

Crossing the midline

What is crossing the midline?

- The body's midline is an imaginary line down the centre of our body. The midline divides the body into left and right sides.
- Crossing the midline means reaching across the middle of the body from left to right, and right to left, with our arms and legs.
- This allows us to perform tasks on the opposite side of our body.
- When we can cross our midline, it means we can use both sides of our brain to coordinate smooth and controlled movements.



Why is being able to cross the midline important?

Crossing the midline is important for many everyday tasks, including:

- Writing without having to switch hands
- Putting on shoes and socks
- Hitting a ball with a bat
- Sitting cross legged on the floor
- Completing both sides of a puzzle using the dominant hand
- Tracking across the page from left to right while reading
- Self-care skills, including dressing and brushing teeth and hair
- Gross motor skills required to play ball games

If a child avoids crossing the midline it can delay the development of a dominant hand. This means that both hands tend to develop to similar levels, but neither to the level of skill of a true dominant hand. This can impact on learning to write and perform other fine motor skills like cutting, pasting and drawing.

How can I tell if my child is having trouble crossing their midline?

Children having trouble crossing their midline may:

- Swap hands while writing, drawing, painting, or colouring – leading to poorer fine motor skills than a child with clear hand dominance
- Rotate their trunk when reaching across the body to avoid crossing the midline
- Have difficulty following text when reading
- Have difficulty with gross motor patterns requiring both sides of the body, like crawling, skipping or star jumps
- Use different feet to kick a ball with no clear preference

How can I help my child learn to cross their midline?

Practicing activities which require the use of both sides of the body at the same time is a great way to improve crossing the midline. Some ideas include:

- Fine motor activities like threading beads and Lego
- Sorting games, e.g. sort coloured pom poms or buttons into different containers located on both sides of the body. For extra fine motor practice use tongs or tweezers
- Popping bubbles
- Craft activities including cutting and pasting and origami
- Art activities like painting or drawing with chalk on a vertical surface. Try drawing rainbows or infinity symbols (∞)
- Playing games like Simon Says, Hokey Pokey and Twister
- Making patterns with streamers or ribbons in front of the body (try holding the ribbon with both hands together and making a figure 8, or one in each hand)
- Setting up puzzles in a way that requires reaching across the midline to collect the pieces
- Sitting back-to-back and passing a ball or balloon to each other side to side
- Rolling or throwing balls towards buckets on the left and right side of the body



- Gross motor activities that require two hands, like catching a ball, riding a bike or scooter
- Driving toy cars around a track in the shape of an infinity symbol (∞)
- Games and activities to develop core strength and balance, for example animal movements (e.g. jump like a kangaroo, hop like a frog, slither like a snake)
- Playing with toys while lying on their tummy on the floor - this makes it harder to rotate the trunk to avoid crossing the midline
- Balloon games like "Keepy Uppy" - try not to let the balloon touch the ground
- Helping with chores like wiping down the table, sweeping or washing the car
- Yoga and Dancing - there are lots of great videos for kids on YouTube eg:
 - Cosmic Kids Yoga - <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>
 - Go Noodle - <https://www.youtube.com/c/GoNoodle>
 - DJ Raphi - <https://www.youtube.com/c/DJRaphi>
 - The Learning Station - <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheLearningStation>

