

Developing Bilateral Skills

Bilateral coordination is the ability to use both sides of the body at the same time in a controlled and organised manner. There are various types of movements that are required to complete activities of daily living which are:



Symmetrical movements — Each leg or hand do the same action at the same time such as clapping hands or jumping.



Reciprocal movements — One hand or leg goes first and then the other repeats the movement rhythmically for example skipping, wheelbarrow walk or pedalling a bike.



Leading and supporting hand movements — One hand plays the supporting role while the other hand does more skilled work, such as cutting with scissors or threading beads.

Children with poor coordination of both sides of the body may have difficulty with two handed or footed activities and controlling one hand while the other hand is doing something else.

Activities to help develop bilateral co-ordination:

- ♦ Tearing paper
- ♦ Construction Toys
- ♦ Threading and Lacing
- ♦ Throwing and catching
- ♦ Sand or water play, e.g. filling, pouring



To develop bi-lateral skills children need to have good body awareness to co-ordinate their movements.

Body awareness is the ability to know where the body is in space and knowing where and how we move.

Activities to help develop body awareness

- Obstacle courses
- Playing on dynamic (moving) equipment- small trampoline, balance board, swings
- Pushing/ pulling weighted objects
- Swimming
- Wheelbarrow walking, animal walking



Crossing the midline is the ability to cross an imaginary line through the center of the body which divides it into right and left sides. Instead some children pass an object from one hand to the other rather than reach across their body. Midline crossing is important to help development awareness of the 2 sides of the body.

Activities:

- Throwing beanbags, hoops, balls where the child is sideways to the target.
- Board games that require the child to move his pieces around the entire board (e.g frustration, Ludo)
- Hand clapping games involving crossing midline, Simon says.
- Position objects or equipment so that the child must reach across midline to pick up an object.
- Keeping feet in the same spot on the floor, play games or drawings that require reaching across midline., i.e twister
- Drawing on a blackboard, draw a largest circle possible without moving feet or body to one side; draw lines from left to right