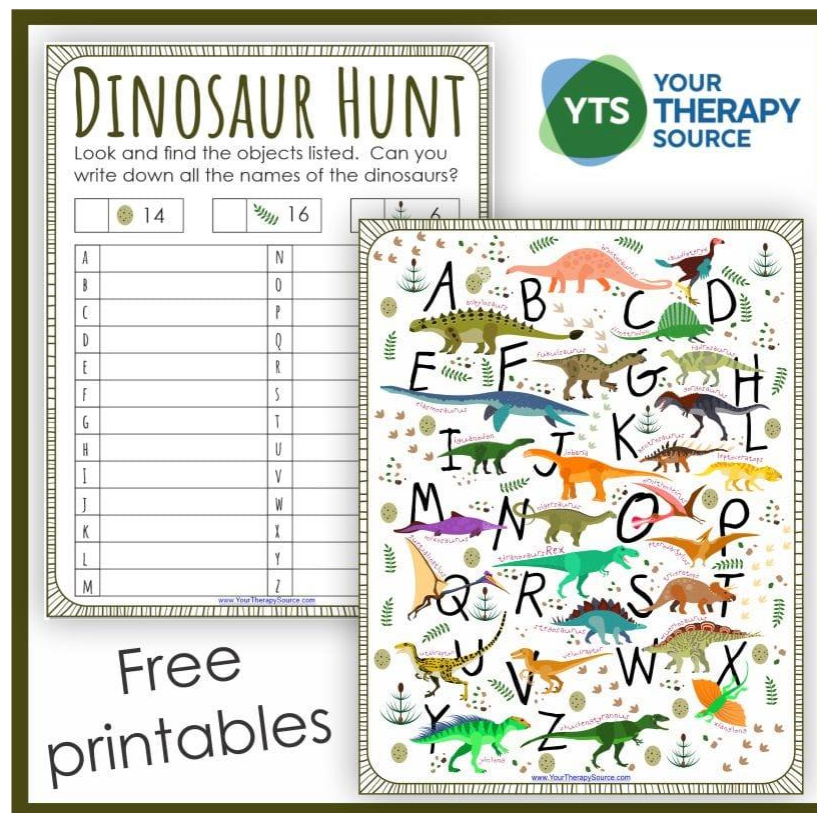
[Improving Self-Regulation Skills for All Students](#)

References:

Bergen-Cico, D. et al. Fostering Self-Regulation Through Curriculum Infusion of Mindful Yoga: A Pilot Study of Efficacy and Feasibility. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. November 2015, Volume 24, Issue 11, pp 3448-3461

Daly, LA et al. Yoga and Emotion Regulation in High School Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Evid Based Complement Alternat Med*. 2015;2015:794928. doi: 10.1155/2015/794928. Epub 2015 Aug 19.

FREE DINOSAUR PRINTABLES TO PRACTICE VISUAL MOTOR AND HANDWRITING SKILLS



If you work with children who like dinosaurs, they are going to LOVE these free dinosaur printables. You can download them at the bottom of the post.

How to Use the Free Dinosaur Printables

Sign up to receive the Your Therapy Source newsletter below to download the printables.

Print the two pages.

Provide each child with page 1 to record their answers.

The children are going to use page 2 to go on their dinosaur hunt.

They need to find 14 dinosaur eggs, 16 ferns, and 6 plants.

After they find those objects, you can increase the challenge and have the children write down all the names of the dinosaurs from the letters A to Z.

The Benefits of the Free Dinosaur Printables – Dinosaur Hunt

When children complete the activity they are practicing the following:

- visual discrimination skills

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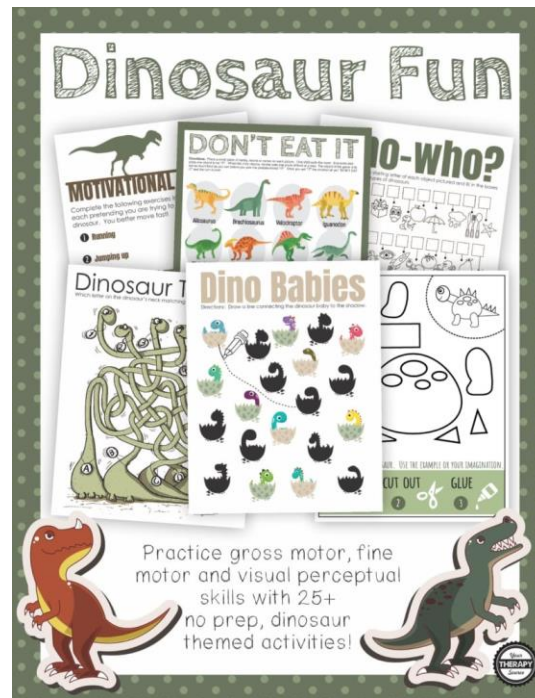
- visual motor skills
- near point copying
- figure-ground skills
- handwriting skills

Want to add in some postural strengthening?

