

Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

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Perceptual, motor, and physical development are foundations for children’s learning in all domains. Development in these areas allow children to fully explore their environment and interact with people and objects. The domain includes four elements: perception; gross motor; fine motor; and health, safety, and nutrition.

Perception refers to how children use their senses to gather and understand information and respond to the world around them. Infants and toddlers use perception during interactions, for exploration, and to make sense of their experiences. Preschoolers rely on perceptual information to develop greater awareness of their bodies in space and to move effectively to perform tasks, such as kicking a ball to a friend.

Gross motor skills refer to moving the whole body and using larger muscles, such as those in the arms and legs. In infancy, gross motor skills include gaining control of the head, neck, and torso to achieve a sitting or standing position. They also include locomotor skills that emerge in the toddler years, such as walking, throwing, and stretching. Preschoolers gain even greater control over their bodies. This contributes to their increasing confidence and ability to engage in social play.

Fine motor skills refer to use of the small muscles found in individual body parts, especially those in the hands and feet. Children use their fine motor skills to grasp, hold, and manipulate small objects, such as cups, or to use tools, including scissors and paint brushes. As they gain hand-eye coordination, preschoolers learn to direct the movements of their fingers, hands, and wrists to perform more complex tasks, including drawing fine details or stringing small beads.

Health, safety, and nutrition is the fourth element of perceptual, motor, and physical development. Children’s physical well-being depends on several factors, including their knowledge and use of safe, healthy behaviors and routines. Children’s ability to keep themselves safe and healthy, such as communicating to adults when they are hungry or sick, is extremely important and contributes to learning and development in all areas.

To read more about this domain, visit the [Interactive Head Start Learning Outcomes Framework](#).

The Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development domain includes the following sub-domains:

Infants and Toddlers

- [Perception](#)
- [Gross Motor](#)
- [Fine Motor](#)
- [Health, Safety, and Nutrition](#)

Preschoolers

- [Gross Motor](#)
- [Fine Motor](#)
- [Health, Safety, and Nutrition](#)

Effective Teaching Practices

The effective teaching practices that follow are grouped in three categories: Interactions, Environment, and Individualization. Examples of ways to support goals for children are provided by sub-domain. It is likely, however, that these practices will also support goals for children in additional domains and sub-domains. This is the nature of teaching and learning in the early years.

Topic: [School Readiness](#)

Keywords: [Motor development](#), [Physical development](#)

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