

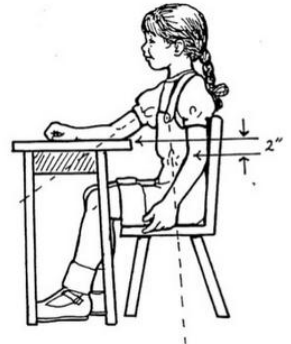


## O.T. TIP OF THE MONTH

### *Upper Body Strength & Stability*

**Stability before mobility!** Upper body strength is essential for the development of fine motor skills in children. A stable upper body provides a base for fine motor control. Using a pencil to draw or print requires the large muscles of the shoulder girdle and upper back to stabilize in order to allow the small muscles of the hand to do more precise work.

First and foremost, good seated posture is key for stability! A general rule of thumb is that hips, ankles, and knees should be at a 90 degree angle; table height should be roughly 2 inches above or at the same level as the elbows when resting at the side; hips should be all the way back in the chair, back resting against the back support; feet should be flat on the floor or a foot stool.



#### Top three tips to develop upper body strength and stability:

##### 1. Encourage different play positions:

- Reading or playing on tummies with arms “propping up” the upper body
- “Four point kneeling” (on hands and knees) to drive a car or dig in the sand
- “Tall-kneeling” to play with toys or draw/paint at shoulder level (at an easel or shelf)



##### 2. Do activities on a vertical surface:

- Mount toys on the wall or set them on a shelf (e.g., etch-a-sketch, Lite Brite)
- Use Velcro to fasten light toys or games on the wall
- Tape papers or activity/colouring pages to the wall or easel
- Use window writers
- Attach paper to a bulletin board and create pictures by poking holes with a tack
- Stamp, paint, or colour at an easel
- Dip cars in paint and drive them on large mural paper on the wall to make a picture.

##### 3. Weight bearing through the hands:

- Animal walks (e.g., seal walk, bear walk, crab walk, frog jump).
- Hallway activities: Wagon or laundry basket rides, scooter races on tummy
- Play outside! Outdoor play is one of the best ways to develop upper body strength. Playgrounds, school yard games, digging in the sand, rocks or snow, yoga on the lawn, etc.