

# Supporting Physical Development Milestones with Start Well Stories: A Journey from Birth to Five

Physical development is crucial in early childhood and it helps lay the foundation for all other learning.

By pairing Start Well Stories with indoor and outdoor activities, early years practitioners can create rich opportunities for babies and young children to refine their gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and overall vestibular development.

From tummy time to running, and from grasping to throwing, physical development happens in stages.

Here, we explore physical milestones from birth to five years, paired with story-based activities designed to support children's growth.

## **Key**

Outdoor activities 

Indoor activities 

# 0-6 MONTHS

## EARLY MOTOR MILESTONES



At this stage, babies are developing basic core strength, neck control, and beginning to explore their surroundings.

### Indoor Activity 2



#### The Animal Boogie by Debbie Harter



**Activity:** Gently move baby's arms or legs to the rhythm of the song, swaying them like animals. This promotes vestibular development (sense of balance) and builds coordination.

### Indoor Activity 1



#### Baby Touch and Feel: Animals by DK



**Activity:** During tummy time on a soft blanket, read the book aloud while encouraging babies to reach and feel soft objects, such as fabric or animal-themed toys. This encourages neck strength and visual tracking.

### Outdoor Activity 2



#### The Animal Boogie by Debbie Harter



**Activity:** Play "Animal Boogie" outside and encourage babies to sway, stretch, and gently move, helping with vestibular development and increasing awareness of their body movements in space.

### Outdoor Activity 1



#### Baby Touch and Feel: Animals by DK



**Activity:** Set up a sensory exploration area outdoors with different textures (grass, sand, leaves). Allow babies to feel the textures during tummy time, promoting tactile exploration and neck control.

### Physical Milestones

- Neck control: Strengthening head and neck muscles.
- Tummy time: Lifting head, improving upper body strength.
- Rolling from back to tummy.
- Grasping and reaching for objects.

# 6-12 MONTHS

## DEVELOPING BASIC MOVEMENT SKILLS



As babies develop more control over their bodies, they begin to crawl, reach, and roll more fluidly.

### Indoor Activity 1



**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**  
by Bill Martin Jr.

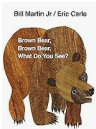


**Activity:** As you read the book, encourage babies to reach for the animals on the page. Place toys around the room to encourage crawling, supporting gross motor development and eye-hand coordination.

### Outdoor Activity 1



**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**  
by Bill Martin Jr.



**Activity:** Spread the book on the grass and encourage babies to crawl toward it, looking for animals or colours in their surroundings, stimulating both visual tracking and gross motor skills.

### Indoor Activity 2



**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**  
by Eric Carle



**Activity:** Create a crawling challenge where babies crawl to "eat" fruit-themed toys or colored objects. This enhances core strength and encourages babies to reach and grasp.

### Outdoor Activity 2



**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**  
by Eric Carle



**Activity:** Create an obstacle course with soft items that babies must crawl over or under, stimulating core development and flexibility as they move like the caterpillar.

### Physical Milestones

- Crawling: Strengthening core and arm muscles.
- Eye-hand coordination: Reaching for and grasping toys.
- Rolling from back to stomach.

# 12-18 MONTHS

## REFINING MOVEMENT SKILLS



At this stage, children are starting to walk, balance, and development more grip strength.

### Indoor Activity 1



**Dear Zoo**  
by Rod Campbell



**Activity:** Encourage toddlers to lift and place toys that match the animals in the book. This promotes shoulder control, elbow strength, and grip development.

### Outdoor Activity 1



**Dear Zoo**  
by Rod Campbell



**Activity:** Take toddlers outside and set up a 'zoo hunt' for animal-themed toys. Encourage them to lift, carry, and place the toys in bins, which supports grip strength, coordination, and gross motor skills.

### Indoor Activity 2



**The Gruffalo**  
by Julia Donaldson  
and Axel Scheffler



**Activity:** Pretend to be the animals from the story. Encourage toddlers to stomp like the Gruffalo, jump over obstacles, or balance on one foot. This helps develop balance and gross motor coordination.

### Outdoor Activity 2



**The Gruffalo**  
by Julia Donaldson  
and Axel Scheffler



**Activity:** Go outdoors on a Gruffalo hunt! Set up a course where children walk, jump, and climb over natural obstacles. This enhances balance and gross motor skills.