Hang page 2 on the wall. Tape page 1 to an easel and the child can record their answers on a vertical surface.

Illustrations for this free dinosaur printable was created by Moloko88 used under a Shutterstock license.

Looking for more dinosaur printables?



The [Dinosaur Fun](#) packet includes 25 no prep, puzzles, games, mazes, and activities to print and play. The Dinosaur games for kids packet is ready to go. Busy professionals, teachers, and parents will appreciate these ready to go activities to help children succeed. [FIND OUT MORE.](#)

More dinosaur activities:

[Dino-Mite Handwriting](#)

[Cut, Sequence, Paste, and Draw – Dinosaurs](#)

[Download your FREE DINOSAUR PRINTABLES here at the bottom of the post.](#)

10 CALMING VESTIBULAR ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM



Are you in search of easy, calming, vestibular activities for the classroom? Vestibular activities can be very beneficial to students to help get their bodies and brains ready to learn. Let's take a closer look at why vestibular activities are helpful throughout the school day for some students.

What is the vestibular system?

The vestibular system tells the brain about where the head is in space and how the body is moving through space. In simple terms, it is responsible to provide information regarding movement and balance. It is located in the inner ear where it receives input from the other senses such as visual, tactile and auditory information. It receives and sends signals regarding rotational (circular) and linear (straight) movements.

Why is the vestibular system important?

Children and adults use vestibular input to maintain upright posture, balance and move through space. It also provides information as to whether things around you are moving. We need vestibular input to tell us about the speed and direction of how and where the body is moving in space.

Problems with the vestibular system can result in balance deficits, excessive physical activity, avoidance of physical activity, motion sickness and changes in arousal level.

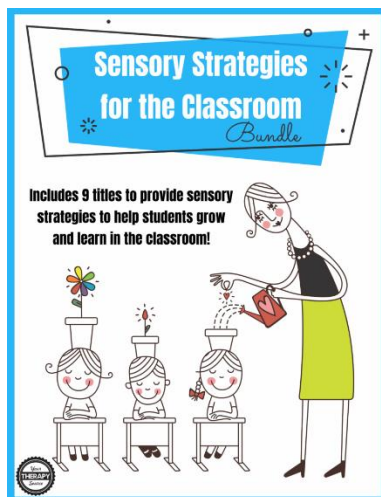
10 Calming Vestibular Activities for the Classroom

In general, fast movements tend to be alerting and slow movements tend to calm the vestibular system. Vestibular input can be very powerful and can last for a long time after completing different activities (think of a time when you experienced motion sickness and how long it took to go away). Be respectful of a child's preferences regarding vestibular input. Some children may crave vestibular movement and some child avoid movement.

Here are 10 suggestions for calming vestibular activities for the classroom:

1. Rocking back and forth in a rocking chair.
2. Perform gentle stretches especially the neck and back.
3. Slow marching in a straight line.
4. Inverting the head (some children find this calming, some children dislike this position) ie [Downward Dog yoga pose](#)
5. [Yoga](#)
6. [Tai Chi for Children](#)
7. Slow rocking sitting on a therapy ball.
8. Tuck and Rock – lay on the floor on your back, bring your knees to the chest and wrap arms/hands around knees so body is in a ball shape. Rock back and forth slowly on your back. This activity is included in [Physical Activity Cards and Game packet](#).
9. Rocking back and forth on all fours on the floor.
10. Animal walks especially if the head is inverted ie bear walk, slow donkey kicks, etc. Try [Animal Actions A-Z](#) for ideas.

Need more sensory strategies for the classroom?



The [Sensory Strategies for the Classroom Bundle](#) includes 9 digital downloads to help students to be ready to learn or participate in functional tasks.

