

Observer _____ Date(s) _____

Location _____ Child _____ Child's Age _____

Level 2

OBSERVATION 3

Assessing Gross Motor Development

“Practice makes perfect” is true for all areas of children’s development, including their gross motor skills. As children run, jump, climb, skip, hop, ride, and throw and catch a ball, their physical skills become refined.

One way to evaluate children’s gross motor skills is by using a checklist. A *developmental checklist* is a list of behaviors a child should exhibit or skills a child should master at a certain age. The observer records the behaviors or skills he or she sees. Developmental checklists are a good way to track each child’s development. Knowing each child’s areas of strength and weakness, as well as those of the group as a whole, helps teachers and caregivers plan activities that encourage children’s development in specific skill areas.

Observation Objective: To identify and document the gross motor skills of one child.

Directions: Observe a child age three to five in an early childhood education class or a child care program for at least 30 minutes. (If possible, find out from the teacher the child’s age in years and months.) Before you observe, read over the items on the checklist—particularly those for the child’s age—so you are familiar with the behaviors you will be looking for. Also read the follow-up questions. During the observation, look for the skills on the list. When you see the child you are observing attempting or successfully completing any skill, put a check mark and record the date in the *Attempted* or *Mastered* column. Leave the columns blank for any skills you don’t have an opportunity to see. After the observation, review your notes and write your answers to the questions. If possible, observe the same child at least one other day to see additional skills.

Observation Tip: Regardless of the age of the child you observe, watch for the skills listed for every age. A four-year-old may not have mastered all the skills listed for age three yet, and the same child may have already mastered a few skills typical of five-year-olds. In general, the closer a child is to the lower end of the age range listed for the skills, the fewer the skills the child will have mastered in that set.

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Observation 3, page 2

Observer _____ Date(s) _____

Location _____ Child _____ Child's Age _____

Age 3 to 3 years, 11 months		
	Attempted	Mastered
Walks without watching feet.	_____	_____
Runs.	_____	_____
Marches to music.	_____	_____
Hops on one foot.	_____	_____
Jumps up with both feet.	_____	_____
Balances briefly on one foot.	_____	_____
Climbs ladder of slide.	_____	_____
Climbs stairs, alternating feet while holding railing.	_____	_____
Pushes self on riding toy.	_____	_____
Pedals tricycle.	_____	_____
Picks up objects by bending at waist.	_____	_____
Catches large ball with arms straight out.	_____	_____
Kicks large ball.	_____	_____

Age 4 to 4 years, 11 months		
	Attempted	Mastered
Walks on a straight line.	_____	_____
Walks forward on balance beam.	_____	_____
Runs well, avoiding obstacles.	_____	_____
Hops on one foot.	_____	_____
Balances on one foot for 8-10 seconds.	_____	_____
Jumps up and down.	_____	_____
Jumps forward about 8 inches from standing position.	_____	_____
Climbs playground equipment.	_____	_____
Climbs stairs, alternating feet without holding on railing.	_____	_____
Throws ball overhand.	_____	_____
Catches bounced ball.	_____	_____
Pumps legs while swinging.	_____	_____

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Observation 3, page 3

Observer _____ Date(s) _____

Location _____ Child _____ Child's Age _____

Age 5 to 5 years, 11 months

Attempted

Mastered

Walks backwards with ease.

Walks backwards on balance beam.

Hops forward ten times.

Runs well.

Skips, alternating feet.

Balances on one foot for 10 seconds or longer.

Jumps over objects.

Tries to jump rope.

Alternates feet, walking *down* stairs.

Throws small ball.

Catches small ball with hands.

Turns somersault.

Rides bike with training wheels.

1. What specific activities was the child doing that allowed you to observe the child's gross motor skills?

2. Did the child appear to show any pride in his or her gross motor abilities or frustration about ones not yet achieved? If so, give examples of what the child said or did.

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3. Describe any instances you saw of the child copying another child's movements or attempting to do something another child was doing. (*Examples:* Riding a riding toy, pumping legs on a swing, jumping from a low height.)

Interpreting the Facts

What role do you think a child's peers play in the child's gross motor development? Explain.

4. Young children often enjoy practicing a skill over and over again, especially when they are first learning it. (*Examples:* Throwing a ball into a container or walking backwards.) Did the child you observed show any of this repeated practicing? If so, describe what the child was doing. As he or she practiced, did the skill seem to improve? Did the child try out variations of the behavior? (*Examples:* Moving closer to or farther away from the container, taking larger steps backward.)

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5. List three skills from the checklist for the child's age that the child did not attempt or master. What activities could the teacher or caregiver plan to encourage development of these skills? Offer at least one idea for each skill.

Learning from Observing: Based on your observation and/or a comparison of checklists of other children the same age, how does the gross motor development of the child you observed compare with the development of other children in the group the same age? Would you rate the child's gross motor skills as "Below average," "Average," or "Above average"? Give specific reasons for your rating. (Take into consideration the child's age in months, as well as in years.)