

# Strengthening Exercise CARDS

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**4 CATEGORIES**  
**38 CARDS**

# Strengthening Exercises CARDS

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## BENEFITS OF STRENGTHENING EXERCISE CARDS:

- A fun way to encourage children to develop muscle strength, balance, and overall body strength.
- Muscle strength refers to the amount of force that a child's muscle generates to support their joints, hold their body in upright postures, and move against gravity.
- Infants and young children develop muscle strength when playing in and transitioning between developmental positions such as prone, hands and knees, kneeling, and standing and during motor play (climbing, jumping, stepping up/down, squatting and standing, running, lifting, and carrying toys).
- The following strengthening exercises are used by therapists to further develop muscle strength and improve proximal stability (stability of the joints closest to the body such as the shoulder girdle and the hip joint) thus providing the support needed for optimal postural alignment and endurance, improved balance, and age appropriate motor coordination.
- Increased shoulder stability and upper extremity strength provides a foundation for increased hand strength and improved fine motor control and precision.
- Improved hip stability and lower extremity strength provides a strong foundation for controlled transitions into and out of positions, efficient gait, and improved mobility skills (running, jumping, hopping, and climbing).

## ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Print Exercise Cards on heavy paper or laminate for durability.
2. Cut out each individual Exercise Card.
3. Organize and assemble into sets by clipping together on a ring.

## HOW TO USE EXERCISE CARDS:

- ☑ The following exercises can be assembled to provide a visual tool for students to use while exercising with therapist or to be offered to families as a home exercise program.
  1. Select an exercise card.
  2. With the adult's assistance as needed, the child is to assume the position depicted on the card.

# CATEGORIES



## Set ①: CORE Strength

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- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SUPINE FLEXION  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CUP STACK        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PLANK        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIT-UPS         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CROSS KICKS      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TABLES       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRONE EXTENSION | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SQUAT JUMPS      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TABLE KICKS  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BRIDGES         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOUNTAIN CLIMBER | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DONKEY KICKS |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BALL PUSHES     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PLANK JACKS      |  |

## Set ②: UPPER EXTREMITY Strength

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KNEE PUSH-UPS   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BALL PRESS          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEATED PUSH-UPS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STANDING BALL PRESS |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WALL PUSH-UPS   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRICEP EXTENSIONS   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUSH-UPS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BALL CURLS          |

## Set ③: LOWER EXTREMITY Strength

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TOE-UPS       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STEP-UPS                                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOOT/ANKLE STRENGTHENING USING A BALL     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WALL SQUATS   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LUNGES  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOOT/ANKLE STRENGTHENING USING A BALL     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SQUATS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LOWER EXTREMITY STRENGTH: USING SCOOTER BOARD | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOOT/ANKLE STRENGTHENING USING SMALL TOYS |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIT-TO-STANDS |   |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STAND-UPS     |   |   |

## Set ④: BILATERAL Coordination

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JUMPING JACKS (FEET ONLY) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCISSOR JACKS (FEET ONLY)   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JUMPING JACKS             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAME SIDE SCISSOR JACKS     |
|   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPPOSITE SIDE SCISSOR JACKS |

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# CORE Strength

## Exercise CARDS

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# SUPINE FLEXION

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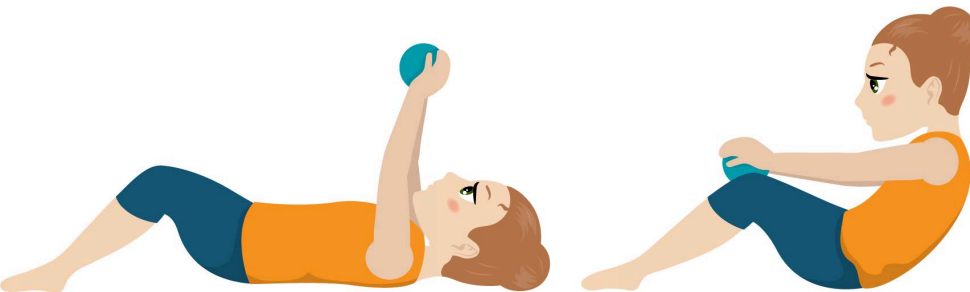
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- ✓ Lay on back with arms extended or crossed on chest.
- ✓ Curl head up off of the floor and flex hips and knees, curling up off of the floor.
- ✓ Hold as long as you can.
- ✓ Try to increase your time holding this position with each trial.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# SIT-UPS

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Lying on a firm surface with arms reaching up, hands clasped or holding a small ball, slowly curl up touching hands/ball to knees.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

If child is unable to do so independently, allow them to start in partially inclined position using a wedge or pillow.

