

# Crawling

Guide to starting or improving  
your child's ability to crawl

Is my child just  
lazy?

I see them  
only using  
one leg

They just want  
to roll  
everywhere

My kid gets on  
hands and  
knees but just  
collapses



Crawling or the act of moving forward on hands and knees is a huge feat for our kids. Gaining the ability to progress across a room to get to a desired toy, to reach a family member or pet, or to just simply explore along the way opens up their world. There is a ton of elements at work to make this possible!

Your child needs:

- Strength in the arms and shoulder girdle
- Strength in core
- Strength around the hips
- Coordination or moving the right part at the right time with the right amount of effort

**Let's get to work!**

[Amazon Toy List](#)

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# Week 1 – Prone Push-up

**Let's build strength in those arms!**

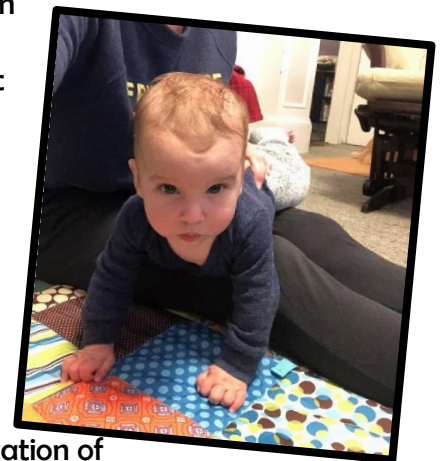
## Level 1

Prone push-up is a fancy way to say straightening elbows to lift head and chest off of the ground while positioning on belly. If you aren't seeing your child do this while playing on belly, try an environment modifications first:

- Present an exciting light-up or noisy toy up off the ground – either hold the item or place it on a low box or step stool
- You may see your child push up through arms to raise line of sight

If you don't see your child do this while playing on belly and the toy trap does not work, take it a step back:

- Place your child over a surface such as a pillow or your legs with hands down on the surface below. You will be supporting the majority of body weight but arms will have to work hard to lift head and upper trunk against gravity. As your child improves, shift them forward inch by inch so you are supporting less weight.



## Level 2

Now let's add an element - weight shifting!

Regardless of whether your child is pushing up while on belly from the ground or with modification of being on your legs or pillow, present something they can reach for.

Weight shifting to one side to allow reaching with the other is an important part of crawling, but by doing it in this position you are reducing the demand and allowing your child to explore that concept with arms only.

**"This isn't working!"**

### Other tips/tricks:

Check out this [blog/video](#) on ways to work on prone prop/push up

### **Our Favorite Toys for this!**

- Sassy Wonder Wheel
- Melissa and Doug Pounding Bench
- Baby Play Mat Activity Centers
- Mirror

[Amazon Toy List](#)

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# Week 2 - Kneeling

## Now let's work on those hips!

Kneeling or positioning so that knees are on the ground and hands are on an elevated surface is a great way to help build your child's bottom and tummy muscles at the same time!

First let's break down terminology:

- [Short kneel](#) = child's bottom is resting on feet (easier)
- [Tall kneel](#) = child's bottom is up off of the feet (harder)

An appropriate height support surface (aka place for hands) will help ensure success with this exercise

- Step stools or short boxes can be great when starting out in short kneel
- Higher surfaces such as sofas or coffee tables will encourage a transition into tall kneeling

### Level 1

Begin in a short kneel position with your child's bottom resting on feet. Remember to use a shorter surface height such as a box or step stool.

- Look for the knees and feet to be together and help [reposition](#) if needed
- Sometimes this is enough of a challenge and you may notice a bit of sway as your child adjusts to the new position

### Level 2

Now let's work on the transition component or getting into a tall kneel position which is really what gets the bottom muscles working!

- In order to encourage a transition from short to tall kneel a taller surface and motivating toy will be helpful
- Placing the toy further back on the surface should get your child to reach towards the toy and bring their bottom off their feet in order to straighten hips and retrieve the toy
- A lot of alternating back and forth (bouncing) is often seen when first getting the idea of the skill
- Once they have that down, you may start to see them hold tall kneel for a longer duration

### "This isn't working!" – [Other tips/tricks](#):

- Try providing some stability by [using your hands](#) on the outside of their knees/thighs to hold them in/together. This will slightly decrease the amount of work your kiddo needs to do
- Sometimes a little boost under the bottom can also be helpful to get them started!



### Our Favorite Toys for this!

- Little Balance Box
- Battat Wooden Activity Cube
- Activity Table (with removable legs)

[Amazon Toy List](#)

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# Week 3 – Modified Quadruped

## Now let's add even more core!

Modified quadruped is a fancy way to say positioning on hands and knees with an adjustment to make it a bit easier. Using an elevated surface for hands is a great way to eliminate some impact of gravity and allow your child to bear weight through the arms and hips with less overall effort.

The higher the surface, the easier it will be (higher surface looks a lot like short kneel from last week!). The lower the surface, the greater the demands on the core!



### Level 1

Place your child on hands and knees with hands on a support surface (options for this include a pillow, folded blanket, couch cushion, your leg, that old text book you knew would have a purpose someday, etc.). Use a toy that encourages more looking and less reaching such as a mirror so that your child keeps two hands down for support.



### Level 2

As your child gets the hang of it, progress by adding weight shifting and reaching. This is similar to week 1, but now the position is more challenging!



