



# **STRONGER** EVERY DAY:

Strength & Balance at Home

*Strength in Every Body*

**Who this toolkit is for:**  
Parents and Caregivers



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Over half of children in the UK don't meet the government guidelines for daily physical activity – **Active Lives Survey 24-25**

# Welcome to 'Stronger Every Day'!

This toolkit is for parents and caregivers, who want to support the development of strength, balance, confidence and emotional wellbeing at home – in simple realistic ways that fit into everyday life.

It's full of practical, flexible ideas for everyone, including children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

This toolkit has been funded by the Department for Education's [Inclusion 2028](#) grant which aims to increase the chances and choices for pupils with SEND in physical education, school sport and physical activity

Staying active is great for children's health, but movement is more than just exercise.

This toolkit was co-created with Sport for Confidence, a Community Health Service that combines Occupational Therapy, physical activity, and lived experience expertise to make movement accessible, inclusive, and fun for everyone.

It will help you see movement in a new way and find simple ways to add it into everyday life. This isn't about sports or doing things 'perfectly' – movement is a tool for exploring environments, living well, helping with learning, independence, emotional regulation, and wellbeing.

You don't need to be sporty, confident with exercise, or have lots of time or specialist equipment.

This toolkit focuses on small, everyday movements that fit into everyday family life.

If your days feel busy, messy, or unpredictable – that's ok.

Movement doesn't need to look like a planned activity. Five minutes here and there, turning ordinary moments into playful challenges, is often more effective than long sessions.

Some days your child may love moving. Other days they may say "no". Both are normal. This toolkit is here to support, not add pressure. Use it as a resource full of ideas that you can change to fit into your day to day life.



It helps children build strength and balance, grow confidence, focus, and manage emotions.

Every child grows and develops in their own way, and sometimes their journey looks different from others. By noticing and celebrating our child's strengths, and supporting them with understanding and encouragement, we can help them build confidence, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging – both now and as they move forward in their lives.

## Why Movement Matters for Children



- [Supports emotions and mental health](#)
- [Improves focus, memory, and problem-solving skills](#)
- Builds strength, balance, and coordination, which support overall development
- Encourages social skills and a sense of inclusion
- Helps every child grow, feel confident, and reach their potential

### What this means for your child:

When children build strength and balance, they are also developing skills that help them to:

- **Sit and concentrate in class**
- **Manage big emotions**
- **Feel confident joining in with play**
- **Try new things without fear of failing**
- **Become more independent with daily tasks**

Strength and balance are not just physical – they support learning, behaviour, and wellbeing.

Children should be active every day and avoid sitting for too long. A variety of movement can support a child's growth, with strength and balance exercises recommended at least three times a week

to enhance a child's overall development and coordination, particularly for young people with SEND.

Guidelines and laws, like the SEND Code of Practice, the UN Rights of the Child, and the Equality Act, make sure every child can enjoy moving, playing, and taking part.

[See Appendix 1 on page 24 for more details.](#)



The movement journey is one that lasts a lifetime. Building strong, confident, and balanced bodies and minds from the start can shape health, learning, and happiness for years to come.

# So, what do we mean by **Strength and Balance**?

These definitions were shaped by the Inclusion 2028 Young People's Collective, a group of young people aged 14-20 with special educational needs and/or disabilities who share their lived experiences to help improve the quality of physical education and school sport for pupils nationwide.

The toolkit has been designed based on their ideas, showing that strength and balance aren't just physical skills, but also include courage, asking for help, listening, fairness, and creativity.

**Full list of definitions: See Appendix 1 on page 24 for other terms we use.**



## STRENGTH

*means using your body to do things that matter to you, being brave in difficult moments, asking for help, and helping someone else.*

## BALANCE

*is how your body stays steady and responds to movement, how you keep calm, how you listen, and how you make fair choices.*



Even small bouts of activity add up to healthier bodies and minds

### What strength and balance look like **at home?**

#### Strength can look like:

- Carrying a school bag
- Pushing themselves up from the floor
- Trying again after something feels hard
- Asking for help when they need it

#### Balance can look like:

- Staying steady while getting dressed
- Calming their body when emotions feel big
- Waiting, listening, and taking turns
- Adjusting to change or new situations

### A Note to **Parents and Carers**

We know that everyone has their own experiences with movement, which can affect how confident you feel encouraging your child to be active.

