

I saw my baby do it once but not since then

Rolling

How can I help my child?

They roll to belly and then get mad when they can't get back!

Guide to starting or improving your child's ability to roll between being on stomach and back

My baby just prefers to stay on their back



Rolling is a very exciting new skill! It is a baby's first transitional movement. Up until rolling, babies are staying in one place and just work to fight gravity in order to look around or interact with an item accessible in that one position. But eventually babies start to notice and desire things out of reach and need a way to get there!

Let's get rolling!

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Week 1 – Visual Tracking, Reaching, Arm Strength

Essentials for rolling include [visual tracking](#) (watching an item), reaching (desire and ability to contact that item), and strength in each arm to be able to use a push off the ground as leverage.

Practice with visual tracking and reaching can be performed in various positions including on [back](#), [tummy](#), and [while held](#). The easiest would be on back as most of the body is supported. Present an item directly in front and then slowly move it in an arch motion side to side while your baby follows. Eventually you will see attempts to reach the presented item. Though it may be a struggle at first, each attempt helps build strength and fine tune the approach, so allow lots of trial and error. Easier is reaching directly in front or to the same side (right hand reaches toy on right). Harder is reaching across the body. Vision and a desire/ability to get that seen is often the driving force behind initial rolling therefore working on tracking objects or toys side to side and reaching to them will be helpful when it comes time to roll.



Next let's discuss strength in arms to push off the ground. Your child becoming comfortable being on tummy is a key precursor to intentional rolling. Tolerating tummy and working on push the head and upper trunk off the ground by weight bearing on arms helps build strength necessary to successfully roll. Rolling [tummy to back](#) is going to require your kiddo push up off the ground prior to roll. Rolling [back to tummy](#) is going to require your kiddo reach with one arm across the body and push away from the ground with the other arm. So in order to develop this strength we want to encourage ample time weight bearing through forearms and eventually hands with elbows straight. Your child may be doing this well already, but if that is not the case, don't hesitate to help by tucking your child's elbows under shoulders for exposure to this position. This [post/video](#) has ideas that may help!



If you find you need more tips for tummy time skills, please check out our tummy time course!

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Week 2 – Sidelying & Hand-Foot Play

Sidelying is a fancy way to say laying on the side. This is the halfway point between tummy and back and gaining comfort with it can help rolling down the line. Make sure to allow for an equal amount of time spent on each side. You may see your child desire to get out of it or just accidentally roll to back, which is absolutely fine and early practice at the larger motion of tummy to back.

This **position** is also great for working on bringing hands together at midline. Present a toy for your child to hold/manipulate. You may start to see the knees/legs start to come in introducing some core strengthening.



Sidelying Tip/Trick:

If your child is having trouble, you can try laying behind them or adding a pillow along back to add a little comfort/support to maintaining.



Hand-foot play is when your child lifts arms and legs against gravity in order to connect the two, often starting with hands to knees and progressing to hands to feet. This helps build core strength. Once there is a hold on the feet, your child may **topple over** and even if accidental, it is early practice at the larger motion of rolling back to belly.

Hand-Foot Play Tip/Trick:

Introduce your child's feet to them. Pick up feet and gently bring up towards hands. Help your child grasp if needed.

Throwing on some socks with texture, sewn on addition, bell or noise-maker may help increase interest!

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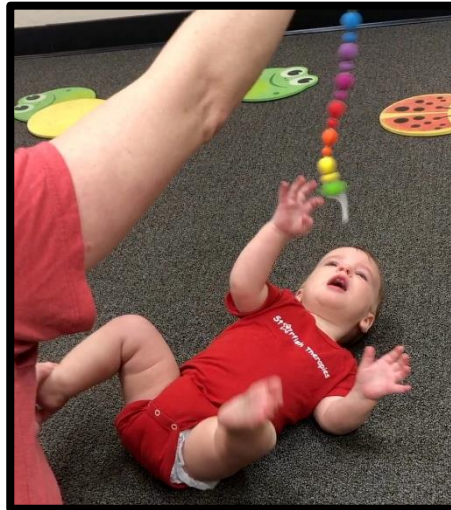
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Week 3 – More Reaching & Half Rolls

Let's return to reaching and now tie it to a half roll. We will start with a half roll from back to side. Have your child position on back. For explanation sake let's talk about rolling to their left and your right. Present an item in front and gain his or her interest in it, as you see your child's right arm (on your left) reach up for the item slowly move it towards your right to

get their arm to continue across their body. If your child stops and returns to their back, restart and use your left hand to guide them across. Now use the same technique the opposite direction!



