

The Evolution of Independent Movement: A Guideline, Not a Mandate



Prenatal primitive reflexes: involuntary movement



Primitive reflexes in place at birth



Head control: first attempts



Awakening of senses with touch, massage, and skin-to-skin contact



Hand and foot recognition



Hip tips: attempting to roll over



Sensory discoveries: especially mouth



Rolling over onto tummy



Pushing up from tummy



Postural reflexes emerging



Studying facial expressions



Grasping



Mouthing things



Commando crawling



Up on all fours



Rocking



Pincer grip



Crawling



Changing hands



Releasing grasp voluntarily



Sitting independently



Navigating small spaces



Pulling up to stand



Cruising



Bobbing up and down, aided



Standing, unaided



Climbing up furniture or stairs



Eye-hand coordination: self-feeding



Walking unaided: toddling or waddling



Marching



Balancing on one foot



Handedness: early signs



Temporal awareness



Manipulative skills emerging



Jumping forward on two feet



Upper body strength developing



Jumping on two feet



Bobbing up and down, unaided



Running



Hopping



Climbing in opposition: opposite arm, opposite leg



Galloping



Midlines developing: isolated or complex whole-body movements



Hand and foot dominance developing



Leaping from standing



Crossing the midline



Leaping from running



Skipping



Automated coordinated movement

Crawling Matters

Crawling has enormous developmental benefits for young children. Both arms and both legs move in opposition to one another, which not only develops physical coordination, but also accelerates the growth of critical connections between the right and left sides of the brain.

Some children skip the crawling stage in favor of bottom shuffling, or they shoot straight up to walking. If that happens, encourage the child to crawl with push-along toys, such as toy cars and trucks.