You don't need to be sporty or an expert - what matters most is creating safe, supportive opportunities where your child can move, play, and explore.

## Turning **Everyday Moments** into **Movement**



Look around your home and day – strength and balance opportunities are already there.

Dressing, tidying, walking, cooking, playing, and even waiting can all help your child build physical and emotional skills.

Everyday life = movement opportunities

Children who are active now are more likely to maintain healthy habits into adulthood



Movement is not just sport – it's play, games, dance, and everyday activities that build strength and coordination. [Physical activity guidelines for children and young people - NHS](#)

## Strength



### Everyday Strength at Home (With no Equipment Needed)

✓ Carrying shopping, laundry or school bags

✓ Pulling weeds or gardening tasks

✓ Opening jars or bottles *(with supervision for younger kids)*

✓ Moving cushions or furniture for play forts

✓ Pushing doors, chairs or cushions

✓ Helping with household jobs *(sweeping, wiping tables)*



### Play-Based Strength

✓ Obstacle courses using pillows, chairs, or tape lines

✓ Wheelbarrow walks *(child walks on hands while an adult holds their legs)*

✓ Dancing or freeze dance

✓ Wall push-ups or floor push-ups

✓ Playing tug of war with a towel or scarf

✓ Hanging, climbing or swinging at a playground

## Strength (continued)



These activities build muscle strength, posture, body awareness, and confidence with everyday tasks children need for school and home life.

Strength activities can be done seated, supported, slower, or with fewer repetitions.

Strength is about joy and effort, not how an activity looks.

### Think of some ideas with your child:

Use the space below to write down or draw strength activities you could try together.



Ask your child "What fun ways can we move today?" Let them lead ideas to make it playful and engaging.

## Balance



### Balance within everyday routines

- ✓ Walk or push along lines on the floor, curbs, or chalk paths outside
- ✓ Raise one leg while brushing teeth or washing hands
- ✓ Mini balance challenges during TV adverts or between tasks using objects around the room
- ✓ Stepping stones using cushions, paper, or floor markers
- ✓ Move backwards or sideways along a hallway
- ✓ Mindfulness: Short mindful movements or breathing exercises
- ✓ Gentle swaying or rocking: Sit or stand and gently sway side to side or forward/back
- ✓ "Statue" games: Freeze in different poses for fun
- ✓ Climbing trees
- ✓ Yoga poses
- ✓ Reaching activities: Pass objects across the body

## Balance (continued)



Balance activities don't just help children stay upright - they also help children feel calmer and more organised inside their bodies.

Gentle swaying, rocking, reaching, and balancing can help children settle when they feel overwhelmed or restless.

**Remember** - Every child is different, and your child's needs may vary one day to the next

### Think of some ideas with your child:

Use the space below to write down or draw strength activities you could try together.



Ask your child *"Where in your day can we add a fun balance challenge?"*

**Next up:** We will explore how to adapt activities, so they suit your child's needs, energy, and environment.



## Adapting Movements



Every child moves in their own way. Some children may need extra support, while others might want more of a challenge. The table below gives ideas of supported options and ways to progress at your child's pace.

Think about:

- **Your child's ability, energy, and comfort**
- **Which activities feel fun and safe**
- **How you can gradually increase difficulty or add variety**

Adaptation is not about pushing children to do more - it's about meeting them where they are and offering choices.



Children and young people should include activities that strengthen muscles and bones at least 3 times a week. [\*Physical activity guidelines for children and young people - NHS\*](#)

## Adapting Movements *(continued)*



Use the below table as a guide, and remember, small steps, encouragement, and creativity are more important than doing movements “perfectly.”

Activity	Supported Option	If your child wants more challenge
<b>Yoga pose / balance</b>	Remain seated or use support (wall, chair, adult’s hand)	Reduce support gradually, close eyes if safe, try holding longer, add gentle arm movements
<b>Swaying / gentle movement</b>	Keep feet on the floor or remain seated	Lift one foot, reach further, sway on tiptoes, add arm movements or rotate torso
<b>Carrying objects</b>	Short duration, lighter object	Longer holds, heavier object, carry while walking slowly, balance object overhead
<b>Push / Pull</b>	Stand or sit on a flat, stable surface	Add a soft cushion, mat, uneven surface  Add slower or larger movements, increase repetitions
<b>Push-ups / wall push-ups</b>	Keep eyes open	Eyes closed (if safe), lift one leg, add slower movement, do more repetitions
<b>Gentle movements</b>	Keep still	Move slowly, add arm/leg movements, sway, twist, reach in different directions
<b>Stepping / hopping</b>	Step on a low, stable surface or small hops in place. Raise legs from seated	Step or hop on uneven surfaces, increase height or distance, try one-legged hops
<b>Throwing / catching</b>	Use a larger or soft ball or balloon, sit or stand close	Use smaller or heavier ball, increase distance, throw overarm or with non-dominant hand, add movement between throws
<b>Seated stretches</b>	Stretch arms, shoulders, or legs while seated	Extend further, reach opposite directions, hold longer, combine stretches with breathing
<b>Core twists / gentle rotations</b>	Sit or lie supported, rotate slowly	Lift feet off floor, rotate faster or further, hold position for a few seconds



