

Developing the Skills

Children develop at **different** rates at different times and this **varies** from child to child. Each child is **unique** and you will need to provide **each child** with opportunities that are **relevant** to that child's stage of development, motivation, etc.

Children with low levels of gross motor skill are:

- less likely to participate in physical education and sport activities at home, in school and in the community;
- more likely to lead to sedentary lifestyles;
- more likely to experience poor health and low levels of well-being, e.g. low self-esteem, low self-confidence, etc.

Children need opportunities to develop a **wide range** of **fundamental** movement skills, as these are the **building blocks** for **future** sports skills. In Dragon Sport, these fundamental skills are called **Technical Skills**.

Body Management skills are **central** to the development of the other skills, as without the control, strength and coordination that these skills develop, mastery of the other skills will be difficult.

The stages 'as they develop', 'as they progress', 'as they become more skilful' and 'as they apply their skills' should be used as **guides** not rules. It may be helpful for children to acquire most of the skills in a stage before progressing to the next stage but this does not work for all children. However, **failure** to perform more **difficult skills** may be related to **earlier** skills being **less developed/secure** and therefore these earlier skills may need to be **revisited** before further progress in the more difficult skills.

The three categories of Technical Skills are:

- **Locomotor** - skills that take the body from one place to another;
- **Body Management**- skills that help the child control their bodies in a variety of ways;
- **Manipulative** - skills that help the child use, work with or handle a variety of equipment.



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It is important that children experience these skills in a 'play' based environment where they can **explore** and **practise** these skills; learning from one another by 'having a go' together. Once they have had a go you can **work with them** to help them **improve** their skill level. The traffic lights on the back of the Technical Skills Cards will help you identify activities/ practices to develop that skill.

Whilst the skills can be performed in **isolation**, it is important that children develop an understanding of **why** it is important to **develop** the skill. This can be most effectively **achieved** by taking part in an activity or playing game. The **Dragon Multi-skills Activity Cards** provide children with the opportunity to 'have a go' at **applying their skills** in a **game like** context. You can then have a coaching conversation with the children to help them evaluate the **effectiveness** of their skills and consider ways to **improve** their skill level and performance/impact on the game/activity. By working in this way, children **understand** the need for skill development as it gives them a **purpose** for **practise**.

Children will be engaged in these skills in a variety of situations - at home, in school and in different community opportunities. Therefore, it is important that you observe children and provide opportunities to build from **where each child is at** and **what they can do**, rather than sticking rigidly to a set plan for each group of children that might be too easy or difficult. Mismatches between ability and activity can lead to demotivation, loss of self-esteem and possibly injury.

Children need time to develop their skill and will need to revisit skills frequently. Once children have acquired these technical skills, they will need opportunities to **adapt and refine** these skills and **apply** them into new situations. This **transfer** of skill will enable children to develop more **specialised** skills and apply them in more specific situations, leading to **sport specific skills**.

A **foundation** of Technical Skills will enable children to make **choices** about the sports and past times they want to **take part** in and make them more **successful** in those activities because they have the necessary underlying skills and confidence to **transfer** to those new activities.

Please see the 'Which Skills...Which Activities?' Factsheet which identifies the various activities that develop each of the skills.