# PRONE EXTENSION SUPERMAN

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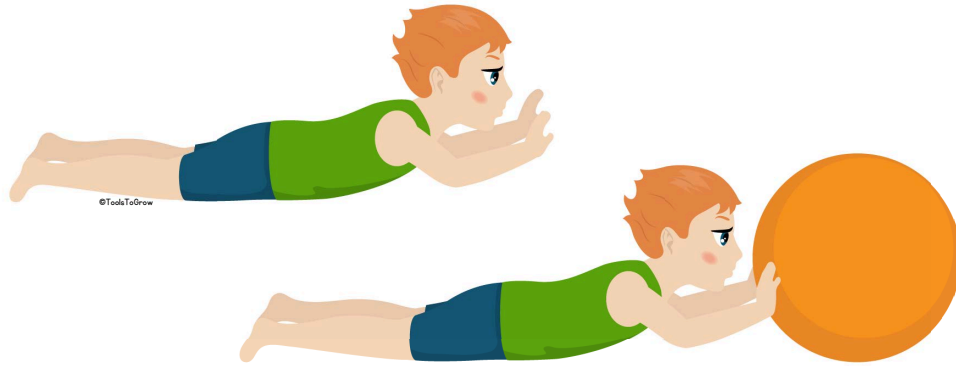
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- ✓ Lying on your belly on the floor, lift arms and legs up off of the surface (fly like superman).
- ✓ Hold this position as long as you can.
- ✓ Try to increase your time with each trial.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# BALL PUSHES

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Lying on your belly on the floor, extend upper body off of the floor, elbows pointing out, and use two hands to push a ball back and forth with another or against the wall.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# CUP STACK

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Lying on belly with 10 cups scattered within arms reach in front of you, use two hands to reach to get a cup and stack them in one stack in front of you. Use two hands at all times.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# SQUAT JUMPS

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- ☑ Starting from a tucked position with hands and feet on the floor, jump out into a push-up position.
- ☑ Next, jump back in.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# BRIDGES

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- ☑ Lying on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor, lift bottom off of the ground, making a bridge with your body.
- ☑ Hold for a count of 3 and return to starting position.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# CROSS KICKS

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- ☑ Start in a hands and knees position.
- ☑ Keeping back and arms straight, kick one leg out straight behind you, lifting the opposite arm straight out in front of you.
- ☑ Hold for a count of 3 and return to starting position.
- ☑ Repeat with opposite arm/leg.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

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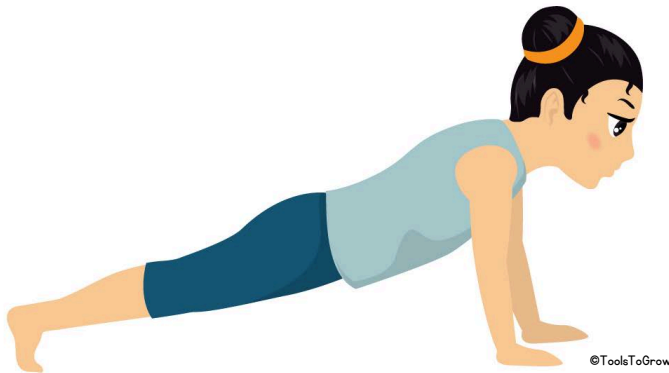


- ☑ Start with hands and feet on the floor, one leg extended out and the other tucked up underneath you, jump and switch legs.
- ☑ Try to keep your bottom low to the ground.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# PLANK

