

Jumping

How do I get them interested?

When should we start to work on it?

What's the best way to help them learn to jump?

How can I help them get their feet up?

Guide to help your child start jumping

Jumping is one of the next big skills after walking. This program offers you exercises and activities that can help your little one get those feet off the floor! These are things you can do to help them build their muscles and coordination in preparation for jumping. We'll also give you tips for increasing their interest in jumping! We created this guide with common questions we get asked and activities we have seen make a big difference! Let's get jumping!



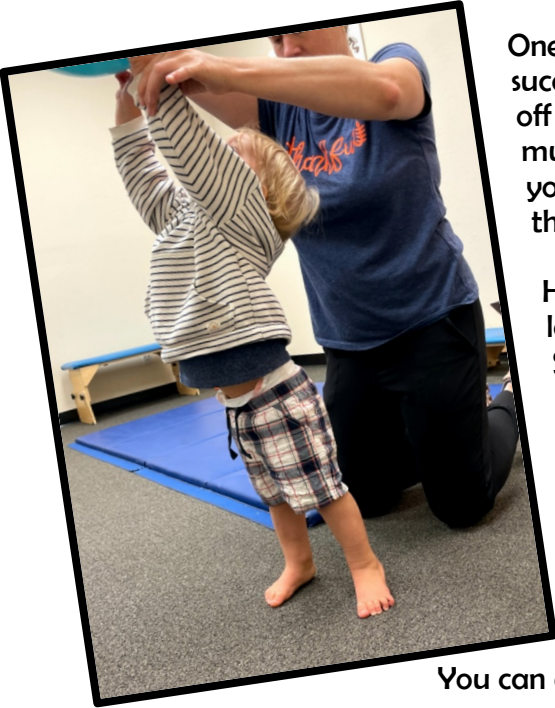
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Week 1 – Rise Onto Toes

Where do you start with helping your little one prepare to jump? It's great if they have the concept of jumping but even if they don't, we still have you covered!



One of the major muscles needed to successfully jump is the calf, so let's start off by building up some strength in that muscle! Find a toy (or other item) that your child is motivated by and have them try to reach up for it.

How do you do this? Well, there are lots of ways. One way is to put Squigz or other items on a window. This lets them have a little support as they try to go up on their toes to reach the item. If this is really easy try holding a toy just out of reach and see if they can go up on their toes without holding on to anything. Sometimes this just takes practice because not only does it require strength, it also requires balance.



You can always help them with balance by lightly holding their wrist or forearm while they reach up. This lets you adjust how much help you are giving so they can start to do it on their own!

Tip:

Make sure your child is coming all the way back down flat on their heels before going up again so they strengthen the full range of the muscle.

Take Note:

Is your child lifting their heels all the way up or just part way? It's not unusual for them to only be able to go part way at first. You can let them go part way and then assist them with the rest!

If you really want to up the challenge you can have them go onto their toes on a soft surface like a pillow or a cushion. This will really challenge their balance while they continue to strengthen their calves!

To make it easier:

Have them hold onto a supportive surface (like a chair) while trying to reach. Make sure to alternate which hand they are holding on with

To make it harder:

Have them hold the rise a little bit longer. Aim for 3-5 seconds before they go back down on their heels.

Please note: While rising up onto the toes is an essential toddler skill we want it to be functional in nature. Staying up on the toes for prolonged, unnecessary, amounts of time and walking on the toes is a sign of atypical development and should be addressed by a pediatric PT*

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Week 2 – Squat to Tip Toes

Now that we've introduced some calf strengthening in, let's take it up a notch and move it to the next level by introducing squats. Jumping requires them to be able to bend their knees and then push off the ground with their toes. So, let's have them squat down and then stand up on their toes.

How can you do this you may wonder? Well you can have a toy where the pieces are on the ground and they squat to pick it up and then reach up high onto their toes to place it in the container. It's ok to start off slow while they are figuring out the activity pattern (squat followed by going up on toes), plus slow requires more control!

