

My child stands at the coffee table but seems stuck when something is out of reach

Cruising

Why is cruising important?

My child seems to lose interest if anything is too far away

Is there a way to set up my living room to help my child build standing skills?

Guide to starting or improving your child's ability to step sideways along support

At this point your child is doing really well standing at support and interacting with toys or people while there, but you notice they keep their play in front of them and don't move closer to something out of their immediate reach. We put together a series of activities that we hope will help your little one start taking sideways steps while at support aka **cruising**. Cruising is important as it provides opportunity for your child to build strength, balance, coordination, and motor planning, all which will eventually apply to walking!

[Amazon Toy List](#)



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Week 1 – Standing At Support Reaching

Let's start with standing at support and taking a look at your child's readiness for cruising. Have your child stand at a support surface that is about mid-chest height. Sofas, coffee tables, stabilized chairs, ottomans, and activity tables are often great options! First we want to take a look at your child's posture. In order to be ready for cruising, your child should be comfortable standing there with feet about hip width apart, able to bounce or allow some movement of knees in and out of being straight, and able to shift back away from the support surface such that their belly or chest is not significantly resting on it. If this does not seem to describe how your child looks, first try to use your hands to adjust them so that it does. If it seems hard for them to tolerate or maintain that, consider trying out our early standing program first!



If your child is showing what is described above, they are likely ready for more challenge. Often a reach to the side is what initiates taking a step so let's work on that part first! While your child is standing at support, present an item out to the side. Easiest would be within their reach on the surface, followed by just beyond their outstretched arm on the surface, and then reaching to an item presented away/up from the surface as you see in the picture to the left. Make sure to work on reaching to both sides!

As you work on reaching farther, you may notice it elicits a small step or an adjustment of the foot to face outward to open up their body a little more for the reach. If you aren't seeing that yet, do not worry we will work more on that next week!

Tips/Tricks:

- Use an item that is very motivating (favorite toy, snack, person, pet, etc.)
- Move the item slowly to entice them to reach for it. Sometimes moving too quickly can result in loss of interest.
- Gradually build distance. It is incredible how aware some kids can be to a task getting even a little bit harder. Work inch by inch!



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Week 2 – Corner Stand/Reach

This week we are going to work on small maneuvering while positioned in a [corner](#). For this activity you will need two supports touching such that they make a 90 degree angle or a corner for your child to position in. You will also need a motivating toy for them to engage with. Have your child stand with their hands on one of the surfaces, get them interested in the toy/object, and then place it on the other surface. The goal is to elicit them partially turning their body and taking one small step or adjusting the foot closest to turn towards the toy.

This activity challenges your child to motor plan or problem solve how to adjust their standing position to be able to get a hand on the item. If they have an incredible reach, you may have to adjust where you put the toy to get the response mentioned above. If they get it easily on the first try without moving their feet, try placing it just an inch or two farther away and see if that does it. Similar to many other activities we have introduced, it is important to do it to each side to encourage symmetrical progress! If you notice your child is a little better one way, consider doing a few more to the harder side.



Squatting & Getting Down:

As your child is working towards cruising, squats and getting down from support are great strengthening activities to include along the way!

Squatting: Place an item on a step stool about halfway down to the ground to encourage your little one to bend their knees for a mini-squat to retrieve it. As they get better, work towards having the item on the ground for a squat with greater depth. Check out this [blog](#)!

Getting down: At this point your child may already be doing this well on their own, but we wanted to outline it in case anyone needs it. Often kids start by plopping to their bottom and gradually learn from those experiences to have greater control. If your child seems stuck, take them through the motion of bending knees while maintaining a hold on support until their bottom gets close to the ground allowing release. It may only take a couple times through for them to pick it up and start initiating when they want down. Be ready to spot them if needed but also give them a chance to refine through safe trial and error. Check out this [video](#) for more!