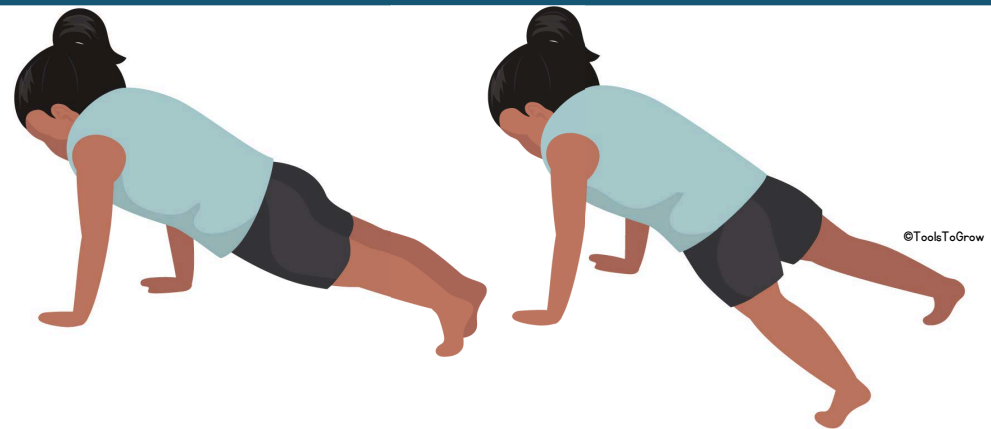
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- ☑ Start with hands and feet on the floor.
- ☑ Hold your body straight in a plank position for as long as you can.
- ☑ Time yourself and try to improve your time with each attempt.

# PLANK JACKS

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- Start with hands and feet on the floor, holding your body straight in a plank position.  
Jump your feet open/closed in a jumping jack fashion.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# TABLES

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Sitting on floor with feet and hands flat on the floor and belly facing up, lift bottom off of the floor to make a flat table with your body. Hold for a count of 3 and return to starting position

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# TABLE KICKS

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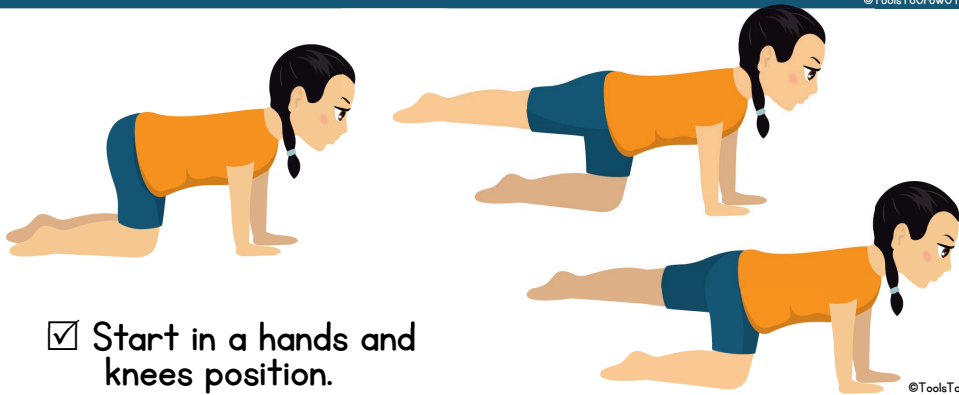
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- ✓ Sitting on floor with feet and hands flat on floor and belly facing up, lift bottom off of the floor to make a table with your body.
- ✓ Kick one leg out and hold for a count of 3.
- ✓ Put that leg down and repeat with the other.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# DONKEY KICKS

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- ✓ Start in a hands and knees position.
- ✓ Keeping back and arms straight, kick one leg out straight behind you, holding for a count of 3.
- ✓ Return to hands and knees position and repeat on the other side.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

