

the school years toolkit

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Shoulder stability

Shoulder stability is the ability to tense the muscles around the shoulder, in order to stabilise the joint for use. This then allows smooth, free and co-ordinated arm movements for activity.

If you have used this Advice Sheet and not seen improvement after four months, please contact CYPIT.

What you may see

A child with difficulties with shoulder stability may demonstrate:

- Poor handwriting
- Poor scissor skills
- Difficulties with dressing and undressing
- Difficulties using a knife and fork
- Difficulties manipulating tools and objects
- Difficulties with ball games
- Difficulties with washing and drying self.

Strategies and Advice

- **Painting or drawing** on a vertical surface by drawing onto paper secured to the wall or to an easel. The surface available to the child for drawing should cover the region slightly below their shoulder height and up to just out of their reach.
- **Elevated games** such as darts, basketball, volleyball.
- **Swimming.**
- **Lifting heavy objects** eg pouring water from one container to another, lifting a toy box etc. Make sure that when lifting, the child bends their knees and avoids hurting their back.
- **Using playground equipment** such as monkey bars, climbing frames, etc.
- **Encourage the child to lie on their tummy** with their head propped up on their hands, elbows resting on the floor to read or watch TV. The child can also prop on one elbow while drawing/playing with the other hand.
- **Carry out activities** in four-point kneeling such as puzzles, drawing, etc.
- **From four-point kneeling**, ask the child to lift the left arm and left leg and then pick up objects from the left side and place them in a container on the right side. Then swap over to the other side!

Section 5 **advice** sheets

- **Tug of War** while standing, lying on tummy or high kneeling. Use a rope or hands and try to pull your partner over a line.
- **Weightbearing through the arms:** place the pelvis/hips on a small box or stool and support the body with straight arms. Once this feels easier you can support the body with one arm while carrying out activities with the other.
- **Push-ups:** encourage the child to lie on their tummy and then push themselves up on their feet and hands. Ask them to lower their chin to the floor by bending their arms at the elbow and keeping the body straight. You can make this easier for the child by letting them do push ups while on their knees instead of feet.
- **Digging** in the garden.
- **Scooter board races:** ask the child to lie on their tummy on a scooter board and propel it around an obstacle course by using their arms. A scooter board is a piece of wood on four wheels and should be large enough for your child to lie on with their trunk supported.
- **Kaleidoscope:** look through this toy but hold it up towards the light/sky.
- **Commando crawling:** place some mats and rugs on the floor for the child to crawl underneath but keeping their tummy on the floor.
- **Crawling:** through tunnels, around obstacle courses, over cushions, animal crawls.
- **Balance ball:** the child needs to be in a crawling position and you then place their hands on a ball just in front of them. They need to push the ball away from their body as far as they can, while keeping both hands on the ball and not losing their balance. Then roll it back to the starting point.
- **Throwing:** large balls over-arm.
- **Magnetic Fishing:** tie a magnet to a piece of string and fix it to a piece of rod or a stick. Then secure some magnets to fish-shaped cards. Place the fish on the floor and ask the child to stand next to them. The child moves the fish from the floor to a table next to them using the fishing rod. Someone can sit at the table and help the fish off the child's rod once it has reached the correct position.