

Understanding and Observing the Motor Difficulties

Through increased awareness of the specific motor difficulties that may be present, educators will be able to identify children with poor motor abilities and find ways to support them as they engage in physical activities.

A child with coordination difficulties may:

- appear clumsy or awkward
- bump into, or knock things over frequently
- experience difficulty with gross motor skills (e.g., running, hopping, skipping, initiating a jump from a small height, climbing)
- experience difficulty with fine motor skills (e.g., changing clothes, tying shoelaces, doing up buttons)
- have difficulty adjusting movements in response to changes in the environment (e.g., gradually slowing down a movement, changing direction quickly)
- have difficulty figuring out the necessary force and direction to throw an object or ball towards a target
- have difficulty positioning body and hands in an optimal position to catch an object or ball
- have difficulty learning new motor skills; once learned, certain motor skills may be performed quite well while others may be performed poorly
- avoid or appear to be uninterested in tasks that require physical activity
- demonstrate low frustration tolerance, decreased self-esteem, lack of motivation

The following principles will help “M.A.T.C.H.” the activity to the child. *From the [CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research](https://canchild.ca/en/resources###) <https://canchild.ca/en/resources###>*

M.A.T.C.H. the Activity to the Child

MODIFY the Task

This involves changing aspects of a task or a group of tasks that are too difficult for the child to perform. The important thing about modifying a task is that the children can still experience success if they make a genuine effort to participate in the activity.

ALTER your Expectations

Consider what the ultimate goal of an activity is and then think about where you can be flexible. Allowing extra time or the use of alternate methods to complete a task can make the difference between a lesson learned and an experience of failure for a child with coordination difficulties.

TEACH Strategies

Children with coordination difficulties or diagnosed with DCD, have the full capacity to learn with their peers, but may require a slightly different teaching approach. Investigate alternate teaching strategies designed for children with special needs.

CHANGE the Environment

Pay attention to what is going on around a child when he/she is experiencing success or difficulty (i.e. noise, level of activity, visual distractions). Minimize the environmental factors that make performance difficult for the child.

HELP by Understanding

Understanding the nature of Development Coordination Disorder will help you to problem solve and provide all students with rich learning experiences. By encouraging a non-competitive classroom environment that fosters individual achievement, you can help children maintain both their self-esteem and their motivation to participate in physical activities. If children feel supported and understood, they are more likely to attempt new activities and to persevere until they achieve success.

Teaching Tips

When observing children with motor difficulties in physical education class, watch how they perform, not just the end result. Observe what strategies they use to overcome their difficulties. Note how these children interact with peers and monitor self-esteem.



The following guidelines may be helpful:

- **Ask questions** - determine if the child understands the task and prompt them to think about specific aspects of the task and their body position (“Is your body in ready position?” “Where do your arms need to be?” “What happens when you bounce the ball harder?”).
- **Describe movements verbally** – use language to guide the movements that are required (“arms up”, “elbows straight”, “feet planted apart” etc).
- **Analyze and adapt tasks** – change the equipment, adapt the task (e.g., roll a larger ball or roll it more slowly).
- **Little and often** – try short, regular periods of practice each day rather than longer periods once or twice a week. Make these practices part of the child’s routine.
- **Vary the practice** – use different types of balls to catch, coming from different types of throws, from varying distances and directions and draw attention to the differences.
- **Expert “scaffolding”** – support the learning of tasks by making tasks simpler and then building them back up; gradually add complexity to tasks.
- **Move to learn and learn to move** – encourage the learning of motor skills necessary for life long fitness (see Encouraging Participation in Physical Activities at http://dcd.canchild.ca/en/EducationalMaterials/resources/DCDPhysAct_Dec9Final.pdf).

"M.A.T.C.H." Flyers

- [Children with Motor Difficulties from JK - Adolescence](#)
- [Children with Coordination Difficulties - A Flyer for Physical Educators](#)