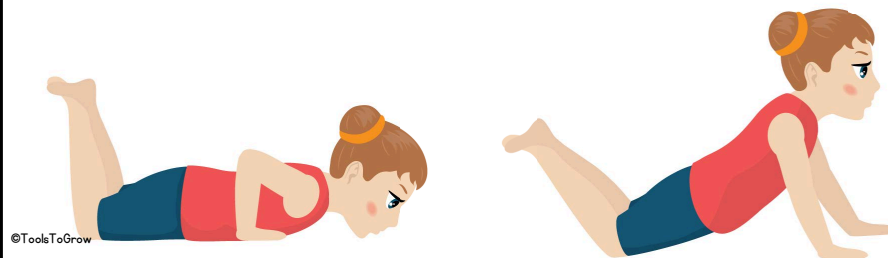
# UPPER EXTREMITY Strength

## Exercise CARDS

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# KNEE PUSH-UPS

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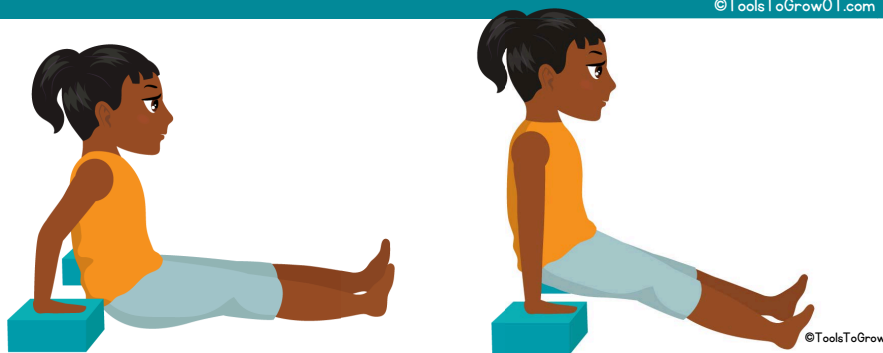
- ✓ Start lying on your belly with knees bent and feet up in the air, with lower leg perpendicular to the ground.
- ✓ Place hands on the floor next to shoulders with elbows pointing up.
- ✓ Push body up by straightening arms. Be sure to keep your body straight.
- ✓ Slowly lower yourself back to the floor.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

\* As you progress, try lowering close to the floor, and then push back up without touching the floor.

# SEATED PUSH-UPS

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- ✓ Sitting with back up against a small step or block, or using push up bars/blocks, place hands behind you on the small step/block with elbows bent.
- ✓ Push up by straightening arms and keeping legs straight.
- ✓ Slowly lower yourself back to the floor.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

\* As you progress, try lowering close to the floor, and then push back up without touching the floor.

# PUSH-UPS

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- ✓ Start lying on your belly with feet flexed, toes extended, pushing into floor.
- ✓ Place hands on the floor next to shoulders with elbows pointing up.
- ✓ Push body up by straightening arms, keeping body straight.
- ✓ Slowly lower yourself back to the floor.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

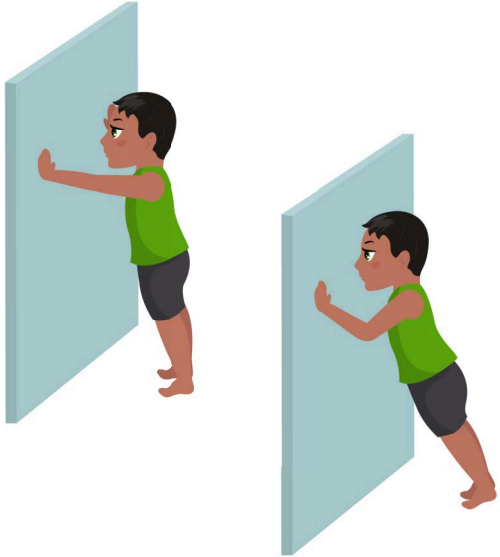
\* As you progress, try lowering close to the floor, and then push back up without touching the floor.



# WALL PUSH-UPS

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- ✓ Stand an arms length away from a wall with feet firmly planted on the floor shoulder width apart.
- ✓ Place both hands, fingers facing up, on the wall in front of you at shoulder height.
- ✓ Bend arms, bringing your face close to the wall (keeping feet planted and body straight).
- ✓ Slowly push and straighten arms.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# BALL PRESS

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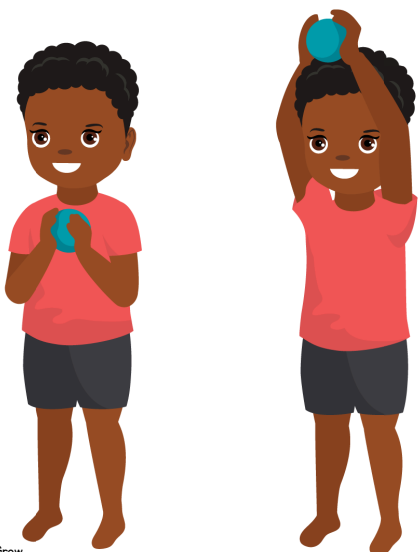


