

Upper Body Activities

***Swinging and hanging** – Have opportunities available for children to hang and swing, this means they are holding their own weight with their arms. Bars, ropes, poles and twigs are great for this. If the child does not like the feel of the rope, cut the end of an old sock and put it over where they touch the rope.

Idea: Place a box to one side of the rope and a landing mat on the other and see if the children can swing from the box and land on the mat.

***Monkey Bars** – Swinging on monkey bars is a great way to develop upper body development, it also introduces the skill of 'brachiating (hand over hand)' and the correct grip (thumb under).

Climbing – Helps with upper body development and also helps to incorporate in the legs – climbing often means cross patterning. Tie a rope up the top of the slide or slope and children have to pull themselves up. Use a ladder, cargo netting, climb trees.

Wheel barrows – Holding the child's legs (above the knee), the child is holding their weight with their upper body and walking with their hands to move forward. This is also great to help stimulate the vestibular (balance) system as their head is lower than their body.

Row-row your boat – In pairs, children hold hands and gently pull each other back and forth using their upper body.

Animal Walks – Using different animal walks often mean holding ones weight with the upper body or using gross motor skills e.g. try walking like a bear, frog leap, puppy dog walk, bunny hop, seal walk, worm crawl, crab walk

Challenge Course – Create a challenge course where the children have to do the whole thing like an animal on their hands and feet. Make them go under and over things, through, up and down things. They could also do it as a bunny hop.

Crawling – Not all children will crawl but it is always a good thing to go back to. Make tunnels to crawl through, incorporate it into challenge courses, games or even use it as an alternative locomotion to get from A to B.

Tug of war – If you do not have a rope use a sheet or parachute. With younger children have them sitting on the ground – this makes it a bit simpler and also means they are focusing on just using upper body strength.

Pulling – Toy wagons with ropes or handles, washing baskets with a rope, pull a friend around on a blanket or towel.

Hand push-of-war – Have two children kneeling opposite each other. They hold their hands up in front of one another and push against each other's hands. For a further challenge ask the children to try this standing on one foot. See who can hold their balance for the longest. Have mats or soft materials around for falling on.

Bridges and Tunnels – Get the children to make a bridge with their body and then another child can go through the tunnel. Get all of the children to line up and make bridges. Take turns to go through the tunnels.

Clock faces – Draw a clock with a centre spot on the concrete. Ask the children to put their feet on the centre point and their hands at 12 o'clock. Get them to keep their feet still and move their hands around to 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock etc. Get them to always go clockwise at first.

Swiss Ball Roll up – Get the children to lie over the Swiss ball with their hands on the floor- see if they can walk their hands backwards and forwards.

Dumper Truck – Get the children to go down onto their hands and knees. Place a bean bag or something small on the child's back. They can move around like a truck and when they want to dump their load they lift their hips into the air so that their hands and feet are the only body parts left on the floor.

Bunny Hop Races – Have races to collect different items and bring back to the start.

Balloon/balloon volleyball – Set up a net between two points. Get the children into 2 groups and play volleyball with a balloon or a balloonee. The aim is to keep the ball off the ground.

Ten pin bowling – with a heavier ball. Fill 10 x 1 litre empty plastic milk bottles with small stones. Stand them up like the skittles at a bowling alley. Get a heavier ball and ask the children to roll the ball down and knock over the bottles.

Scooter Board

- Children lie on the board on their tummy and pull themselves along.
- Children sit on the board and use their hands to move themselves around.
- Lying on a scooter board children use a rope tied from two points low to the ground to pull themselves along with their arms, a skate board could be used instead of a scooter board. This activity is also encouraging cross patterning with the arms.

Parachute

- Making waves- Hold the parachute at waist height with both hands and shake it up and down vigorously and watch the waves that are formed. Make big waves and small waves.
- Pop corn- throw 6-10 small balls into the parachute and have the group pop them in the air. Encourage them to try to keep them on the parachute.
- Tug of War- Divide the group into two sides. Each side pulls on the parachute as in a regular tug of war.

* If the children are less confident or younger, you could put a box under them to stand on for support. Slowly remove as they gain confidence.