Dr. Leanne Jaye

Research | Childhood Development | Education

TAPESTRY

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS

This free document has been created to support educators in having conversations about fundamental movement skills.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Leanne Jaye is a dedicated educator and researcher specialising in child development, with a particular focus on Fundamental Movement Skills. With a background in Sports Therapy and Strength & Conditioning, she holds a PhD in early childhood movement development. Driven by a passion for improving children's outcomes, she empowers teachers and parents with effective strategies to support and nurture their growth.

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WHAT ARE FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS?

Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) are basic movement skills that form the foundation for more complex physical activity. They consist of three main categories:

Locomotor skills 

Help us move from one place to another such as running, jumping, hopping or skipping.

Object (ball) Control Skills 

Help us to manipulate objects with control, for example a ball may be manipulated when throwing, bouncing or striking it.

Stability (balance) skills 

Help us in maintaining control over our body when we are still or moving, for instance when balancing, twisting or landing.

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WHY ARE FMS IMPORTANT?

As early years practitioners, fostering these skills early on helps children thrive across various developmental domains. Here's why:

Physical Development

• Builds confidence, coordination, and fosters lifelong physical activity habits.

Cognitive Development

• Enhances brain development, improves problem-solving, and fine motor skills.

Social and Emotional Development

• Boosts self-esteem, encourages teamwork, and resilience.

Language Development

• Supports language learning through instructions and spatial vocabulary.

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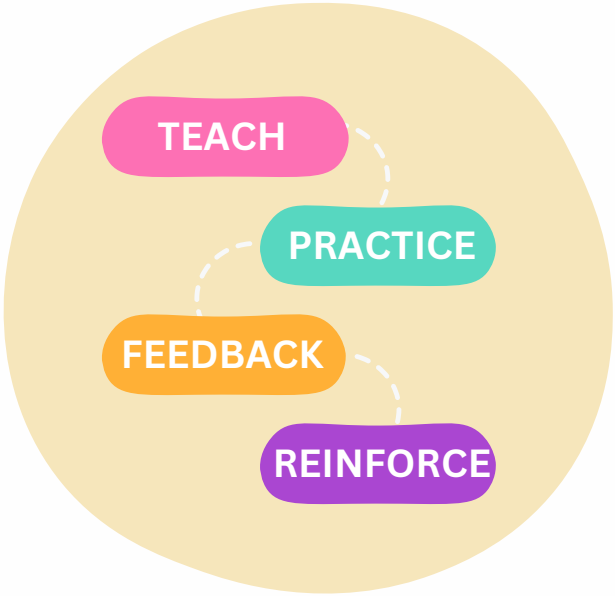
HOW DO FMS DEVELOP?

Children do not develop their FMS naturally (Clark & Metcalfe, 2002, Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006). For children to progress in their FMS development, we need to provide opportunities to teach, practice, feedback and reinforce. (Riethmuller et al. 2009, Logan et al. 2012, Morgan et al. 2013):



TEACH

Children need direct instruction to learn FMS like jumping, throwing, and balancing. Teaching ensures they develop correct techniques, preventing habits that may hinder progress or cause injury. Clear demonstrations, step-by-step guidance, and age-appropriate explanations are essential for effective skill acquisition.

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HOW DO FMS DEVELOP? (CONTINUED)

PRACTICE

Regular and consistent practice is key for developing FMS. Repetition helps children refine movements, improve coordination, and build confidence. Over time, they develop muscle memory, enabling them to transition from basic actions to more advanced movements. This foundation supports participation in sports and physical activities.

FEEDBACK

Constructive feedback helps children understand their strengths and areas for improvement. For example, suggesting adjustments to posture when balancing or timing during a jump can enhance their skills. Positive, actionable feedback builds confidence, keeps children motivated, and accelerates progress.

REINFORCE

Positive reinforcement, such as praise, encouragement, or rewards, motivates children to persist in practicing FMS. This reinforcement builds a sense of accomplishment, strengthens learned skills, and fosters ongoing engagement in physical activity.

