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Developing gross motor skills: the vocabulary of movement

Early Learning Goal links: Handwriting plus Language for communication; Movement; Music; Imagination; Responding to experiences and expressing and communicating ideas.

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Ten ideas for developing the vocabulary of movement for handwriting

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Focus		Contexts	Associated vocabulary	
1	Round and round	Skip round and round (individually).circles, big, small, fast, sHold hands and move round and round as a group.this way, that way, clockMove an object round and round – use streamers, scarves, hoops.anticlockwise, rollMove arms and shoulders round and round.Move head round and round.		
2	Up and down	Move the whole body up and down. Climb up and down equipment. Move a streamer up and down. Move arms and shoulders up and down. Move head up and down.	high, low, above, below, stretch, curl, tall, short, reach, tiptoe, scrunch, tiny, ball	
8	Over and under	Move over and under equipment. Move whole body in waves as if going over and under objects. Make hands move under and over in waves.	up, down, high, low, through over, under	
4	Making curves	Make curves with the whole body, standing or lying on the floor. Move both hands and then one hand in curves as if stroking a pet. Let the hands dance in waves to music.	smooth, curly, stroking, soft, gentle, over, under	
6	Making zig-zags	Make jagged movements with the body (to music). Make jagged shapes with the whole body lying on the floor. Make jagged hand movements.	up, down, sharp, jagged, points	





⑤ Making zig-zags

Making spirals and figures of eight	Skip out from the centre of the hall in spirals and then skip in. Make both hands move in spiral movements. Make spirals with streamers and scarves. Dance in figures of eight.	out and in, in and out, round and round, snake, unfurl, uncurl, untwirl, unwind, coil, wrap up, wrap round, encircle, trap, cross over, middle	
Making backward, forward and sideways movements	Move in different directions in a large space. Move sideways like a crab. Move both arms backwards, forwards and sideways. Make the head move sideways in different ways (looking left and right or just moving the head from side to side in a rocking motion).	in front, behind, stepping carefully, scrabble, creep, run, jump, skip, sideways, forwards, backwards	⑦ Making backward, forward and sideways movements
Standing up and lying down	Stretch body as tall as possible. Lie on floor and make body as long as possible. Crouch down to make body as short as possible. Curl up on side to make body as small as possible.	stretch, curl, tight, long, longer, tall, taller, small, smaller, short, shorter	
Balancing and posture	Experiment with balancing on large equipment – low beams and benches. Walk along different line markings to keep balance. Walk with a bean bag on the head. Practise walking very tall as if someone is pulling up your head with a piece of string – then they let go and you collapse! Scrunch up shoulders and then relax them. Touch the chin on the chest and then lift the chin up.	tall, stretch, up, straight, pull up, look up, carefully, concentrate, use hands and arms, straight back, shoulders down, comfort, relax	
Sky writing	Develop sky writing and encourage the use of both hands. Practise in the air, on palms and on backs. Experiment with different types of movement as outlined above (e.g. zig-zag patterns, curvy patterns).	big, sweeping, imagine, stretch, reach, draw, outline, practise	 Image: Control of the second se
	figures of eight Making backward, forward and sideways movements Standing up and lying down Balancing and posture	figures of eightMake both hands move in spiral movements. Make spirals with streamers and scarves. Dance in figures of eight.Making backward, forward andMove in different directions in a large space. Move sideways like a crab.Move sidewaysMove both arms backwards, forwards and sideways. Move both arms backwards, forwards and sideways. Make the head move sideways in different ways (looking left and right or just moving the head from side to side in a rocking motion).Standing up and lying downStretch body as tall as possible. Lie on floor and make body as short as possible. Cruch down to make body as short as possible. Curl up on side to make body as small as possible.Balancing and postureExperiment with balancing on large equipment – low beams and benches. Walk along different line markings to keep balance. Walk with a bean bag on the head. Practise walking very tall as if someone is pulling up your head with a piece of string – then they let go and you collapse! Scrunch up shoulders and then relax them. Touch the chin on the chest and then lift the chin up.Sky writingDevelop sky writing and encourage the use of both hands. Practise in the air, on palms and on backs. Experiment with different types of movement as outlined above	figures of eightMake both hands move in spiral movements. Make spirals with streamers and scarves. Dance in figures of eight.round and round, snake, unfurl, uncurl, untwirl, unwind, coil, wrap up, wrap round, encircle, trap, cross over, middleMaking backward, forward andMove in different directions in a large space. Move both arms backwards, forwards and sideways. Move both arms backwards, forwards and sideways. Move both arms backwards, forwards and sideways. Make the head move sideways in different ways (looking left and right or just moving the head from side to side in a rocking motion).in front, behind, stepping carefully, scrabble, creep, run, jump, skip, sideways, forwards, backwardsStanding up and lying downStretch body as tall as possible. Crouch down to make body as long as possible. Curl up on side to make body as short as possible. Curl up on side to make body as small as possible.stretch, curl, tight, long, longer, tall, taller, small, smaller, short, shorterBalancing and postureExperiment with balancing on large equipment – low beams and benches. Walk with a bean bag on the head. Practise walking very tall as if someone is pulling up your head with a piece of string – then they let go and you collapse! Scrunch up shoulders and then relax them. Touch the chin on the chest and then lift the chin up.big, sweeping, imagine, stretch, reach, draw, outline, practiseSky writingDevelop sky writing and encourage the use of both hands. Practise in the air, on palms and on backs. Experiment with different types of movement as outlined abovebig, sweeping, imagine, stretch, reach, draw, outline, practise

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