NO EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR, NO PROBLEM – HEAD OUTDOORS TO IMPROVE FINE AND GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Did your child not qualify for extended school year services? Many times if therapists and teachers are not concerned that the child will regress over the summer, extended school year services are not recommended. If you are concerned as a parent, teacher or therapist, here are some suggestions to help maintain skills over the summer.

Benefits to No Extended School Year

If you are disappointed that your child did not qualify, try to change your mindset about this. First of all, no extended school year recommendation means that the teachers and therapists are confident that your child will maintain their skills over the summer. Second of all, be happy about not having to be bogged down by a summer schedule. Today's families are SO BUSY so to have an open calendar sometimes is refreshing.



Best Suggestion to Maintain Skills over the Summer

My #1 tip to maintain skills over the summer is to use that time to create new habits of outdoor play time. The sensory-motor and cognitive gains can be amazing throughout the whole body including vision, attention span, muscle strengthening, sensory input and more!

Simple Activities to Maintain Skills

1. Play in the sand – tactile input, foot strengthening, balance, core strengthening (working on hands and knees) and proprioceptive input (carrying buckets of sand, packing the sand down, etc). If your child dislikes sand, read this post on [Progression of Tactile Input Using Sensory Bins](#).
2. Walk barefoot – children will receive tactile input on foot, small muscles of the feet work harder and balance skills will be challenged.
3. Swimming – overall strength, endurance, aerobic fitness, proprioceptive input, and FUN!
4. Playground time – climbing equipment, swinging, slides, and FUN!
5. FREE PLAY with friends! – this is crucial. Children can practice social, emotional, creative, physical, and cognitive skills when they simply play! Make sure to provide time for independent play. Read some [suggestions here on making time to play](#).

More resources to prevent the Summer Slide - Instead of just turning on the TV or tossing your child a tablet, check out the fun activity packs. Many of the digital download packets from Your Therapy Source encourage fine motor, gross motor, and visual perceptual skills. Children will have FUN while maintaining their skills. Check out the [Summer Sensory Motor Packet](#) or the [Beach Packet](#). Just print and play. You can view all of the [Themed Sensory Motor Packets here](#).

IMPROVE FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION IN CHILDREN



In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world children are bombarded with exciting visual and auditory stimulation daily. When the screens are turned off, it can become difficult for children to maintain their focus on activities in the real world, especially at school. Here are suggestions to improve focus and concentration in children.

Provide Time for Meaningful Play

Building focus requires practice in settling one's nervous system, in strengthening one's eye muscles, and in mylenating the neural pathways in one's brain. To help children build the ability to focus, we must give them opportunities, through playful, meaningful activities, to explore and master the skills needed to do so.

Water Painting Activity

If sustaining focus is a challenge for your children or students, don't get frustrated or feel like a failure. Here is a fun, peaceful activity to improve focus and concentration in children.

The ability to focus is a mind-body integration pattern that must be experienced, named, and reinforced for kids to actually understand what you want from them and how to do it. Don't assume they know how. Instead, help them learn through the following steps and then practice, just like you would any other muscle:

1. Identify what they need to do in their mind-body to focus
2. Play with and practice how to move into a focused state from other states
3. Reinforce the self-regulation steps or activities that work for them to focus

Try using a water drawing board or a chalkboard to provide a fun and compelling experience that requires focus. Paint a picture on the board using water.

After you draw on the board with water, children watch the drawing change as the water dries. They organically become very focused, like cats with a mouse hole, as they watch the lines very slowly disappear.

Teaching What Being Focused Is

Once they are focused, ask the children to identify how they feel in their bodies by noticing ...

How are you [breathing](#)?

What's your ["inner speed" or how fast do you feel you are going inside](#)?

How does your body feel?

What's going on in your head?

What words would you use to describe how you are being right now?

Explain that the way they are being – is called: **Focused**. This "state" is what your parents and teachers are asking for when they say: *focus and stay on task*. You will love seeing the "ah-ha" in their eyes when they connect focus as an action they can do in their bodies.

Leave the chalkboard or water board nearby and invite children to watch it again any time they feel scattered and want to re-focus themselves. The water board becomes a structure that kids can use to practice the skill of focusing when they lose focus. Giving children a way to build this skill, without shame or judgment, empowers them to discover what works best for them, to reinforce as needed, and to develop confidence in their own self-regulation!