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FMS DEVELOPMENT: WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Young children begin to develop their FMS and are not expected to fully master them until around ages 9–10 years. Research shows younger children perform less effectively in FMS than older peers (Adeyemi et al., 2018). Many children in the UK fail to meet expected FMS levels, with those in deprived areas often showing lower skills compared to affluent peers.

Children from Black and White ethnic backgrounds generally perform better in overall FMS and locomotor skills (e.g., running, jumping) than children from Asian backgrounds (Adeyemi et al., 2018).

In early childhood, boys and girls exhibit similar movement abilities. However, as they grow, boys often excel in object control skills like catching, throwing, and bouncing (Adeyemi et al., 2018).

Early years environments and primary schools are ideally positioned to offer **inclusive opportunities for all children** to practice and develop their FMS during the early stages of skill development.

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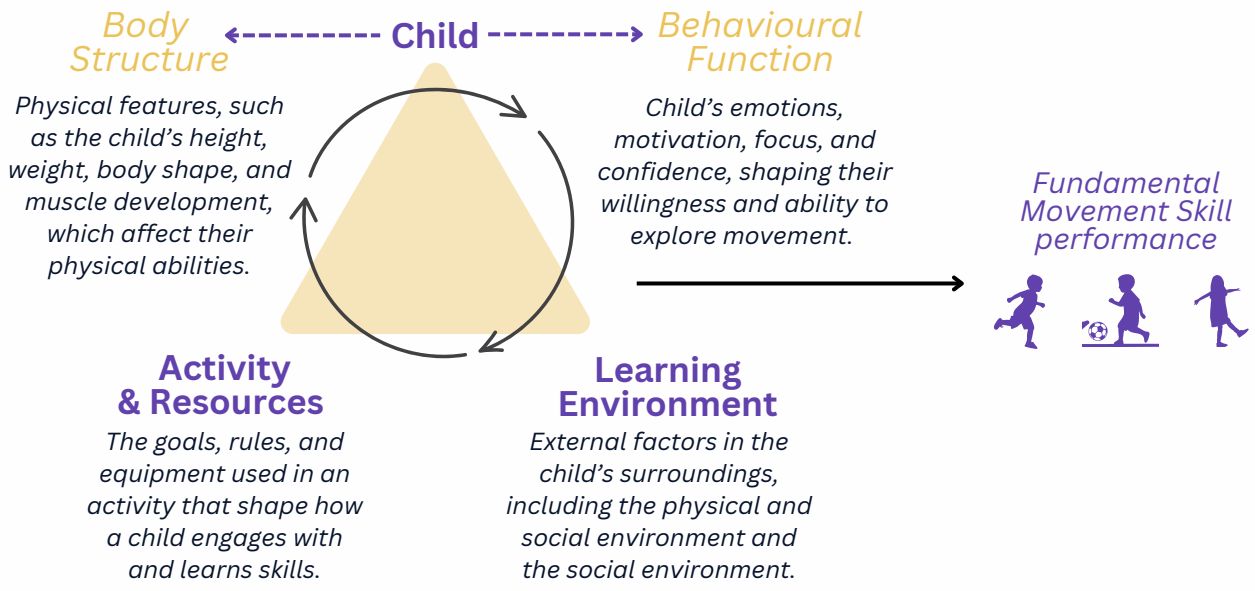
WHAT IMPACTS FMS DEVELOPMENT?

Constraints are any factor that influence or limit how a child or individual develops and performs their movement skills. There are internal and external factors that shape the way movement occurs, and they play a significant role in how people learn and refine their motor skills. Dr. Leanne Jaye's Early Years FMS Constraints Model, adapted from Newell's constraints theory (1986) explains this well and includes 3 main categories:

Early Years FMS Constraints Model



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These constraints interact dynamically, shaping motor skill development. Early years practitioners can modify constraints – for example adjusting equipment weight or environment - to create activities that support skill learning tailored to each child's needs and abilities, fostering effective movement development.