### **“This isn’t working!” – Other tips/tricks:**

- Similar to week 2, try providing support at the sides of their knees/hips and/or on the outside of elbows – gradually reduce the amount of input you give
- Add some distraction – parent/sibling/ family member being silly or dancing around

### **“What else you got?! – Progression:**

- Make the item harder to reach – up off surface, more out to the side
- Gradually lower the surface hands are on



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# Week 4 – Sustained Quadruped

## Now let's hold!

Sustained Quadruped = holding hands and knees position on ground and is the next step towards crawling. At this point your child is able to hold the position and reach with each arm in modified format (week 3) and you have been able to progress to hand(s) on low surfaces. Now it is time to work on holding the position on flat ground.

### Level 1

Two hands down

- Use a mirror or visually stimulating toy (movement, light up, etc.)
- Track duration of hold and work to increase it by adding a distraction just before hitting previous record or you notice fatigue starting to set in



#### Tips/tricks for level 1:

Look for your child to start [forward/backward rocking](#) in this position

- If your child is having a hard time maintaining the position and is not playing with shifting, use your hands around the sides of trunk or hips to introduce small shifts

### Level 2

Reaching

- Once your kiddo can hold hands and knees position for a good 10 seconds, start to increase demand by [placing a toy at eye level or slightly above to elicit a reach](#)
- Make sure to alternate sides and allow for equal practice reaching with right and left!



#### Tips/tricks for level 2:

Is your child collapsing while attempting to reach?

- Help them maintain a straight elbow on the stabilizing arm by placing your hand on the outside of the elbow preventing it from bending – decrease that help over time/practice

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# Week 5 – Crawling With Hands Elevated

## Now let's move!

So now you are seeing that your child has the strength and endurance to maintain hands and knees position and reach with each hand. It is [time to get moving!](#)

### Level 1

Working on [progressing forward with hands on an elevated surface](#) is a great way to introduce the movement component. It is similar to week 3 in that you are eliminating some impact from gravity and reducing the amount of work needed to keep the body up, but the addition this time is movement! Have your child position on hands and knees with hands on any stable and easily moveable object such as a sofa cushion, pillow, or small box. We are looking for 6 inches or less (again, higher in this range being easier, lower being harder). Where you position (in front of your child or behind) may depend on the object you are using, but the overall approach is the same. Help your child maintain hands on surface while you gradually progress the object away. You are looking to elicit forward movement of the knees to catch up with the hands. You are inching your child along, try to match what you see your child do.



### Level 2

Progression is good! If your kiddo is doing great with a 6 inch surface but still not crawling over ground try progressing down to a 4 inch surface. If your kiddo is doing this rather easily but not yet crawling over ground you can try doing a couple bouts of this (up/down the living room once or twice) then removing the surface to try over flat ground.

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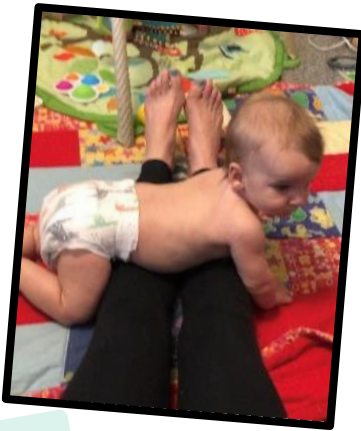
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# Week 6 – Crawl Over Obstacles

Once your kiddo is on the move we want to continue to provide challenges to their movement. Crawling over obstacles is an easy way to do that. Not only does it increase the demand on the arms and core to help them further strengthen, it also challenges motor planning or the ability to assess a situation and adjust the body as needed to accomplish the task. Some objects that we love to use for this includes:

- **Pillows:** The soft, squishy surface will sink down a bit when weight is on it, making your child have to work harder to pull their legs forwards while staying up on their hands
- **Parent's legs:** This allows for a more elevated surface, requiring a greater degree of weight shift to traverse. Start easier! Only 1 leg will be easier than 2 legs. Lower down towards the ankle will be easier than up on the thigh!
- **Pool noodles:** This object has less depth so may be a bit easier than the ones above.



## Level 1

One obstacle at a time – just a pillow, piece of foam furniture, or [just legs](#)

### Tips/tricks for level 1:

Give them a boost! If your child is having a hard time, help him or her be successful. Then try to help a little less the next time!

## Level 2

Your baby's [first obstacle course](#)! Now put obstacles in series. Can they get their favorite toy on the opposite side of the room by crawling over 2 pillows then your legs? Be creative! [Add any other safe item](#) into the mix to up the challenge.

### Tips/tricks for level 2:

Is your child hesitant to traverse all items at once? Gradually building up the amount of items to crawl over can help allow ease them into it and lead to them completing a longer/more challenging course in the long run!



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As your child works towards crawling you may notice the following:

- Attempts to push up to hands and knees, collapse, repeat...
- Hybrid movement or inching forward using a variety of methods (pulling forward with arms, up into hands and knees with collapse that sends them just a little further, adding a roll here and there, etc.)

This is all trial and error to help them refine the movement!

Here are some videos on what you may see along the way:

[Pre-belly crawling](#)

[Belly crawling](#)

[Quadruped to Collapse to Move Forward](#)

[Crawling – Moving Legs before Collapsing](#)

[Crawling – Moving Legs and Hands \(almost\)](#)

**Congratulations for all the progress your little crawler has made! Happy exploring!**

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