

the school years toolkit

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Motor planning

Motor planning is our ability to have an idea of how we want to move, to plan how we are going to achieve that movement and then execute that movement. Another word for motor planning is Praxis, which is where the word Dyspraxia comes from – a dysfunction of praxis.

We need good praxis in order to plan and execute movement in response to constantly changing everyday situations.

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

What you may see

The child may demonstrate:

- Poor grading of movements
- Poor timing and sequencing
- Poor anticipation eg catching a ball
- Often trips, falls or bumps into things
- Poor at construction activities, including writing and scissor skills
- Difficulties with carrying out every day, self-care tasks such as dressing
- Difficulties learning new skills, needs more practice than peers
- Difficulty copying motor movements.

Strategies and Advice

Help the child identify the steps needed to begin and accomplish the task. Have them repeat the directions and if possible write them down.

- Ask the child questions about what they are going to do and how they are going to do it when they are within the environment that they need to do something.
- Encourage the child to verbalise what they are doing while they are carrying out the activity.
- Give the child a short assignment so that they can feel instant success by completing the task. Keep a track of the length of time they can focus on a task and structure the assignment so that it can be completed in that length of time.
- Give one direction at a time. After one action is successfully completed, add another action.

Section 5 advice sheets

- Help the child physically move through the action so that they can experience the correct movement, for example hand-over-hand.
- Art projects that require assembling parts to create something – this will challenge the child’s ability to develop strategies for organising parts as they relate to the whole. Creative activities can also build on a child’s self- esteem. Make sure they receive lots of praise for any creation.
- Reviewing how to play the game before actually playing it. Demonstrate verbally, as well as visually.
- Marking the boundaries of the game/task. For example, rope, yarn, masking tape or chalk can be used to mark a game circle or start and finish lines.
- Using signals for control e.g. two blows of a whistle to signal “freeze”.
- Stopping action between turns in order to get everyone’s attention and therefore regain attention.
- Rehearse what the child has learned on a regular basis.
- Start with basic two step activities, building up to three to five steps. Use number and temporal concepts to reinforce sequencing eg “first” and “last”, 1 – 2 –3.
- Encourage checking off steps as they are accomplished eg placing a symbol card in a “done box”.
- Always sequence left – right and up – down and encourage order e.g. line up objects to be counted.