

BEING ABLE TO REACH ACROSS MY BODY

We all have an imaginary midline running down the centre of our bodies. In order for us to effectively coordinate the two sides of our bodies together, we need to be able to reach across our body and cross that imaginary midline.

Each side of our brain is responsible for the opposite side of our body, so that the right side of our brain affects the left side of our body and the other way around. Both sides of our brain need to work together, as do both sides of our bodies, in order to do activities involving both sides of our body (bilateral coordination) and to develop co-ordination.

Learning to cross the midline of our body is therefore important in the development of bilateral co-ordination. When there is a lack of easy side-to-side movement, each hand tends to operate on their own side of the body. Children who avoid crossing the midline often turn their body to avoid crossing the midline and this interferes with the development of hand dominance and makes bilateral motor tasks very difficult.

A child who is not able to cross the midline may be having difficulties with:

- Tying shoelaces
- Coordinating a knife and fork
- Reading and writing
- Establishing hand dominance
- Ball games
- Drawing and cutting skills

Crossing the midline during play - activity ideas

These activities will help your child to cross their midline more automatically rather than having to think about it:

- Pop bubbles with only one hand (they will have to reach across their body to pop the bubbles floating on the opposite side).
- Reach for bean bags, balls, stuffed animals, or other objects across midline, then throwing at a target.
- Draw large figure eights (the infinity sign or an 8 turned on its side) on paper, on the floor with a finger, in the air with a finger, or drive a matchbox car around a figure eight pattern.



- Ask the child to stand or kneel with a streamer/ribbon in one hand and draw a sideways figure of eight in the air (∞). Make sure the arms are stretching to the other side of the body.



- Moving objects from a box on one side of the body to a box on the other side, while using one hand only. You can turn this into a sorting game or a building game etc.
- Balloon tennis using one hand only and ensuring there are a lot of movements that encourage crossing the midline.
- Throwing a beanbag with one hand to a container placed on the other side of the body.
- Let the child play with sand, scooping sand from one side of the body and putting it into a bucket on the opposite side of the body without switching hands.
- Pretend to drive a car with a ball in both hands to use as a steering wheel and cross both arms while turning the “steering wheel”.

- Play flashlight tag. In a dimmed room, lie on your backs and have the child follow your flashlight beam projected on the wall with his own flashlight.

- Touch the opposite hand or elbow to the knee.



- Cross one foot over the other while walking sideways.

- Knee Slap Walk- walk around raising each knee while touching/slapping it with the opposite hand (or elbow). Change it to a skip while touching the opposite knee as it comes up.

- Windmills- stand with feet spread apart and arms extended out to the sides. Bend over at waist and tap right hand to left foot. Stand back up and then bend and tap left hand to right foot.

- Wash the car and make sure the arms cross midline while scrubbing.

- Push toy trucks and cars while crawling on the floor along a path made with tape; create lots of turns and waves.



- Floor play: when playing on the floor, encourage your child to lean on one hand or elbow. Place the toys or games on the side being leaned on. This forces the child to cross the middle when playing.

- Play sorting games: place objects to sort on the left side and containers to place them in on the right side: sort coins, cars vs. trucks, pompoms, marbles, bingo chips, etc.

- Play body awareness games like the Hokey Cokey and Simon Says

- While they are kneeling down, ask the child to draw a large rainbow on paper on the floor, ensuring the rainbow covers the whole page and the child uses the same hand.

- While they are kneeling, encourage the child to draw an arc around themselves. You can turn this into a rainbow and colour it in.



- Frisbee throwing
- Encourage crossing midline while turning pages

Establishing hand dominance

If a child is not able to cross midline they will pick up a writing tool with whichever hand is closest to it, which will interfere with the establishment of hand dominance. When determining which hand is the most dominant, place the object to be picked up in midline and then keep a record of which hand is used to pick it up each time to determine which hand is used the most.

It is acceptable for a child to have different hand dominance for different activities (e.g. left hand for writing and right hand for cutting with scissors) as long as dominance is consistent within an activity.