

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

Motor Planning

Motor planning is the ability to conceive, organise and carry out a sequence of unfamiliar actions. Children can have difficulties at one or all of these stages. Motor planning difficulties may affect the upper limbs and hands (fine motor), body and lower limbs (gross motor), mouth and tongue movements (oral-motor), and/or eyes (oculomotor).

The following strategies may be useful for your child in learning new activities:

- Have someone explain the aims and outcomes of the activity prior to attempting it. If necessary, break the activity down into parts and explain each step and ask your child to repeat the instruction back to you.
- Use demonstration as method for learning the new action. Modelling the activity or using hand over hand techniques allow the child to understand the body movement needed. Hand over hand help (holding your hands over your child's hands while you do the activity) could also be beneficial in order for them to "feel" the correct motor pattern
- **Repetition is a key** and if an activity is difficult the first time, children can be discouraged to try it again, but for a child with motor planning difficulties practice is crucial.
- A child with motor planning difficulties is likely to have more trouble with sporting activities because there is so much variation that could happen within the one skill. Try practising specific skills in different ways to demonstrate the variation. For example after your child has mastered catching a ball being thrown to them, practice catching a ball that is bounced to them before they catch it, as the skill will feel new again.
- Support your child to use cognitive strategies and self-checking strategies such as:
 - **Goal** – what is it that you are going to do? e.g. Catch a ball
 - **Plan** – how are you going to do it? e.g. How do I need to stand?, How do I need to position my feet and arms to catch the ball?
 - **Do** – Try to complete the activity
 - **Check** – How did it go? Do I need to change anything for next time?



Some activities that may help with motor planning include:

- Play doh and putty activities
- Activity books with dot-to-dots, mazes
- Origami
- Jigsaws
- Obstacle course
- Animal walks
- Skipping with a rope
- Soldier jumps (one arm and opposite leg, then swap)
- Ball games



- Motor sequences are a fun way of developing motor planning based on activities your child may be able to do. Make up any sequence of activities as long as you know your child can perform the individual steps (i.e. don't ask them to jump, hop, clap if they can't hop!).

For example:

- Jump, clap hands, touch your head
- Stamp feet, touch shoulders, sit down
- Clap hands, touch ears, hop, turn around
- Or general sequences:
 - Hop, jump, hop, jump
 - Hop, jump, clap, hop, jump, clap
 - 2 jumps, turn, clap, 2 jumps, turn, clap
- You could also use tools e.g. a ball (catch ball, turn in a circle, throw back. Catch ball, turn in a circle, touch head, throw ball back), on a line, using a hoop.

As your child improves, add more items/steps into the motor sequence to challenge them or ask them to make up a sequence for you to do.



Together with you, in your local community