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Week 3 – A Few Side Steps

Now let's get **moving**! We are going to combine the first 2 weeks of skills and encourage your child to move sideways a bit more along the surface. It will likely help to first clarify some terms we often use when talking about cruising - leading and trailing legs. The leading leg is on the side that is closest to the destination and the trailing leg is the one that is farther away or that follows behind. We are going to use these terms below!

Often kids will start cruising by leading with their **hands**. After all they are working towards getting their hands on something! Also up until this point they have generally had more experience reaching and controlling the shifting of weight of their upper body and less of their lower body. However, for successful cruising we need shifting at the hips. In order to successfully cruise to the side, your child will first have to shift their weight **AWAY** from the object they want to unload the leading leg

allowing a step to the side. You can show this to your child by placing your hands on the side of their hips and providing side to side input according to the weight shift you want. Use your hands to shift your child's weight towards their trailing leg, taking weight off their leading leg, and allowing a step. Then use your hands on the side of their hips to help them shift weight to their leading leg, taking weight off the trailing leg allowing it to follow.

Sometimes hands on hips is all you need to encourage the proper weight shifting and the feet will follow, but other times kids need a little more. Don't hesitate to move your child's feet for them at first. The sequence would be shift weight to trailing leg, help lift leading leg and place a few inches closer to item, shift weight to leading leg, and help lift trailing leg to come in. Allowing for success is key! We want to start small and build up from there. For this week, let's aim for **2-3 steps** each direction and then allow your child to have the toy they are working for as the reward!



Make sure you practice this equally to both sides! You may notice that one side is easier than the other for your child, no need to worry this is often seen when a new skill is being acquired. Practicing the harder side a bit more may be helpful!

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Week 4 – Longer Distances & Inside Corners



Now that we have worked consistently on 2-3 step cruising, it's time to increase the [distance](#)! Your child may have already started to do this on their own, but if not no need to worry! If your child is hesitant to keep going past the initial couple steps, we can go back to the same type of hands-on guidance you used last week. Allow your child to take the most amount of steps on their own before trying to help them. Once they stop, move their toy a bit farther and add help as needed to keep them going. This is where a strongly motivating toy is going to come in handy. Alternatively we have also found that snacks like puffs or cheerios are often great motivators for longer distance cruising. Pausing in between steps is normal. Your child is still working hard to develop their balance in standing and taking these brief pauses may be them reestablishing their stability before continuing. Keep

an eye out for signs of fatigue such as leaning body/tummy against surface, progressively slower speed, or trying to lower down to the floor to crawl over to the toy. If you see any of these allowing a break for play on the floor may be necessary.

Another activity for this week is [inside corners](#). We did a little on this in week 2 but now it involves [entering and leaving the corner](#) instead of starting within it. Set up two supports so they form a corner or use one surface that has a corner built-in like a couch with a chaise portion. To start, have your child position a decent distance away from the corner, then encourage your child to start walking along the surface and cross over the corner in order to get to the item on the other side. It might be helpful to work in increments for this, slowly progressing their toy along the surface and corner may help!

Here is a [blog](#) on progressing cruising to reference throughout the remainder of the program!



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Week 5 – Around Outside Corners

Next is **outside corners**! This involves a similar set up to week 4 but now the corner on the opposite side is the area of focus. Household options include the corner of a large ottoman or coffee table, a larger activity table, or two bench seats placed together. This is an advancement from inside corners given the sides of the corner are farther apart and it takes a little more problem solving to make it to the other side. If you missed it last week, here is a [video](#) outlining how to set up the corners!



Keep in mind the techniques previously discussed may also help this week including guiding the movement initially or gradually moving the motivating toy to keep your child interested in progressing. Sometimes in the process of working around an outside corner, kids can get their foot caught on a table or bench leg. Keep an eye out for that and be ready to spot them or help, but only

after giving them some time to try to work through it first. If your child does well with the first outside corner consider continuing around the other outside corners if you are using a table or ottoman. Then switch directions so they are challenged to move and problem solve each way!



My child often lowers to the floor, crawls over, and pulls to stand instead of choosing to cruise...
This is common! If your child is proficient in crawling they may use it as a workaround rather than exploring the newer skill. They are using what they know and that's okay! Here are a few [tips](#) that may help!