Drink Water

Humans are 60% – 75% water. Hydration is essential to the health of every function of our body and for conducting the mind's millions of electrochemical messages. You would think that we would naturally prioritize drinking water throughout the day so we can feel, think, and do well. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

So, this is an important reminder. Just drinking more water will have a powerful positive effect on your health and your child's ability to focus. Think about it, for little or no expense, and minimal effort, you and your whole family could think more clearly, digest better, move more easily, feel less stressed, get sick less often, experience fewer headaches, have more energy, improve your memory, and enjoy life more. So why not START.

How much water? The [Mayo clinic](#) astutely notes that every individual is different but recommends roughly 3L for men and 2.2L for women.

The layman's rule of thumb is basically half your body weight in ounces of water. If you weigh 100 lbs, you should be drinking 50 ounces of water. That's a little over 6 cups – so figure a glass of water 6 times throughout the day. Ideally, however, the best way to consume the water is by sipping every 20- 30 minutes. The body can better absorb it when taken in frequent small amounts. Also, be advised, other

fluids do not count. Water is water. According to the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/) water helps to:

1. Keep your temperature normal
2. Lubricate and cushion joints
3. Protect your spinal cord and other sensitive tissues
4. Get rid of wastes
5. Improve cognitive function in children and adolescents.

Self-Regulation Flash Cards

Help children develop impulse control, focus, and well-being!



Practice Proper Posture

Alignment matters. Practicing proper posture means that you pay attention to the alignment of not just your spine but also your head, neck, shoulders, rib cage, pelvis, knees, ankles, feet, and toes. How you hold yourself, send your weight through your joints, and move any part of your body has impact overtime – not just your physical health but also your mental, emotional, social, and professional health.

Given the world we live in, proper posture is something you really have to work at – learn about, perfect, and practice. It's not going to happen naturally because so many aspects of our lives work against it especially for students who spend long hours sitting at a desk hunched over and then possibly even longer hours leaning over their cell phones.

Mobile devices keep us all rounded forward, looking down for way too much time a day. It's no wonder that slumping is an epidemic – killing off focus, fun, connection, and vitality. When we are stooped or slouched, our muscles and ligaments struggle to keep balanced. This then leads to fatigue, back pain, headaches and lots of other problems. On the other hand, when you stand up straight and walk tall, you actually think, focus, and feel better. Practicing proper posture actually helps you feel calmer, more relaxed, and more physically and mentally able and stable.

Importance of Spinal Health

Spinal health is the basis of balance and stability not just in our bodies, but in our minds and feelings, too. So, how do we help our children practice proper posture and in so doing, lay a foundation for wellness and the unfolding of their full potential?

- Have your child checked out by a pediatrician.
- Notice how your child moves and relates to the world physically? Are they open and receptive, competent and curious, or withdrawn and worried, closed and careful? Understand that

movement and posture are not just physical, they represent one's mental-emotional state as well.

- Support them in activities that help them feel strong and capable in their bodies, which then translate to feeling confident in themselves as learners and contributors in the world.
- Model good posture. Discuss good alignment in all the joints of the body and why it's important. Notice other people's posture and invite your kids to mimic them to play with how different postures feel and make them feel.

Try Cross Crawl Exercises

If you want to help kids focus – prepare them to be successful with cross crawl exercises.

First, get them on their feet for 1 minute of doing a [cross-crawl movement](#) (We call it ***Monkey Wisdom*** 'cause it's more fun!).

Second, follow up with 1 min of a balancing pose or some other slow, intentional movement activity that requires mindfulness and focus. Some examples are:

- [yoga poses](#) such as tree pose or [downward dog](#)
- a breathing exercise such as [bumble bee breathing](#)
- a simple side stretch or walking slow motion.

Why? Because the cross-crawl movement diffuses stress, energizes the body, balances the brain, and stimulates positive chemical and neurotropic messengers; and the slow, intentional movement grounds the body, resets the nervous system for alert receptivity, and focuses the brain.

This is not magic or rocket science, it is simple physiology. While you rhythmically shift weight from one foot to the other, you are using your core muscles and lighting up your neo-cortex, which controls movement. You are also activating your spine, and your vestibular and proprioceptive systems, which forces the brain and body to both integrate and coordinate.

While you touch opposite arm and leg, you stimulate the two hemispheres of the brain to work together for whole brain thinking. And finally, with slow, mindful movement, you ground and center all that energy for optimal brain – body function.