- ✓ Lie on your back on a firm surface, holding a small weight or weighted ball.
- ✓ Push the weight/ball straight up and slowly back down to chest.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# STANDING BALL PRESS

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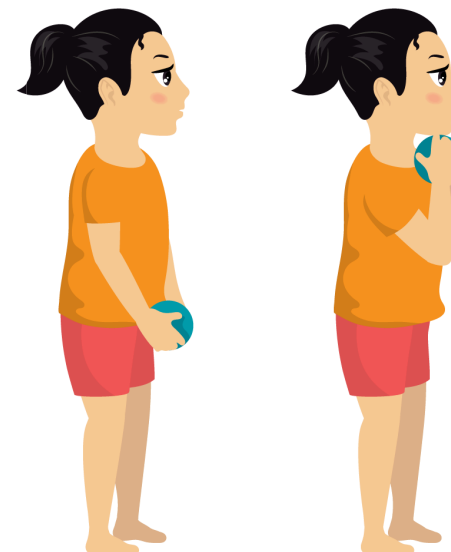
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- ✓ Stand with feet apart and small weight/weighted ball held at chest.
- ✓ Slowly raise the ball up overhead by straightening arms.
- ✓ Slowly lower back to chest.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# BALL CURLS

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- ✓ Standing with feet slightly apart.
- ✓ Hold a small weight/weighted ball in hands with your arms straight down.
- ✓ Slowly bend elbows to lift weight/ball toward chin, keeping elbows close to body.
- ✓ Return to starting position.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# TRICEP EXTENSIONS

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- ✓ Stand with feet apart and arms holding small weight/weighted ball straight overhead with elbows close to ears.
- ✓ Slowly lower the weight/ball back behind head, maintaining elbows near ears position.
- ✓ Return to overhead position.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

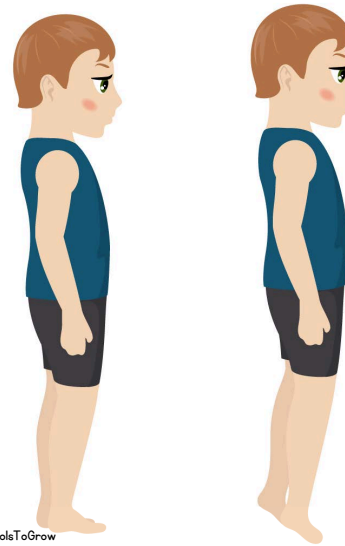
# LOWER EXTREMITY Strength

## Exercise CARDS

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# TOE-UPS

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- ✓ Standing up straight and tall, raise high up onto your toes.
- ✓ Slowly lower back down.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# WALL SQUATS

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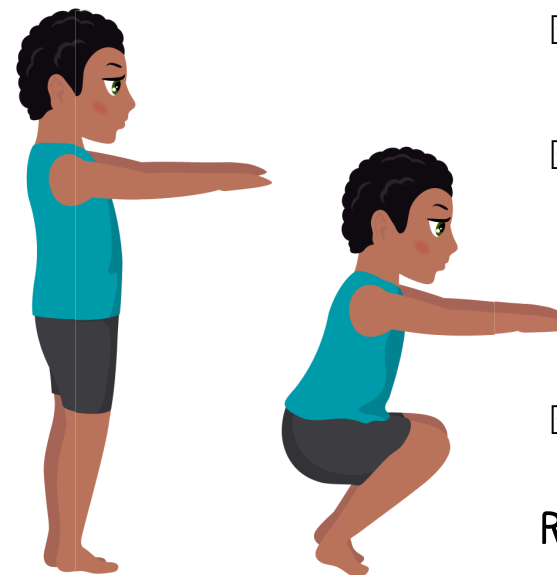
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- ✓ Stand with your back against the wall and feet about one foot from the wall.
- ✓ Slowly slide your back down the wall, pretending to sit in an invisible chair.
- ✓ Hold for a count of three.
- ✓ Make sure to keep your back and shoulders against the wall.
- ✓ Slide back up into standing.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# SQUATS