Demonstrations are a great way to teach the activity. Since this is multi-step it can take some practice. Show them how it's done and you can get in a mini work out too!



You can play by having them squat to different heights so they are strengthening their legs in the whole range. A mid range squat is going to require the most strength and control and be most similar to what's needed for jumping.

Activity Ideas:

- High Fives! This is great because you can adjust the height of your hand
- Stacking items (cups or blocks) – Build the tower and reach up high to place the next one or to knock them off!
- Bubbles – Catch them on the wand so your child reaches up to pop them!
- Anything with a ramp. Have it so the ramp is elevated and the ball or car rolls down and lands on the ground. This requires squatting to pick it up and tip toes to make it go again!
- Puzzles – Hold the piece up high and the puzzle on the floor so they have to squat to put the piece in.
- Piggy Banks – This one can go either way, coins on the ground and bank up high, or coins up high and bank on the ground!
- Any type of container and small pieces. Clean them up and then dump them out and start over again!

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Week 3 – Purposeful Bouncing

Bouncing is something you may see your child start to do on their own. This is great. Often the first time you see it will be in the crib. [Trampolines](#) are also a great tool for this but definitely not necessary!

So how can you help your child take this skill from the crib to the floor? You can [give them your hands](#) to hold and demonstrate bouncing up and down with them. Move your arms up and down in small (3-4 inches) and fast motions. This can help them follow the motion with their bodies.



We also like to pair the action with words. This helps your child to be more purposeful with what they are doing. Some of our go-to's are 'bounce' or 'down and up'. If you want to prep them for jumping down the road you can go straight to 'bend and jump' even if they aren't clearing the floor!

Decrease the support you are providing when able. Starting off with a lot of help through your hands and then gradually decreasing how much 'bounce' you are giving is a great way to have your child do more of this movement on their own.

Sometimes when your child is trying to bounce/jump they may look like they are [stomping](#). That's okay. It's all part of the motor planning as they learn how to coordinate all the components!



Bouncing often leads to 'accidental' jumping. This is good and should be brought to your child's attention! If you notice they do a big bounce and their feet leave the ground make sure you give them encouragement and excitement for their success. This will help them to distinguish bouncing from jumping and also often makes them want to keep trying to do it again.

Tip!

Incorporate this throughout your day! Since building the strength and coordination for jumping takes time, allowing more opportunities for exercises that build up to the skill throughout the day is helpful.

**** Make sure you are not just pulling your child's arms up without them helping or giving resistance through their arms. This can cause Nursemaid's Elbow.****

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Week 4 – Handheld Jumping

Now that your child is getting the hang of bouncing, let's help them get their feet up off the floor! They may have done this accidentally already which is great (see Week 3 where we talk about cheering them on when this happens). If they haven't, there is no need to worry.

Two key differences between handheld bouncing and jumping is the *amount* of movement and the *speed* of movement.



- Amount of Movement – During bouncing, only a small amount of knee bending is required. Now that we are working on full jumping, a larger amount of knee bend will be needed.
- Speed of Movement – Bouncing is a quicker movement with more rapid and consecutive bending and straightening of the knees. Jumping is going to require a *slower bend* and then a *quicker straightening* to get those feet off the ground.

Pair your demonstration with key phrases just like in bouncing. You can use 'bend' or 'down' with the first part of the movement and 'jump' with the second part. This will help your child to associate the word with the activity.

Make sure you aren't pulling your child's arms above their head. Here are ways to safely help them!

Mimicry is great! Whether you are holding your child's hands or they are using a trampoline/crib, try demonstrating the jump while they are trying. This can be super helpful while your child is learning the movement patterns!

