

## **BILATERAL SKILLS**

Bilateral skills are the ability to use both sides of the body together to perform an activity. The movements may be either bilateral (one side performing a different movement than the other) or reciprocal (same movement on both sides). This requires the foundation of dissociation (freeing the pelvis and limbs to move independently of the trunk and head), integrated postural reactions (small muscle or tonal adjustments that help control the upright body against gravity), co-contraction of the active musculature, and communication between the right and left sides of the brain. Some positions and activities that can help develop these skills are listed below in order of developmental progression.

### **18 months – 3 years**

1. jumping with feet together – sequence of skill is jumping in place, off a step, forward 2-4". Jumping is easily added to a typical day by jumping in place, jumping races, off the last step, over cracks in the sidewalks, jumping through doorways, over objects on the floor, etc.
2. riding toys – sequence of skill is scooting with feet moving together, scooting with alternating feet, then pedaling. Most children move the riding toy backward before they move it forward.
3. climbing – advance to playground equipment.
4. obstacle course – make a simple course using stuff in your house. Think of prepositions – you need something to go over, under, around, and between. Creep under tables, climb over chairs, jump off a step or box, etc. Be creative.

### **3 years to 5 years**

1. running- begins with a fast walk with arms up at the head. As control improves arms will drop down by the sides and move in alternating time with the legs. As postural reactions improve and alternating knee and ankle control develop, the gait (pattern) and cadence (rhythm) will become smooth. Progression is running straight, ability to turn corners while running, ability to vary speed of running.
2. jumping – continue the sequence to jumping over small objects then jumping backward. Hopscotch boards are good for practicing jumping with feet together where there is one box and feet apart where there are two boxes.
3. catching – sequence is trapping the object to the chest then catching with elbows bent. Begin with slow moving objects (beach ball, balloons, bubbles, etc.) the progress to large playground balls. You can change the position of the child to work on multiple skills/strengthening while playing ball (on all fours, in a kneeling position, vary the surface your on such as sand, pillows, grass, etc.).