

Pre-Walking Exercises

Pulling Up to Standing

- Start this exercise by encouraging your child to pull up at furniture, such as a couch.
- Your child should be able to put either knee up to make this transition.
- Progress to a vertical surface your child cannot grip, such as a wall, cabinets, sliding door or refrigerator (use toys, window clings, suction cup toys to encourage this movement).



Squatting (Bending Knees to Pick Up a Toy)

- Start with your child standing and holding onto a piece of furniture, and encourage them to pick a toy up from the floor.
- If your child sits all the way down and then pulls back up, try holding the toy at knee level to encourage a mini-squat until strength and balance improve to complete the full range of motion.
- Have your child continue to practice this skill while holding a vertical surface, such as a wall or cabinets.
- Once your child can stand unsupported, have them practice squatting and standing back up without holding on.
- Have your child practice picking toys up from both sides.



Pre-Walking Exercises

Standing at Support Rotating Body to Reach

- Have your child practice letting go with one hand and encourage reaching in all directions (both sides, up and down) for toys, bubbles, etc.



Cruising (Side-Stepping) Along Support

- Place toys at either end of a piece of furniture, such as a couch, to encourage this movement.
- If your child needs assistance to step, help by holding at their hips and shifting their weight onto the leg opposite of the direction in which you are moving so that the leading leg is free to step to the side. Then, help shift their weight at the hips onto the leg in the direction you are moving to bring the following leg over.
- Have your child practice stepping in both directions.



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Cruising Along a Vertical Surface

- Once your child can stand at a vertical surface, such as a wall or sliding door, begin to encourage sidestepping – try suction-cup toys or window clings as motivators.
- Practice this skill in both directions.



Cruising Stepping Over an Obstacle

- While your child is moving along furniture or a flat surface, add a thick book or step stool your child must step up and down from as they sidestep toward a toy.
- The taller the obstacle, the greater the challenge, so adjust the task to your child's current ability.
- Practice this skill in both directions.



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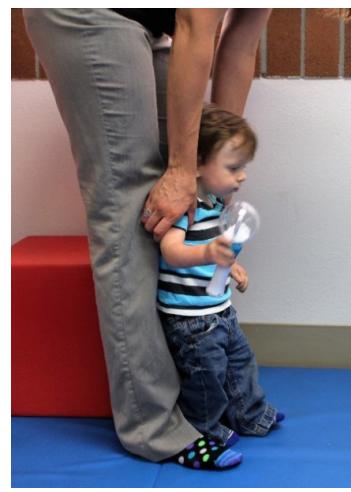
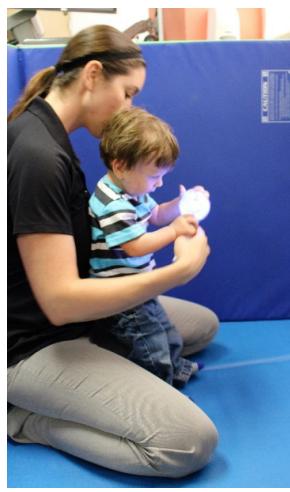
Cruising Between Furniture

- Have your child practice moving between support surfaces that they can reach (couch to ottoman, wall to chair, etc.) without sitting down to crawl.
- As your child's balance improves, move the support surfaces farther apart so that a step must be taken in between the support surfaces.
- Continue to gradually increase this distance to encourage walking.
- Practice at various angles: 90 degree L-shape, 180 degrees turning completely around, etc.



Standing with Back Support

- Have your child stand with their back against a support, such as a couch, wall or your body while you stand or kneel.
- Encourage your child to reach in all directions (use toys, bubbles).
- Gradually encourage your child to lean forward to minimize leaning.
- Have your child progress by practicing squatting and standing back up.



Pre-Walking Exercises

Standing Holding Unstable Support

- Have your child stand while holding something that will move, such as a large ball, push toy on wheels or a towel stretched between your two hands.
- You can initially help stabilize this object as needed until your child can balance.



Walking with a Push Toy

- Assist your child with walking while they are pushing a toy or something else unstable, such as a box or laundry basket across the floor. Your child can also try walking while rolling/pushing a large ball.
- Once your child can take a few unsupported steps while walking with the push toy, roll it out a few inches in front of your child and encourage them to take a step or two toward the toy. Gradually increase the distance you are pushing it away so that they will take more steps.



Pre-Walking Exercises

Walking Holding Hands

- Start by holding both of your child's hands; as their balance improves, release one hand.
- Hold your child's hands below their shoulder level (the lower the level you support them, the more your child will need to keep their balance).



Walking Toward or Between Caregivers

- Have your child stand while being supported by one caregiver or holding onto a support surface, and then encourage them to walk toward you.
- Start with a very short distance requiring just one to two steps and gradually increase this distance as your child's balance and confidence improve.