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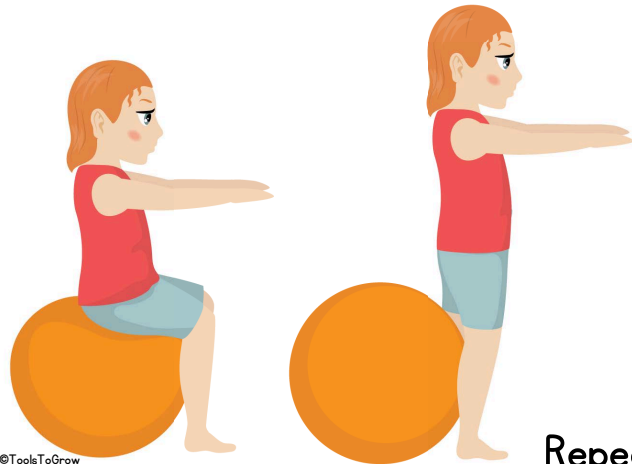
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- ✓ Start in a standing position with feet slightly apart.
- ✓ Squat down to the floor, as far as you can while keeping trunk upright and without losing balance.
- ✓ Stand back up.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# SIT-TO-STANDS

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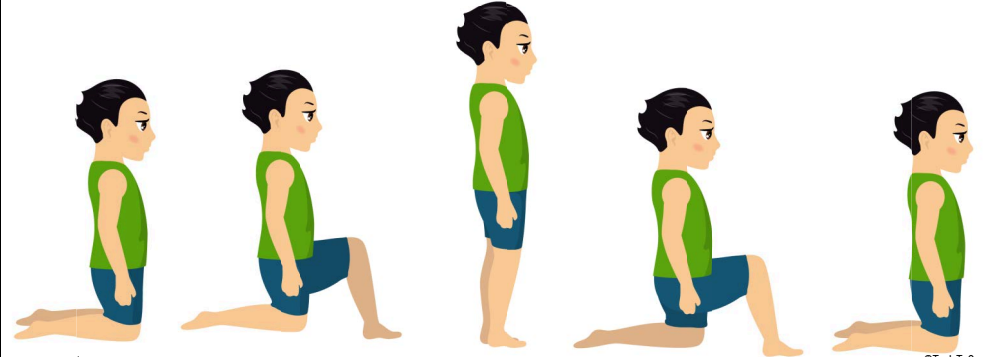
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- ✓ Start in a seated position on a bolster, stabilized ball, or small chair.
- ✓ Lean forward and stand without using upper extremities for support.
- ✓ Slowly return to sitting.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# STAND-UPS

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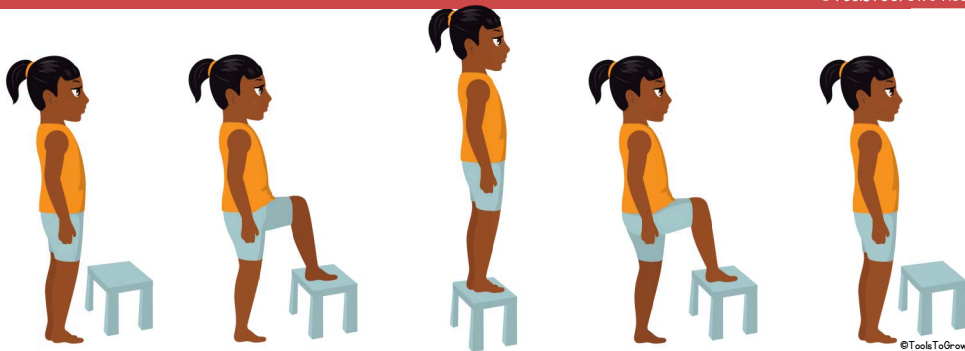
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- ✓ Start in a tall kneeling position.
- ✓ Raise one leg up and push using that leg to stand up.
- ✓ Do not use hands on floor or furniture while standing or returning to kneel.
- ✓ Return to tall kneel through the same motion

