

Exercises for climbing stairs

Climbing stairs is an important functional skill that can also help support a child's overall development and independence.

Climbing stairs can help to support:

Lower body strength – Climbing stairs helps to strengthen the muscles of the legs and hips which are needed for walking, running, jumping and climbing.

Balance and coordination – Stair climbing requires your child to shift weight from one leg to the other while maintaining balance. This helps to improve coordination, postural control, and stability.

Single-leg control – Each step requires your child to support their body weight on one leg. This skill is essential for other activities such as kicking, hopping, and running.

Motor planning and body awareness – Navigating stairs helps children learn how to plan movements, judge step height, and understand where their body is in space.

Independence and confidence – Being able to safely climb stairs allows children to move more independently in their environment and helps to build confidence in their physical abilities.

Safety

Footwear

- Children should wear well-fitting, closed toe shoes with non-slip soles
- Shoes should provide good support

Supervision

- Children of this age should always be closely supervised by an adult when climbing stairs
- The adult should stay within arm's reach especially during early stages of practice
- Hand or handrail support should be used and can be gradually reduced as confidence and skills improve

Environment

- Stairs should be stable, well-lit and free of obstacles
- Try to avoid distractions during practice

Stepping up and over a step



Helps to improve leg strength, balance and ability to shift weight between legs

Position your child in front of a small step.

Encourage them to practice stepping up with one leg and stepping down with the other one.

Make this more challenging by increasing the height of the step and by alternating the leading leg.

Stomp/marching



Helps improve single-leg control and balance.

Position your child in standing.

Encourage them to stomp or march on the spot alternating their legs focusing on getting their knees as high as possible

Use bubbles or targets on the floor to make it more engaging.

Obstacle course



Helps improve motor planning, balance, and confidence.

Set up cushions, pillows, and other obstacles to step over or onto.

Encourage stepping up, stepping down and moving around obstacles.

Provide hand hold assistance initially if required before progressing to letting them do it independently.

Reach and Squat



Helps improve lower limb strength as well as control for pushing through legs.

Have your child reach up for a toy and then squat down to place it on the floor.

Progress by encouraging them to hold the squat for a few seconds.

Single-leg standing

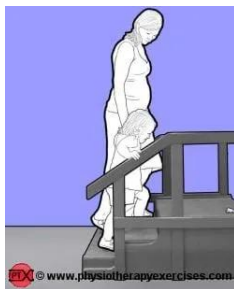


Helps to improve balance and ability to support bodyweight through one leg.

Encourage your child to practice standing on one leg, pretending to be a flamingo. Use hand support initially if needed.

Progress this by increasing the amount of time spent standing on one leg and removing hand support.

Assisted stair practice



As your child becomes more confident you can progress to practicing on actual stairs.

Position your child at the bottom of some steps and encourage them to climb the stairs whilst holding onto your hand for support. Initially, have them put two feet on every step before progressing to alternating feet.

Slowly build up the number of steps that your child is climbing.

To progress, reduce the handhold support slowly and encourage them to use the handrail instead.