

Motivated to Move

Overview

During the first three years, infants and toddlers are naturally motivated to move so they can build their physical abilities and explore their world. One of the best things you can do to support infant and toddler development is provide lots of time for physical play. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when planning for physical play experiences:

- Create a safe environment so infants and toddlers can freely move and explore.
- Interact, play along, and model different ways to move.
- Make sure children can access materials independently.
- Use music to set the tone and invite children to creatively move their bodies.
- Provide mirrors so children can observe themselves moving.
- Thoughtfully select materials that invite children to move in a variety of ways and at a level that supports their development.

Physical Play & Development

Cognitive development

Infants and toddlers are in the sensorimotor stage of cognitive development, so physical play experiences are critical to learning.

Physical development

Physical play experiences give infants and toddlers a chance to gain control of basic body actions, build strength and develop coordination.

Social/emotional development

Through physical play infants and toddlers bond with caregivers and peers, gain a sense of trust, and develop self-awareness, autonomy and confidence.

Language development

When coupled with music, storytelling, and interaction physical play enriches opportunities for infants and toddlers to build language.