



Crossing the Midline

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What is the midline

The body's midline is an imaginary line down the centre of the body that divides the body into left and right. Crossing the midline is when we move our arm or leg across the middle of our body to perform a task.

Before midline crossing is well established, children are usually observed to engage in tasks on only one side of their body. E.g. reaching for an item placed on their left side with only their left hand.

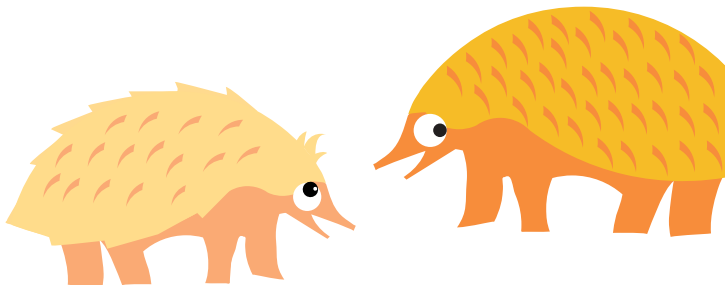
Why is the midline important?

Crossing the body's midline is an important developmental skill needed for many everyday tasks such as: writing, reaching towards your foot to put on a shoe and sock with both hands and hitting a ball with a bat.

The midline also promotes the coordination and communication of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. It also encourages bilateral coordination, the process of developing a dominant hand, and development of fine-motor skills. Midline activities also develops a child's gross motor skills such as coordination and balance.

Observable difficulties with crossing the midline:

- Switching hands during an activity. E.g. writing, cutting
- Rotating the trunk instead of reaching across body for objects on the opposite side
- Difficulty performing age-appropriate self-care tasks independently.
- Have poor pencil skills
- Use different feet to kick a ball (mixed dominance)
- Have difficulty coordinating gross motor patterns. E.g. crawling, skipping, star-jumps





Colors

White paper

Pink flower

Brown chocolate

Black rabbit

Red shoes

Blue butterfly

Yellow duck

Green rubber duck

Blue teddy bear

Orange teddy bear

Purple storkbook

My day

How to cross the midline:

1. First start with bilateral coordination activities. Move both sides of the body symmetrically such as pushing or pulling objects. For example, completing “head and shoulders, knees and toes” with both hands
2. When the children have mastered bilateral coordination, begin crossing the midline. For example, have them mirror your movements. Stand in front of them, ask them to copy you and have your hand touch the opposite shoulder, then have your hands touch the opposite hip.
3. While marching the children are able to tap their opposite knee. For example, placing their right hand on left knee and then opposite- then march backwards and complete, or complete with eyes closed?.
4. As coordination progresses, introduce activities that require a strong hand and assistive hand. For example, using scissors with a dominant hand and having the assistive hand move the paper

Activities to improve crossing the midline:

- Craft: Threading beads, cutting and pasting, folding paper
- Finger Puppets: Placing finger puppets on one hand and encouraging the child to remove the puppets with the opposite hand
- Blocks and Percussion: Getting the child to bang blocks or percussion instruments together in their midline
- Playing *Twister*
- Playing *Simon Says*
- Streamers: Getting the child to make streamers or ribbon circles and patterns in front of their midline. Use two hands together or one in each hand
- Marching games using their arms and legs
- Stickers: Placing stickers on one arm and encouraging the child to remove them with the opposite hand

References

Therapies for Kids

<https://therapiesforkids.com.au/importance-of-crossing-the-midline/>

Children Development Centre

<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/fine-motor-skills/crossing-the-bodys-midline/>

Kids Sense

<https://www.cdchk.org/parent-tips/what-is-crossing-the-midline/>