### Physical Milestones

- Walking: Beginning to take independent steps.
- Climbing: Encouraging climbing on safe structures.
- Holding objects: Improved grasping and finger dexterity.
- Standing: Building strength and balance.



# 18-24 MONTHS

## INCREASED CONTROL AND REFINING MOVEMENTS



Children at this stage start to show mastery over basic movements, such as jumping, climbing, and throwing.

### Indoor Activity 1



#### We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen



**Activity:** Create an indoor obstacle course with climbing and crawling sections. Encourage children to jump or skip over puddles, mimicking the movement in the story, which helps refine gross motor skills.

### Outdoor Activity 1



#### We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen



**Activity:** Set up a "Bear Hunt" in the garden with different textures and obstacles. Encourage children to crawl, jump, or run over surfaces like grass, puddles, or logs, helping develop balance, strength, and coordination.

### Indoor Activity 2



#### Handa's Surprise by Eileen Browne



**Activity:** Let children reach and carry fruit toys, like in the story. As they move around the room, encourage them to walk, jump, and balance while carrying objects, which supports fine motor and gross motor development.

### Outdoor Activity 2



#### Handa's Surprise by Eileen Browne



**Activity:** Hide fruit around the playground and have children run or crawl to find them. This enhances gross motor skills and improves hand-eye coordination as they manipulate the objects.

### Physical Milestones

- **Jumping:** Learning to jump with both feet off the ground.
- **Throwing:** Developing the ability to throw and catch.
- **Balance:** Refining ability to walk on uneven surfaces.

# 2-3 YEARS

## MASTERY OF MOTOR MOVEMENT



At this stage, children begin to engage in more complex movement patterns, including running, skipping, and climbing confidently.

### Indoor Activity 1



**Wonkey Donkey**  
by Craig Smith



**Activity:** Children can gallop, jump, or dance to the rhythm of the book. These movements help develop balance, coordination, and gross motor skills.

### Outdoor Activity 1



**Wonkey Donkey**  
by Craig Smith



**Activity:** Encourage children to gallop, hop, or dance outside, mimicking the wonky donkey's movements in an open space. This helps children develop their coordination and gross motor skills.

### Indoor Activity 2



**Owl Babies**  
by Martin Waddell



**Activity:** Have children flap their arms like owl wings or balance on one foot while pretending to be owls. These movements strengthen their core and improve vestibular control.

### Outdoor Activity 2



**Owl Babies**  
by Martin Waddell



**Activity:** Pretend to be owl babies in the garden. Have children jump from one spot to another, or stand and balance on tree stumps, enhancing their balance, core strength, and motor coordination.

### Physical Milestones

- Running: Mastery of running with more controlled movement.
- Skipping: Beginning to skip.
- Climbing: Confidence in climbing higher structures.

# 3-5 YEARS

## ADVANCED COORDINATION AND MASTERY



At this age, children engage in more complex activities such as skipping, running long distances, and performing physical tasks with greater control.

### Indoor Activity 1



**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**  
by Bill Martin Jr

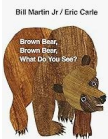


**Activity:** Set up an indoor scavenger hunt where children have to find colored items, jump, or skip between them. This helps reinforce color recognition while developing gross motor skills.

### Outdoor Activity 1



**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**  
by Bill Martin Jr



**Activity:** Take children outdoors and have them jump, run, and balance while finding objects that match the colors in the book. This enhances gross motor development and improves coordination.

### Indoor Activity 2



**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**  
by Eric Carle



**Activity:** Encourage children to perform crawling or jumping actions, imitating the caterpillar's movements. Set up obstacles they can jump over or crawl under, helping develop balance and core strength.

### Outdoor Activity 2



**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**  
by Eric Carle



**Activity:** Create a nature scavenger hunt where children jump, crawl, and explore. These activities strengthen core strength, balance, and fine motor skills.

### Physical Milestones

- Skipping: Mastery of skipping.
- Throwing and Catching: Ability to throw and catch with more precision.
- Climbing: Confidence climbing and jumping from higher structures.

By combining indoor and outdoor activities with engaging Start Well Stories, early years practitioners can foster a dynamic and exciting environment, where children grow both physically and cognitively.

From strengthening core muscles to developing fine motor control, these activities offer developmental milestones that promote a love for movement, storytelling, and exploration.