

Crossing Midline



Why is Crossing Midline Important?

Crossing midline is the ability to reach across the center of the body with the hands, feet, or eyes. Although it may seem like a simple skill, it is a critical building block for motor development, learning, and everyday activities.

When children consistently cross the midline, they strengthen communication between the left and right hemispheres of the brain through the corpus callosum. Neurologically, each side of the brain naturally prefers to work independently. Crossing the midline requires both hemispheres to communicate efficiently, helping build and strengthen neural pathways that support coordinated movement, attention, problem-solving, and learning.

Children who avoid crossing the midline may switch hands frequently, turn their entire body instead of reaching across, or have difficulty coordinating movements that require both sides of the body to work together.

How Does Crossing Midline Support Learning?

Crossing midline supports:

- Reading smoothly from left to right
- Writing across a page without switching hands
- Developing a consistent hand dominance
- Bilateral coordination
- Visual tracking across a page
- Sports, playground skills, dressing, bathing, and other self-care tasks

Crossing midline also helps integrate the Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (ATNR). If ATNR remains active, children may struggle with crossing the midline, maintaining hand dominance, reading fluently, and writing efficiently. Repetitive crossing-midline activities encourage mature movement patterns while supporting ongoing ATNR integration.

Making Crossing Midline Part of Everyday Life

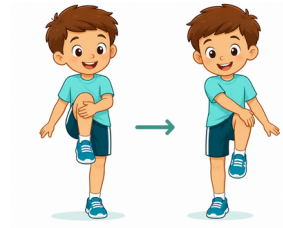
The good news is that practicing crossing midline doesn't require special equipment. Simply changing how a task is set up creates many opportunities to practice.

- Place crayons, markers, scissors, puzzles, or craft supplies on the opposite side of your child's dominant hand.
- Place cups, utensils, or napkins slightly across the body's centerline during meals.
- Encourage your child to reach across their body to put away toys or pick up laundry.

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Activities to Practice Crossing Midline

- Cross Crawls:
 - Touch right hand to left knee, elbow, shoulder, ear, foot, etc. Then switch sides. Complete 10-20 controlled repetitions.
- Figure Eights:
 - Draw large sideways "8's" (∞) on paper, a whiteboard, sidewalk with chalk, or even in the air. Encourage your child to keep their eyes on their hand as it moves.
- Sticker Rescue:
 - Remove stickers placed on the opposite arm, leg, shoulder, or shoe.
- Simon Says:
 - Use opposite hand/body-part commands. Ex.: "Touch your left knee with your right hand."
- Window Washing:
 - Give your child a spray bottle (optional) and cloth. Encourage them to use one hand to wipe long side-to-side strokes across a mirror or window without switching hands.
- Balloon or Bubble Play:
 - Blow bubbles or toss a balloon so it floats across your child's body. Encourage them to reach across with the opposite hand to pop the bubble or tap the balloon.
- Clean-Up Helper:
 - Place a toy basket on one side of your child and toys on the other. Have them pick up each toy with one hand and reach across their body to place it into the basket.
- Tape Road:
 - Create a path on the floor using painter's tape. Place small toys, bean bags, or stuffed animals on alternating sides of the tape. Have your child crawl or walk along the path, reaching across their body to pick up each item.



Recommendations

Aim for 5-10 minutes of crossing-midline activities each day. Frequent, playful practice is much more effective than occasional long sessions. Encourage your child to reach across the body without switching hands or turning the entire body. Every time your child crosses the midline, they strengthen communication between both hemispheres of the brain, supporting movement coordination, reading, writing, learning, and independence.