Consider working in smaller increments by placing the toy just a couple steps away. Then right before they get there, playfully move the toy just a little bit farther and then again as needed and tolerated! Find a balance so that you encourage a little more but don't allow too much frustration to develop!

Another Variation to Try:

Set up supports with slightly different heights so your child can work on cruising between them! Include both opportunity for going from higher to lower and lower to higher.

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Week 6 – Small Gap Between Surfaces

Now we want to work on making it across **small gaps** between surfaces! Start small by setting up two supports so that there is only 2-3 inches of space between them. Give your child a chance to work across the gap each direction a few times. Once they seem to have a handle on that, you can gradually increase the gap by an inch or so to add more challenge.

Another set up to work on this week is transitioning between two parallel supports as seen in the picture and shown in this **video**. This requires more rotation and different adjustment to the feet to be successful. Make sure the parallel supports are close enough that your child can easily reach between the two at first. Give them a chance to master this distance in each direction.



Once your child seems more confident with the maneuvering needed, you can gradually increase the distance to add more challenge to strength, balance, and how much they must adjust their body to make it work!

Tips/Tricks:

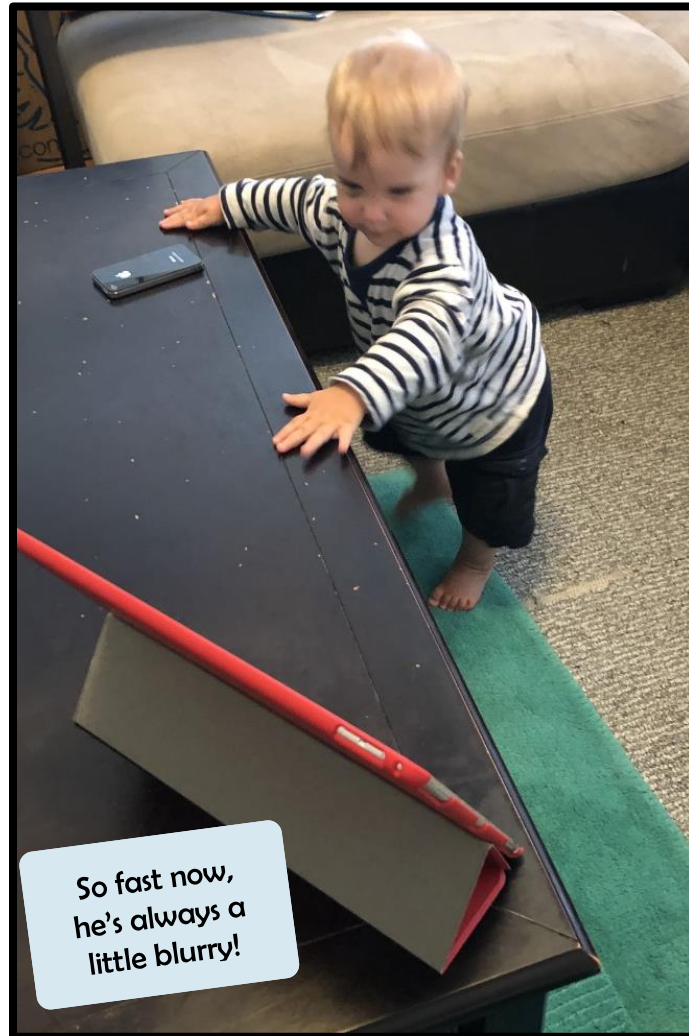
- Sometimes kids leave their feet behind when trying to reach to the next surface. If this is the case, help them bring the hands back to the first surface and take a step to get closer first!
- If your child is hesitant to initiate the reach, feel free to help guide their hand to the support and help them through it
- If your child still has trouble, try placing them in the middle of the surfaces with one hand on each side. This way they only have to do half and you can build from there!

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**Congratulations to your little cruiser
and all your work helping them
progress!**



**As your child progresses closer to walking,
consider checking out our pre-walker
program!**

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