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# STEP-UPS

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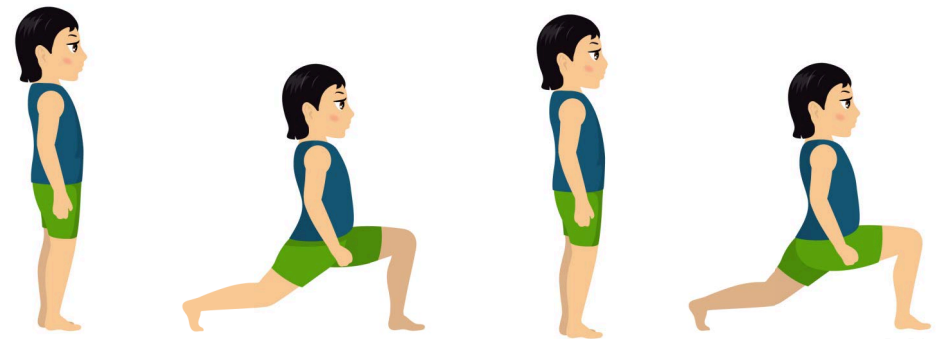
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- ✓ Stand on floor facing a small step, curb, or bench.
- ✓ Step "up, up, down, down, \_\_\_\_\_ times leading with \_\_\_\_\_ foot.
- ✓ Repeat, leading with opposite leg.

**VARIATIONS:** (1) Play music and encourage child to keep going until the song ends. (2) Put colored spots on the floor to each side of the bench or step. Shout out which color to step to, stepping front/back to strengthen hip flexion/extension and to each side to strengthen hip abduction/adduction.

# LUNGES

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- ✓ Start in a standing position with feet slightly apart.
- ✓ Take a large step forward, bending back knee toward the floor, and then step back into starting position.
- ✓ Repeat on other leg.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# LOWER EXTREMITY STRENGTH SCOOTER BOARD

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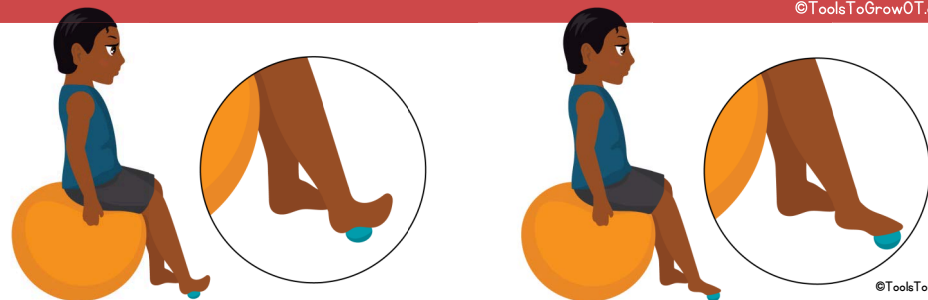


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- ✓ Seated on a scooter board, use lower extremities to:
  - Pull forward by flexing knees (strengthens knee flexors = hamstrings) or
  - Push backward by extending knees (strengthens knee extensors = quadriceps).
- ✓ Dig heels into the floor and point toes up to ceiling (strengthens ankle dorsiflexion).

# FOOT/ANKLE STRENGTHENING USING A BALL

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- ✓ Sit on a bench or small chair with foot on a small ball.
- ✓ Move the ball back and forth from under your heel to under the balls of your feet. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.
- ✓ Use your foot to move the ball in a circle, clockwise, and counter-clockwise. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times in each direction.

\*Keep hip and leg still while moving foot/ankle.

# FOOT/ANKLE STRENGTHENING USING BUBBLES

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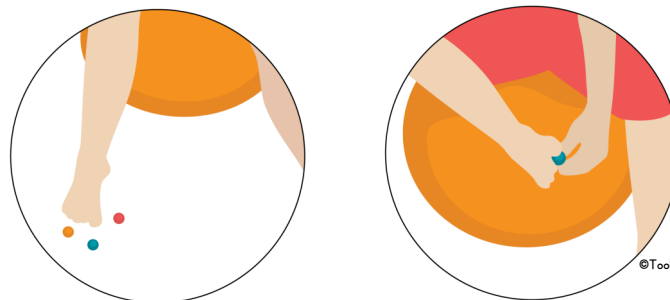


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- ✓ Sit on a bench or small chair with foot on floor.
- ✓ Keep hip and leg still, heel down, lifting foot up/to sides to pop bubbles or touch toy held by therapist or parent.

# FOOT/ANKLE STRENGTHENING USING SMALL TOYS

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- ✓ Sit on a bench, chair or small ball with foot on floor.
- ✓ Using toes to grab small toys, cubes, or checkers, lift leg and turn foot to reach the toy with hand.