Now let's work on half roll from tummy to side. Have your child position on tummy with you at the feet. For explanation sake let's talk about rolling over your child's left shoulder. Since your child is on tummy, your right and left are the same, which may help if the above was trickier to understand. In order to facilitate this one, make sure your child's left arm is tucked in. If their elbow or hand

are out away from their body, it will interfere with them being able to roll over it. If necessary help bring it in and keep it there. Next present an item to your child's right side getting interest in it and attempts to reach for it. As your child reaches, slowly bring the item over them towards your left aiming to lead their right hand across resulting in a roll to back!



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Week 4 – Tummy to Back

Now let's complete the roll started last week! Similar to half roll from tummy to side, start by having your baby push up onto extended arms by dangling a toy off the ground. The closer their hand or elbows on the opposite side to the one that will reach is to their body the easier it will be for them to initiate the roll. Once they reach for the item, gradually move the toy up and over their shoulder allowing for their gaze and hand to follow it.



The first couple of times your child completes the roll, it may appear accidental and it may even catch your baby a bit off guard. Encouragement following the transition can be helpful to reassure your baby that it was a good thing that just happened rather than a scary thing.

Some babies need a little extra help to begin completing this roll - providing some help for them at their hip is a great place to start. Using the example above, given the opposite arm is tucked in or close to the body and their right hand is reaching towards the item, you can place your hand on their right hip and gently guide it counterclockwise while gradually moving the toy they are reaching for in the same trajectory. Don't forget to practice both sides!

It's okay if your child's roll is not exactly like what we are describing/showing. It may not look how you expect because baby's problem solve given a specifics of their situation!

Having trouble?
Here is a brief video explaining the components of the movement! Or if you have time, you can check out this longer video!

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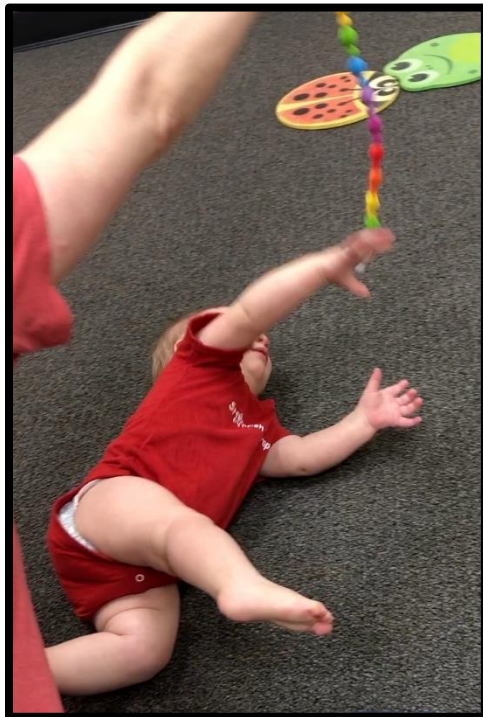
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Week 5 – Back to Tummy

Next let's work on getting from back to tummy. It is important for your child to be comfortable with the destination of being on tummy. It can be hard to get kids to work towards a position they don't like. So if that is the case, check out our tummy time progression to see if that can help!

Similar to half roll from back to side, with your child on their back, present an item in front of them and gain their interest in it. Following the previous example and the pictures on this page, you want your child to reach with their right hand towards the item. As they start to reach slowly move it clockwise to get their arm to continue across their body.



Now that your child will be finishing the roll, more trunk rotation is needed. Some babies may need a little extra help. Similar to week 4, you can help through the top hip. The leg on the same side as the hand reaching should lead the way. If that hip is staying back or directly in line with the bottom leg, you can place your hand top hip and provide gentle encouragement in the clockwise direction.

Don't forget to practice both sides!

Having trouble?

Here is a [video](#) to show in real time how you can help through the top hip!

Here is another [blog with video](#) that may be helpful!

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Week 6 – Rolling Every Which Way

Once your child gets the hang of rolling, you will likely start seeing them go back and forth between tummy and back more frequently and you may start seeing them use rolling to go further distances. If one roll in either direction continues to be challenging, it is completely okay to keep working on them individually!



Rolling with variety or with purpose to get something further out of reach gives your child the chance to work on problem solving. Instead of placing items in the vicinity previously used for a single roll, expand the toy radius to see if you can inspire them to figure out how to use what they know how to do to get it. Your child may need a few attempts to figure out how to be successful. Watch them engage in trial and error and if you really think they need help, just add a little help at a time and see what they can do with it before you add more!

Check out this [blog](#) for a little more on problem solving/motor planning!

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**Congratulations for all your little one's
progress with rolling!**



**Now that your child is rolling all over the
place, you may see them start to explore
other movements. Belly crawling may be
next!**

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