### TOP TIP

- **Start simple:** Begin with supported options and progress at your child’s pace.
- **Use everyday items:** Chairs, cushions, or soft toys make exercises safe and fun.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Every attempt builds strength, balance, and confidence.
- **Safety:** Movement is more fun and helps children grow, when they try new things safely. Positive risk-taking means letting your child try different or more challenging activities while keeping them safe.
- **No need for perfection:** The key is to have fun, try new things, and keep moving.
- **Adapt for your child:** Every child is different. Adjust the activity, duration, or support to match their needs. This can vary day to day.



**“Strength and balance start with a little bit of fun.”**

Children and young people should include activities that strengthen muscles and bones at least 3 times a week.

*Physical activity guidelines for children and young people* NHS

## Strength and Balance **Activity Cards**



The toolkit includes **Strength & Balance Cards**, co-created with young people from Inclusion 2028's Young Person's Collective, designed to be fun, simple, and easy to use at home.

[LINK TO CARDS AND IMAGE](#)

Each card includes three elements:

1. **Movement Challenge** – Simple activities to build strength, balance, coordination, or posture. You can do them anywhere: the living room, garden, hallway, or even while waiting for a bus.
2. **Positive Words** – Encouraging phrases to help your child feel confident and resilient.
3. **Kind Action** – Small ways to show empathy and connection to siblings, parents, or friends.



You don't need to have the cards with you. Look at them and use the activities at other times during the day or make up your own ideas!

### Using the cards every day

**Morning boost:** Pick a card after breakfast to start the day with positive energy.

**Before bed:** Gentle stretches or balance moves to feel calm.

**Everyday tasks:** Add a challenge before chores or transitions.

**Homework break:** Quick movement break to help your child focus

**Family game:** Everyone picks a card and tries the activity together.

**Outdoor play:** Use cards in the garden, park, or on walks.



- Let your child choose what feels comfortable for them.
- Encourage small steps and gradual progress.
- Celebrate effort and creativity, not just doing it "perfectly."
- Adapt activities for your child – it might look different each time depending on energy, time, space etc – refer the earlier table

# Sensory Processing: How We Experience the World

**Every child experiences the world in their own way.**

**Sensory processing** is how the brain makes sense of information from the body and surroundings, including:



### Sight

lights, colours, movement

### Sound

voices, music, traffic

### Touch

clothes, textures, hug

### Taste and smell

food, smells in the kitchen or outside

### Proprioception

knowing where your body is in space  
e.g., pushing, pulling, carrying, lifting objects

### Vestibular

sense of balance and movement  
e.g., swinging, spinning, rocking, tilting head back

### Interoception

sensing internal body signals e.g., hunger, thirst, needing the toilet, feeling your heartbeat

This affects a child's **emotions, attention, behaviour, and how they move.**

All responses are normal – some children are **more sensitive**, while others **seek extra sensory input** to feel calm or alert.



Sensory differences are not something to fix. Understanding how your child experiences the world helps you support them more effectively.

**Some children who are sensitive to sensory input may:**

- Cover their ears or squint in bright lights
- Feel anxious in crowded places
- Avoid certain textures or unexpected touch

**Children who seek extra sensory input may:**

- Move or fidget often
- Touch objects, walls, or textures
- Jump, spin, or rock to feel regulated

**Try this:**

Watch your child for 5 minutes during play. Can you notice if they avoid, seek, or enjoy different sensations? Use this learning to adapt activities to their needs.

