

# Upper body

Activities that use the upper body are great for developing strength and coordination in the core, shoulders and arms, plus strength and dexterity of the hands and fingers.

Some upper body activities, like monkey bars and climbing, contain an element of risk. Children are born to take risks, it stretches their abilities so they can learn new things. Through challenge and risky play children learn about courage, perseverance, and decision-making.

Many of these active play ideas also help develop the vestibular system, body awareness, spatial awareness, crossing the midline (brain development), and social and emotional connection.

Children develop their large muscles before they can move on to fine motor skills. For instance, the upper body needs to develop strength and coordination before a child can work on handwriting.

***“Put down the pencil and go play on the monkey bars.”***

*(Connell & McCarthy, M is for monkey bars, 2011)*

Core strength also effects a child’s posture and their ability to sit up straight at a desk once they start school.



# Upper body

## Activity ideas

### Tug of war

Tied to a pole for young children.

### Parachute games

### Wheelbarrow races (ensure backs are straight)

### Crawling

Tunnels, box used as a tunnel, hut play, crawling games like Hungry Hippos, Dragon Tails, Nudge-a-ball, Dump Trucks.

### Monkey bars

Swinging and hanging, possum walk.

### Climbing trees

Rope ladders and abseiling.

### Crab walking

Upwards facing on hands and feet.

### Caterpillar walking

On hands and feet, knees off the ground, hands move forward in small steps as far as possible, then feet follow.

### Bear walk

Downward facing on hands and feet.

### Variations of walks/crawling

Around a corner, backwards, zig-zag through cones, in a line with others, as a race, under a table, up and down a hill, and through the playground.

### Scooter boards

Tie a rope between two posts with children lying on their backs on scooter boards, pulling themselves along the rope. Children lie on their tummy on scooter board, pushing along the ground with their arms.

### For babies

Tummy time and floor play.

