

PHYSICAL LITERACY

LEARNING BODY-BASED SKILLS IN CHILDHOOD CONTRIBUTES TO WHOLE-PERSON LITERACY THROUGHOUT THE LIFECOURSE.



By pushing physical boundaries, taking risks, and finding their edge, children wire their brains to **feel more comfortable with uncertainty**. This gives them the courage, as adults, to try new things, the perseverance to try again when it gets hard, and the confidence to make decisions, modify choices, and adapt in order to reach goals.

Movement-based play helps children to develop spatial abilities, strength management, and **body awareness** (proprioception). This helps with everything from handwriting to playing sports, and not falling out of bed when we sleep!

The power to use your body to complete tasks begins in early childhood, when **muscles develop as they are needed** in response to movement. Strength, stamina, flexibility, and agility are all acquired through active play.

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Three of the most important skills for school-readiness (and work-readiness in adults) are the ability to **sit still, stay focused, and pay attention**. The vestibular system controls these, as well as posture and balance. Kids (and adults) usually fidget because they are trying to concentrate. Vestibular maturity (balance, stillness, orientation, concentration) is learned through movement.

Children develop **temporal awareness** (understanding timing) by moving through life's daily rhythms, developing body awareness, and learning to predict outcomes (what happens to the ball when I roll it?). This leads to the ability to analyze environmental data and make predictions in adulthood.

It's never too late to hone your physical literacy

As a child improves their ability to move their body, their language and communication skills develop. Facial expressions, hand gestures, sound, and emotions make **communicating a whole-body process**. The more body-awareness you have, the better you can express yourself.

You can't have an emotion without motion. Feel happy and you smile. Feel frustrated and you tighten your muscles. **Emotions safely expressed through movement** (laughing, jumping, swaying, stomping, dancing, reaching out) allow children to practice experiencing multiple feelings at once, and identify, integrate and regulate them. This creates more emotionally mature adults who are better at empathizing with others.

Sources:

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