

DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS

CRAWLING

Babies start by propping up on their forearms during tummy time and gradually become strong enough to push up onto their hands. They will then begin to lift arms and legs off of the floor and finally gain the strength to reach for toys with one hand when resting on their tummies and even begin to pivot around to reach a toy behind them in this position.

Next, babies will begin “commando crawling” or creeping forward on their bellies and this movement will eventually give way to an all fours position. Once baby becomes comfortable transitioning from sitting to all fours and back again, he will begin to put the movements together to crawl with reciprocal movement of the legs and arms.

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Why is crawling important for development?

- Crawling helps babies develop strength in the muscles of the neck, core, arms, and hips.
- Through crawling, babies are able to integrate some of the primitive reflexes (involuntary, protective movements) so that they can develop purposeful, controlled, and coordinated movements of the body.
- Babies develop bilateral coordination (coordinated use of both sides of the body together) through crawling.
- The muscles in babies' hands become stronger and more developed through crawling.
- Crawling contributes to the development of visual perceptual and visual motor skills.

How to encourage crawling:

- Provide plenty of opportunities for tummy time and play in other positions on the floor (side lying, on back, etc.).
- Place toys on a cushion or other low surface to encourage play on the knees.
- Place a rolled towel or small blanket under baby's tummy during tummy time to help him prop onto hands and knees.
- Place toys just out of reach during tummy time.
- Limit the amount of time your baby spends in a car seat, carrier, stroller, or swing.

Once baby is an official crawler, you can try:

- Crawling over pillows and cushions
- Chasing a ball or other rolling object (e.g. coffee can) or blowing bubbles and crawling after them
- Crawling races
- Crawling on the grass outside with close supervision