Common Challenges

- Your child won't bend/unlock their knees: Give them a little tickle behind their knee to help encourage it.
- Your child can jump in the crib or trampoline but not when they hold your hands: This is probably the most common challenge. They need to learn how to hold their arms stiff so they can get leverage to jump but it feels 'funny' because your hands aren't a solid support like the rail on a crib.
A few things you can do are:
 - Hold their hands on your knees so they feel like they are holding something stable
 - Hold their arms up closer to their arm pits and slowly work your way down to their hands
 - Hold your arms very still (even pin your elbows to your side) so you are making a solid support for them to use
- They will start to hold their arms so they can get leverage but they still aren't getting air: When this is happening you want to time your lift with when they straighten their knees so they can begin to piece it all together!

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Week 5 – Jumping Down

This may sound counterintuitive but jumping down is actually a great way to introduce independent jumping! You can use a small height (don't go crazy!) like a phone book or anything in the 2-4 inch range. By adding the height, they naturally work to produce more force and power! This can nicely translate to jumping on flat ground.

As they start to feel comfortable with a small height you can slowly start to increase the height to a curb or small step. You can start to make it part of your routine if you have steps to get out of



your house!

If your child has started to jump by themselves on the ground and they are trying to jump down with both feet by themselves, it may take some trial and error to know the right height. If they are consistently plopping back on their bottom or forward on their hands when they land, the height may be a little too high. You can either find lower heights or give them one hand to try with. If they still need more help use two hands and then wean down to one!

What is a 2 footed take-off?

A 2 footed take-off is a 'true' jump – you want *both* of your child's feet to leave the ground at the *same time*!

What if they only use 1 foot (or do a staggered jump):

This is something that is seen early on with jumping but shouldn't last long. If it is persistent it could mean that one leg is stronger than the other. If you notice this, along with a stronger preference for one leg in general and your child has difficulty correcting it even with your help, we recommend seeking out a pediatric PT evaluation to help.



Is fear of initiating a jump stopping your child?

Try one of our tried and true techniques: start by giving them 2 of your hands to hold, then just 1 hand, then *you* hold *their* t-shirt, and finally have them do it by themselves!

Motivation can also be key! Finding something to jump onto or in can make all the difference. You can use puddles, piles of cushions, spots, stomp rockets, piles of leaves, or anything your imagination comes up with!

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Week 6 – Jumping Up and Forward

If your child is now able to jump on flat ground and jump down, it's time to progress their jumping skills. So let's work on jumping up higher and further forward. Both of these are important progressions and both require more power generation.



Jumping Forward: Using visual targets on the ground is really helpful for developing this skill and it can make practicing it more fun!

- Start small! Yes, we say this all the time, but starting with smaller distances and gradually increasing the distance can help build your child's confidence and motivation. This makes it even easier to encourage and facilitate longer jumps!
- Make it a Game! How many jumps does it take to get across a room? Can you 'beat' that score?



Jumping Up: Arms are key for this. Having your child use their arms to 'reach' up can help to get a higher jump. Don't be surprised if this throws off their jump at first, sometimes adding in a new body part changes the coordination of the movement.

- Use a spot or target on the floor. Have your child jump up from, and land back on the spot.

Be Creative!

One of the most fun parts about jumping is all the **versatility** and fun that kids can have with it. Some things we like are: **hopscotch**, **obstacle courses**, and so much more!

Have you discovered a fun way to help get more jumping into your child's routine? We would love to hear all about it!



BONUS!

Jumping Over: Jumping over obstacles combines the skill and coordination of jumping up and forward together. This often comes a little later down the line but it is a great way to mix up jumping early on. Just know that your child may need a little extra help with this at first (think back to week 3 and hand hold jumping) and this is completely expected! Don't be surprised if they **step over** the hurdle at first. Start small!

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Congratulations to your courageous jumper and for your patience helping them get there!



Now allow your child lots of practice and variety to refine their skill. Next up for them will be hopping!

Jumping is a hard skill to master! If you've tried this program with your child and they are still having difficulty with independent jumping they may benefit from more focused, specialized, and specific activities. Pediatric PT can help with this!

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