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WHAT IMPACTS FMS DEVELOPMENT?

Primary school teachers have identified various factors they believe influence the development of FMS and engagement in physical activity. These factors are multidimensional, spanning policy, community, and organisational levels (such as the school and home environment), as well as interpersonal dynamics involving teachers, parents, and the child themselves (Eyre et al., 2022).

When you think about the children and families in your class, setting and community, what do you think are the constraints that impact children's FMS? How might you support them?

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WAYS TO PROMOTE MORE PRACTICE

Integrate opportunities for children to practice FMS across EYFS areas of learning. Here are a few examples:



<u>Communication and Language</u>

Activity: Run and Rhyme

• **Objective**: Develop listening and language skills while running.

• **Setup**: Place rhyming word picture cards (e.g., cat/hat, sun/run) at different points around the space.

• **Activity**: Call out a word (e.g., "cat"), and children run to find the matching rhyming word card (e.g., "hat").

• **Skill Developed**: Running – bursts of speed and direction changes.

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WAYS TO PROMOTE MORE PRACTICE



<u>Personal, Social, and Emotional Development</u>

Activity: Catch-and-Pass Friendship Circle

• **Objective**: Build teamwork and social skills while practicing catching.

• **Setup**: Use a soft ball or bean bag in a small group circle. Teach children to say the name of the person they are passing to before throwing.

• **Activity**: Children throw the ball or bean bag gently to each other. Invite children to choose whether they would like the thrower to come closer to them or further away. Can they do a little wiggle dance on the spot when anyone makes a catch?

• **Skill Developed**: Catching – hand-eye coordination and social collaboration.

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WAYS TO PROMOTE MORE PRACTICE



Literacy

Activity: Moving Story Puzzle

• **Objective**: Combine physical activity with sequencing and literacy skills.

• **Setup**: Place picture cards with different parts of a story around the room.

• **Activity**: Children move in various ways (e.g., skip, leap, hop) to collect the cards. Once all the cards have been collected work as a team to arrange them in the correct order.

• **Skill Developed**: Problem-solving, sequencing, and creative locomotion.

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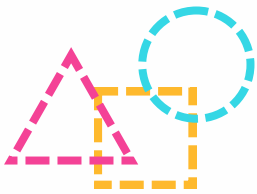
WAYS TO PROMOTE MORE PRACTICE



Mathematics

Activity: Jumping Pattern Path

- **Objective**: Practice pattern recognition and jumping skills.
- **Setup**: Create a jumping path using taped shapes, numbers, or colours in a repeating pattern (e.g., circle, square, circle, square).
- **Activity**: Children jump along the path, calling out the pattern as they land on each shape. Encourage them to continue the pattern by jumping to the next correct spot when the pattern stops.
- **Skill Developed**: Coordination, rhythm, and muscle strength.

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Understanding the World

Activity: Animal Throw-and-Target Safari

- **Objective**: Learn about animals while practicing throwing.
- **Setup**: Place pictures of habitats on buckets and have beanbags or soft balls with pictures of animals in a pile.
- **Activity**: Children throw the bean bags into the habitat buckets that match your clues (e.g., "Throw the animal that lives in water" or "Throw the duck to the place it lives").
- **Skill Developed**: Throwing – aiming and force control.

For more ideas explore Dr. Leanne Jaye's FREE downloadable FMS Activity Pack with simple ways to integrate more opportunities for FMS practice. They are equipped with instructions, skill information and examples.

Empower children with FMS to build strong foundations for better outcomes.

Join the conversation and check out Dr. Leanne Jaye's podcast with Tapestry as we discuss all things FMS HERE!

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RESOURCES

1. Here's a resource for some basic principles on Adapting Skills for Every Child to make them easier or a little more challenging.

2. For activity ideas to promote more practice here's Dr. Leanne Jaye's FREE Fundamental Movement Skills Activity Pack.

3. Checkout www.drleannejaye.com for more information.

4. Link to the conversation on Tapestry Podcast.

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READING AND RESEARCH

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