



You're the Coach

One thing that babies need most to support optimum physical agility and strength is their very own personal baby coach. And guess who that is? It's you. That's right, even if you were never good at sports, or didn't really enjoy them, you still have everything you need to be your child's first coach.

Here are just a few ideas for you for supporting optimum motor development from birth–two:

Infant/baby:

- Practice tummy time. This works to build neck control and core, and it's critical to your baby's reaching other milestones, like sitting up, walking, and crawling. Start with two-three minutes at first. This is exercise, and it can feel hard for babies. Your being with them to offer encouragement when they practice will help them more easily manage this skill and build your attachment.



Age 1:

- During reading time, encourage your baby to turn pages. This helps develop their pincer grasp, which they need for self-care skills such as buttons, zippers, and spoons. As they learn, they may, at times, get excited and just want to turn pages. That's fine. You can coach them with page-turning as you sometimes point out things that they see. You will also need to think about how you can coach gross motor skills at this age. Sitting, crawling, standing, and taking first steps will all be more fun with you cheering your baby on.



Age 2:

- For fine motor skills, or small movement skills, (fingers, toes, wrists) try stacking blocks. Scribble and color with large crayons. For gross motor skills, or large movement skills (arms, legs, torso) maybe set a timer and practice jumping together for 20 seconds. Count how many jumps you can do. Be sure to watch for cues that they get tired or need to move to a different activity. As coaches, it's our job to make sure the learning is fun so that they want to come back to a skill and practice it again.

References: Stanberry, Kristin. (N.D.). *Understanding Physical Development in Preschoolers*. <http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-childhood/understanding-physical-development-in-preschoolers>; *Ways to Encourage Motor of Physical Development*. Help Me Grow Minnesota. (N.D.). <http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/HelpfulRes/Articles/WaysEncourageMotorPhysical/index.html>