ADVENTURE SKILLS
TOOLS FOR

 **BODY**  **MIND**  **HEART**

16 Self-Regulation Flash Cards
1 Adventure Skill Poster Page



Help children to develop impulse control, focus, well-being, and emotional resilience.



Improve focus and concentration with this [16 Self-Regulation Flash Card Set](#) in printable PDF format. This download includes health lessons and self-regulation techniques that combine activities based on creative movement, yoga, and Brain Gym(R).

References:

Popkin BM, D'Anci KE, Rosenberg IH. Water, hydration, and health. *Nutrition Reviews*. 2010;68(8):439–458.

Kempton MJ, Ettinger U, Foster R, Williams SCR, Calvert GA, Hampshire A, et al. Dehydration affects brain structure and function in healthy adolescents. *Human Brain Mapping*. 2011;32:71–79.

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Benton D, Burgess N. The effect of the consumption of water on the memory and attention of children. *Appetite*. 2009;53:143–146.

IMPORTANCE OF POSTURAL CONTROL FOR REACHING IN CHILDREN WITH CP



Recent research examined the importance of postural control for reaching in children with cerebral palsy. The authors wanted to determine why children with cerebral palsy exhibit small displacements during forward reaching in standing: is it because it is difficult to stabilize the lower limbs or is it because they can not control the movement of forward reaching?

In order to determine this, the study compared the motor performance of children with cerebral palsy and typically developing children, during anterior (forward) reach in standing.

Methodology of the Study

This cross-sectional study on postural control and forward reaching included 28 children, 14 with spastic cerebral palsy and 14 typical children, who were all evaluated by the Pediatric Reach Test and three-dimensional motion analysis.

Results of the Study on Forward Reaching

After data analysis the researchers determined the following:

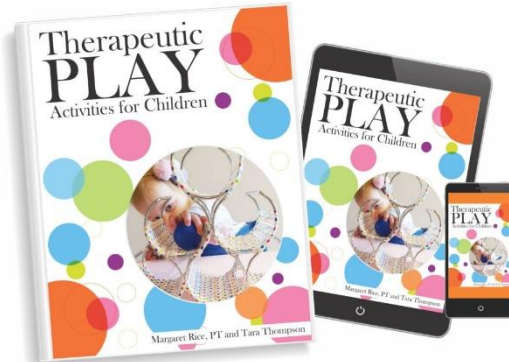
- Children with mild cerebral palsy show lower performance in the anterior reaching.
- Children with mild cerebral palsy exhibited difficulties with flexing the trunk and shoulder.
- Children with cerebral palsy performed anterior reaching with lower speed.
- Children with cerebral palsy needed more time to control their reaches.

Conclusion

The researchers concluded that children with cerebral palsy show lower anterior displacement and movement control and decreased bending of the trunk and flexing shoulders while reaching forward, indicating poor postural balance.

Reference: dos Santos Soares, L. M., Rozane, J. M. S. G., & de Paula Carvalho, R. (2019). Motor performance of children with cerebral palsy in anterior reach. *Clinical Biomechanics*.

Helpful Resource for Children with Cerebral Palsy



Therapeutic **PLAY** Activities for Children
Available for immediate download at YourTherapySource.com

If you need activity ideas, check out [Therapeutic PLAY Activities for Children](#). The digital download includes 100 play activity pages and 12 tip sheets. The play activities encourage the development of fine motor skills, bimanual skills, rolling, crawling, tall kneeling, standing balance and cruising with a strong focus on children with cerebral palsy.

Read more on Cerebral Palsy

[Motor Planning and Cerebral Palsy](#)

[Hand-Arm Bimanual Intensive Therapy and Motor Planning](#)

[50 Bimanual Activities of Daily Living and get a FREE Printable!](#)

[Research Review on CIMT and Bimanual Therapy for Children with Cerebral Palsy](#)

[CIMT, Bimanual Therapy, and OT Home Programs](#)

Read more on the Importance of Postural Control

[Effects of Stabilization Exercises on Balance in Children with Cerebral Palsy](#)

[Trunk Control Measurement Scale for Children](#)

[Postural Control, Gross Motor Development and Mealtime](#)

[Sitting Postural Control, Focused Attention and Cerebral Palsy](#)

[Functional Tasks and Postural Control](#)

Helpful Resources for Postural Control

[The Core Strengthening Exercise Program](#)

[The Core Strengthening Handbook](#)

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