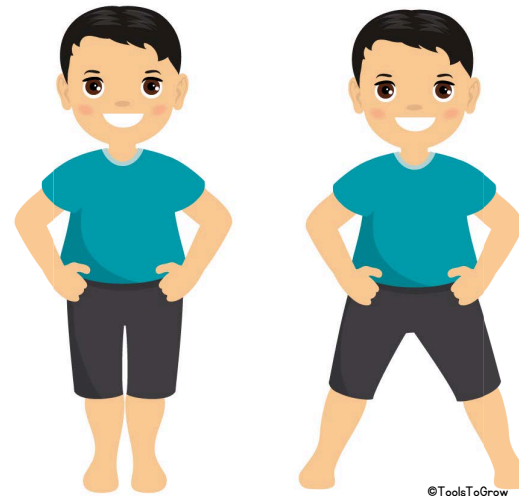
# BILATERAL Coordination

## Exercise CARDS

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# JUMPING JACKS FEET ONLY

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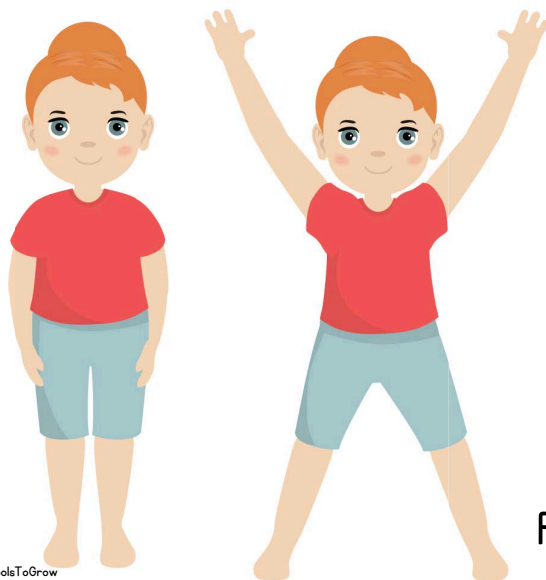


- ✓ Start by standing with feet together on a shape or marked area.
- ✓ Jump feet open (feet off of the shape/marker), jump closed.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# JUMPING JACKS

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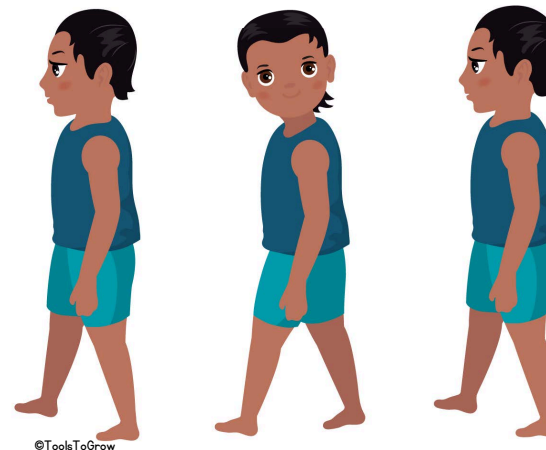
- ✓ Start by standing with feet together on a shape or marked area, arms down at sides..
- ✓ Jump feet open (feet off of the shape/marker) while opening arms up overhead, then jump feet closed while bringing arms back to sides.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

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# SCISSOR JACKS FEET ONLY

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- ✓ Using a line on the floor for a visual marker, stand with one foot in front of the line and one foot behind the line, feet facing forward.
- ✓ Jump up and switch legs in a scissor fashion.
- ✓ Jump feet back to starting position.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

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# SAME SIDE SCISSOR JACKS

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- Using a line on the floor for a visual marker, stand with one foot in front of the line and one foot behind the line, feet facing forward and hands at sides = right arm alongside right leg and left arm alongside left leg.
- Jump up and switch arms/legs in a scissor fashion.
- Jump arms/legs back to starting position.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

# OPPOSITE SIDE SCISSOR JACKS

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- Using a line on the floor for a visual marker, stand with one foot in front of the line and one foot behind the line, feet facing forward and hands at sides (right arm alongside left leg and left arm alongside right leg).
- Jump up and switch arms/legs in a scissor fashion.
- Jump arms/legs back to starting position.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.