**TOP TIPS THAT WORK FOR THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN**

- Create calm spaces: A quiet corner with soft lighting, cushions, or favourite toys.
- Keep predictable routines: Children feel safer when they know what's coming next. You can use visuals such as Now/ Next or daily schedules.
- Add movement breaks throughout the day: Short jumping, stretching, balancing, or dancing games.
- Use sensory tools: Fidget toys, textured balls, soft fabrics, or anything your child enjoys.
- Follow your child's lead: Notice what helps them calm down, focus, or feel alert, and offer it naturally throughout the day.

**Remember:**

- All children are different - adapt strategies to your child's needs and mood.
- Celebrate small wins, like trying a new taste or texture, or completing a balance move.



**Need Extra Support?**

If sensory responses affect daily life, you can:

- Speak to your child's school
- Contact your GP or local services
- Ask an Occupational Therapist for advice

Words That Build **Confidence**



Using positive, encouraging words during movement helps children feel confident, motivated, and proud. Small comments, reflections, and reminders can make everyday movement safe, fun, and rewarding.

**Ways to Build Confidence Through Words**



**Encourage during play:**

Pair movement with kind words during games, obstacle courses, or free play.

**Visible positive messages:**

Place short encouraging notes where your child will see them- e.g. on mirrors, in lunchboxes, or on their bedroom wall.

**Create positive words together:**

Let your child draw or write notes that show their strengths, achievements, or goals.

**Daily reflection:**

Spend a few minutes each morning or evening sharing a positive thought to start the day or something that went well.

**Movement with encouragement:**

Add supportive words during movement.

**Playful praise:**

Turn encouragement into part of the game.

**Simple reflection questions:**

Ask things like, "What part did you enjoy most?" or "What felt easier today?"

**Remember**

It's not about saying the "perfect" words. Noticing effort, naming strengths, and encouraging your child to try again helps them feel confident and ready to move.

## Words That Build Confidence *(continued)*

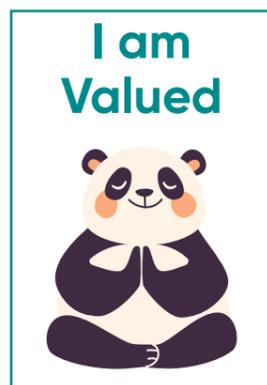


### TOP TIPS

- **Celebrate strengths:** Notice what your child does well – e.g. balance, coordination, energy, or enthusiasm.
- **Use positive language:** Replace “can’t” with “learning to” or “working on”.
- **Link to interests:** Connect activities to things your child enjoys.
- **Build on strengths:** Use skills your child feels confident in to support new challenges.
- **Focus on Growth:** Encourage personal progress instead of comparisons with others.
- **Give Time:** Allow children to explore and learn at their own pace
- **Model Positivity:** Show that mistakes are learning opportunities.
- **Offer Choice:** Let children decide how and when to move or participate.



*“You managed that balance really well.”*  
*“I noticed how you kept going, even when it was tricky.”*  
*“You’re getting stronger and more confident with each try.”*  
*“I like how you figured out that tricky step.”*



- I am kind
- I am enough
- I am confident
- I am strong
- I am special
- I am courageous

## Key Takeaways



### All Movement Counts

Stretching, hopping, balancing, dancing, or even carrying shopping bags - every move helps your child grow.



### Celebrate Effort

Praise effort, not perfection. Every movement builds confidence.



### Adapt for your Child

Adjust activities to suit your child’s needs, ability, mood, and energy. Remember, what works one day might look different the next - every day can be a little different.



### Everyday Opportunities

Play, household tasks, walks, or breaks are all chances for movement.



### Support Wellbeing

Use calm spaces, routines, movement breaks, and encouraging words.



### Fun is Key

Make movement playful, safe, and enjoyable - it feels best when it’s fun!

# Conclusion

## You don't need to use every idea in this toolkit.

If one small change helps your child feel stronger, calmer, or more confident, that is brilliant!

Every child is different, and every family has their own routine. Use this toolkit to explore movement in ways that suit your child, make it part of everyday life, and have fun together.

Remember, it's not about perfection; it's about moving, laughing, and growing stronger every day!

**Thank you for taking the time to explore this toolkit and support your child's growth, confidence, and wellbeing.**

**Your encouragement and involvement make a real difference!**

Any questions, contact: [SEND@youthsporttrust.org](mailto:SEND@youthsporttrust.org)



Regular physical activity improves mood, self-esteem, and resilience in children.



