

Bilateral Co-ordination

Bilateral Integration: this is a neurological process where the sensations from both sides of the body are integrated together. It is a foundation skill for bilateral co-ordination. This is not directly observable.

Bilateral co-ordination: is the ability to use both sides of the body together in a smooth, simultaneous and co-ordinated manner. This is observable. There are two types:

- ‘Symmetrical’ - both hands/sides of the body carrying out the same movement patterns e.g. clapping, using handlebars to steer a bike, using a rolling pin, volleyball etc.
- ‘Asymmetrical’ – using two hands/sides for different functions, with one hand carrying out the major manipulations of the activity and the other hand assisting. e.g. using a knife and fork, holding the page whilst the other hand writes, holding the paper whilst the other hand cuts with scissors, using your legs to peddle a bike etc.

Development of bilateral co-ordination contributes to the establishing a dominant hand and the ability to cross the midline of the body. Children with difficulty in crossing the midline typically use each hand only on its side of the body eg. when picking up an object with the non-dominant hand and transfer it to the other hand rather than reach across the midline with the dominant hand. This can make movements look rather awkward.

Gross Motor Bilateral Co-ordination Activities

- **Bubble Pop Method:** Pop bubbles by accurately clapping hands together
Variation: Blow bubbles to both sides of the body to address midline crossing, tip and balance on a rocking board while clapping, poke bubbles with pointed index fingers. Comment: Ensure your child tracks the bubbles with his eyes.
- **Balloon Fun:** Using both hands together encourage your child to throw the balloon into the air and catch it. Variation: Keep balloon afloat by repeatedly hitting it with open hands, bat it repeatedly with both hands clasped together in one large ‘fist’

- **Ball activities and games:** Encourage ball activities that require serving with one hand and hitting with the other (tennis, badminton), bouncing with one hand, then the other to various rhythms of increasing speed and dribbling with alternating hands.
- **Jumping Method:** your child jumps with two feet together, forwards, sideways, and backwards.
Variation: Try clapping whilst jumping over line or rope. Sack races – child jumps with legs and lower trunk in a pillowcase or sack in all directions
- **Bouncing Equipment:** Large gym ball Method: Sit on the ball with your feet flat on the floor and arms on your lap. Start off by bouncing up and down on the ball then try ‘bounce, bounce, stop’. Variation: ‘Space hopper’, Trampoline, jumping on the bed!
- **Pushing/pulling :** Sit on the floor with your feet flat and knees bent, back to back with a friend. Try to push each other over.
Variation: Try to stand up by pushing against each other’s back- dig your heels into the ground; in high kneeling, place your palms on those of your friends and try to push against each other; tug of war.

