

## **Activities for Running**

Running is an important gross motor skill which develops during preschool years as children gain strength, balance and coordination. Running builds on earlier skills such as walking and can help children move more efficiently and confidently in different environments.

Running can help support:

**Gross motor development** - Running strengthens the large muscles of the legs, hips and core which helps improve endurance and power needed for active play.

**Balance and coordination** - Running requires coordinated movement of the arms and legs whilst maintaining balance, especially when starting, stopping or changing direction.

**Cardiovascular and respiratory fitness** - Running helps improve heart and lung health by encouraging children to stay active for longer periods of time.

**Motor planning and control** - Children learn to control speed, direction and timing of movements while running.

**Confidence and participation** - Developing running skills supports participation in playground games, sports and group activities which helps build confidence and social engagement.

## **Safety**

To ensure running activities are completed safely, the following should be considered:

### **Footwear**

- Children should wear well-fitting, closed-toe shoes with good grip
- Shoes should provide ankle and heel support
- Avoid running in socks only

### **Supervision**

- Running activities should always be supervised by an adult
- Clear instructions should be given, especially around stopping and slowing down safely

### **Environment**

- Use a large, open space free from obstacles
- Avoid slippery, wet, or uneven surfaces
- Ensure clear boundaries are marked to prevent collisions

<p><b>Standing on one leg</b></p>  <p>© www.physiotherapyexercises.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps improve single-leg balance and stability needed for running.</li> <li>Encourage your child to stand on one leg.</li> <li>Start with support if needed (hand hold or holding a stable surface).</li> <li>Progress by increasing the time held and gradually reducing support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Walking along a line</b></p>  <p>©Physiotools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps improve dynamic balance and control while moving, which supports running.</li> <li>Mark a line on the floor using tape.</li> <li>Encourage your child to walk along the line, placing one foot in front of the other.</li> <li>Progress by increasing the length of the line, reducing support, or adding a brief pause before continuing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Marching</b></p>  <p>©Physiotools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps develop leg lift, rhythm and coordination needed for running.</li> <li>Play music and encourage your child to march like a band on the spot, then march to a target e.g. a cone.</li> <li>Progress by asking your child to lift their knees to touch your hand, then gradually raise your hand slightly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Animal walks</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps to build strength, coordination and body awareness that support running skills.</li> <li>Encourage your child to move like different animals (e.g. bear walking, crab walk, elephant stomps, kangaroo jumps).</li> <li>Progress by combining two animal movements (e.g. bear walk then crab walk).</li> <li>More info on animal walks here: <a href="https://thechildrensphysio.com/2020/12/28/animal-walking-exercises/">https://thechildrensphysio.com/2020/12/28/animal-walking-exercises/</a></li> </ul>

<p><b>Musical statues</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to improve coordination, rhythm, endurance and control when stopping and starting.</li> <li>• Play music and encourage your child to dance around the space.</li> <li>• Stop the music and ask your child to "freeze" and stay still like a statue.</li> <li>• Progress by changing speed of music, increasing time spent frozen or adding different freeze positions (e.g. feet together or standing on one leg).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Run to a cone</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to practise running to a target with control and listening to instructions.</li> <li>• Set out different coloured cones or objects in a clear space.</li> <li>• Say "Ready, steady, go" and encourage your child to run to a cone/object and run back.</li> <li>• Progress by calling a named colour (e.g. "Run to the blue cone") or increasing distance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Balloon volleyball / Bubble popping</b></p>  <p><small>© www.physiotherapyexercises.com</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to improve coordination, visual tracking, and movement timing.</li> <li>• Encourage your child to move/run to tap a balloon or pop bubbles before they touch the ground.</li> <li>• Progress by increasing the space, encouraging quicker movement or changing directions frequently.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Obstacle course</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to improve coordination, balance and movement control while encouraging running.</li> <li>• Set up a simple course using cones, steps or soft play equipment.</li> <li>• Encourage your child to move through the course, including short sections of running between different obstacles.</li> <li>• Progress this by increasing the distance or adding additional obstacles.</li> </ul>