## Frequently Asked Questions (Parent FAQs)

### What if my child doesn't want to join in?

Saying 'no' is communication. Your child may be feeling tired, overwhelmed, unsure or seeking choice. Try offering a choice, adapting the activity, or joining in yourself. Observing is still learning.

### How much movement is enough?

Little and often is best. Short movements spread across the day are better than one long session.

### My child isn't 'sporty' – will this still help?

Yes! This toolkit is about moving in everyday life, feeling confident, and having fun, not about being good at sports.

### Is this suitable for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

Yes! The activities can be adapted to fit your child's needs and daily routine. Use this toolkit as a helpful guide to find what works best for your child.

Any further questions, contact: [SEND@youthsporttrust.org](mailto:SEND@youthsporttrust.org)

# APPENDICES:

## Appendix 1 - Glossary

### 1. Definitions:

**Physical Activity** – any movement that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movement including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work or domestic activities.

**Occupational Therapy** – takes a whole-person approach to both mental and physical health and wellbeing enabling individuals to achieve their full potential.

**Emotional Regulation** – the ability to manage and influence emotional experiences and responses, deciding which emotions arise, when they occur and how they are expressed, to maintain balance and function effectively.

**Sensory Processing** – how the brain receives, interprets, and organises information from the senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, balance, body awareness) to understand the world, respond appropriately and carry out daily activities, learning and social interactions.

**Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND)** – a child or young person has special educational needs and/or disabilities if they have a learning difficulty and/or a disability that means they need special health and education support, we shorten this to SEND.

**Inclusion 2028** – a grant funded by the Department for Education aiming to improve the chances and choices for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in physical education, school sport and physical activity.

**Young Person Collective** – a group of young people aged 14-20 with special educational needs and/or disabilities who share their lived experiences to help improve the quality of physical education and school sport for pupils nationwide.

### 2. Key Guidance and Expectations

**The UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines**, which recommend that children take part in muscle- and bone-strengthening activities at least three times a week, alongside activities that build balance and coordination. The guidelines also highlight the importance of reducing sedentary time and breaking up long periods of sitting with light movement. Schools can play a key role by weaving movement into lessons, breaktimes, and playground activities.

**The SEND Code of Practice (2015)**, which promotes inclusive, person-centred education that supports participation and independence. It affirms that all professionals should look to enable children and young people to make choices for themselves from an early age and support them in making friends and staying safe and healthy.

**UN Rights of the Child** – Children have the right to play, rest, participate, and develop to their full potential. Inclusive movement opportunities help ensure these rights are upheld within the school environment.

**Equality Act (2010)** – Schools have a duty to:

- Make reasonable adjustments
- Ensure disabled pupils are not disadvantaged

### 3. Equipment

#### Free or Low-Cost Options

You don't need fancy equipment – everyday items and simple activities can help your child move, build strength, and have fun.

- **Building a fort or obstacle course:** Use cushions, chairs, or blankets for an indoor adventure.
- **Using everyday objects:** using socks to play a game of indoor bowls
- **Digital resources:** Free children's yoga or movement videos online, e.g., Cosmic Kids Yoga
- **Active games:** Tag, hopscotch, or playground games with siblings or friends.
- **Skipping rope**
- **Outdoor play:** Trees, climbing gates, or natural obstacles in parks or the garden.
- **Fidget toys:** Small handheld toys can help children focus and self-regulate

#### Equipment That Requires More Resources

Some activities need extra equipment, see suggestions below:

- **Resistance bands**
- **Light weights** (or you can use cans, or water bottles)
- **Local sports clubs or swimming lessons**
- **Trampoline**
- **Garden play equipment:** E.g. Climbing frames, stilts, pogo sticks, swings.
- **Gardening tools:** Plants, pots, spades, rakes, wheelbarrows
- **Balance beams or stepping stones**
- **Yoga mat:** Useful for stretching, yoga, or floor exercises.
- **Boxing equipment**
- **Community play structures:** E.g. swings, slides, climbing frames at parks or local centres.

## TOP TIPS

- Be creative! Many household items can be used safely for movement and balance.
- Mix and match: Combine free and more structured options depending on space, time, and your child's needs and interests.
- Encourage variety: Different activities help build strength, balance, coordination, and confidence in fun ways.



**The movement journey is one that lasts a lifetime.**

**Building strong, confident, and balanced bodies and minds from the start can shape health, learning, and happiness for years to come.**

**Scan the QR below and  
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