



# CORE STENGTHENING IN THE CLASSROOM

Renee France, PT, DPT

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## WHAT IS THE CORE?

The core/trunk is a stable base that allows for participation in life's daily activities

It includes your diaphragm, pelvic floor, abdominals, back and hip musculature

The core provide stability and support for all movements

Core strengthening involves exercises and activities that enhance the muscles around the trunk of the body

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**PROXIMAL STABILITY**  
→  
**DISTAL MOBILITY**

Stability and strength in the muscles closest to the center of the body (core) supports efficient and coordinated movement in the parts of the body further away from the center (arms, legs, hands, feet)

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**WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

- Balance** – A strong core helps children balance, stay upright, and move their arms and legs while staying still
- Posture** – A strong core helps children maintain functional postures at home and in the classroom
- Coordination** – A strong core helps children coordinate more refined movements
- Handwriting** – A strong core helps children improve their handwriting.
- Motor Skill Development** – A strong core helps them maintain balance and coordination during activities like running, jumping, and climbing
- Efficient Movement** – A strong core contributes to more efficient and effective movement which translates to better energy conservation and endurance
- Prevents Injuries** – A strong core protects the spine and surrounding muscles from injury and can help kids recover more quickly when injuries occur

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## WHAT DOES CORE STRENGTH HAVE TO DO WITH SCHOOL?

Kids are relying on the strength and stability of their core for all activities including:


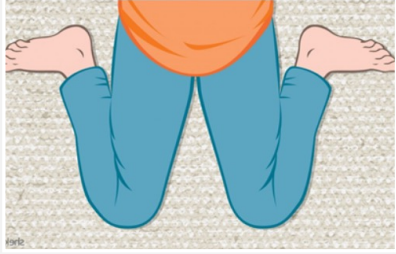
Moving in and out of a chair	Putting on and taking off shoes	Accessing playground equipment	Sitting still and upright	Navigating stairs and other obstacles
Drawing and writing	Managing clothes for toileting	Carrying objects	Using manipulatives	Cutting with scissors

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## SIGNS OF WEAK CORE MUSCLES

- Avoiding gross motor games in gym/at recess
- Delayed milestones
- Difficulty with transitions
- Difficulty with balance
- Difficulty with handwriting
- Underdeveloped pre-writing skills
- Difficulty using scissors
- Fidgeting and having difficulty sitting still
- Slumping or leaning on one hand or on the desk
- Difficulty with unsupported sitting (w-sitting)

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## WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH "W" SITTING

### What is W-sitting?

- Sitting on the floor with bottom between legs and knees bent with legs rotated away from the body, forming the shape of the letter "W" with their legs.

### Why do kids W-sit?

- To achieve a wider base of support and lower center of gravity
- Less reliance on the core muscles
- Typically a compensation for weak core muscles

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## THE LINK BETWEEN CORE STRENGTH AND ATTENTION



When kids don't have good core muscle endurance, they struggle with sitting in one position for extended periods of time, which leads to fidgeting and slumping.



Kids with weak core muscles can't maintain functional upright posture without actively thinking about it, decreasing focus on academic tasks.



A weak core means poor posture and having poor posture makes it difficult to visually attend to tasks.

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## POSITIONING AND SEATING

In the classroom, include both supportive seating options for activities with high fine motor and attention demands AND dynamic, unsupported positioning throughout the day.

- Supportive seating: 90 – 90 – 90 Rule
- Unsupported positioning – freedom to move as much as possible to challenge core muscles in different ways
- Side sitting, unsupported floor sitting, tall kneel and many more...

**90-90-90 Rule**

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# CORE STRENGTHENING POSITIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

**Sitting on the floor**

- Circle time
- Morning meeting
- Centers

**Vertical surfaces**

- Standing, tall kneeling, half kneeling
- Easels, white boards or taping work to wall
- Completing a puzzle or game on a cube chair
- Add reaching overhead to challenge the core

**Quadruped position**

- Playing games or completing learning activities on all 4's

**Prone position**

- Playing games or completing learning activities while lying on the floor on your stomach

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# CLASSROOM MOVEMENT IDEAS TO BUILD CORE STRENGTH

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## YOGA AND ANIMAL WALKS

-  Add yoga activities into your daily routine. You can work on counting while holding each position or do letter yoga.
-  Try animal walks during transitions
-  Songs with actions are another great way to work on core strength within the classroom.

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## BENDING, SQUATTING, LIFTING & LOWERING

Try activities where kids place and retrieve items on and off the floor.

- Place various toys and objects on the floor, call out a letter and have kids find and retrieve an object that begins with that letter sound.
- Present numbers on the board. Place number cards on the floor and have kids retrieve the card with the correct number.
- Place a bucket of letters, numbers or toys on the floor so kids squat down to retrieve them.
- Pull out some Squigz and have kids pull them off the window and squat down to place them in a bucket. You can work on colors by calling out a color of Squigz they have to retrieve.



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## BODY BRIDGES

Experiment with turning your body into a bridge for cars and other toys!

- Simple seated bridge – Sit with legs bent, feet on the floor
- All fours bridge – Hands and knees on the floor
- Plank bridge – hands and toes on the floor, body straight
- Downward dog bridge – Hands and feet on the floor, bent at the hips.
- Crab walk bridge – Crab walk position, lift bottom off the floor

***Challenge kids to count to 5 or 10 while holding the bridge!***

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## CREATIVE CORE STRENGTH ACTIVITIES

### **Weighted Birthday Present**

- Put a 1 lb weight in a small box and wrap it. Sing “Happy Birthday” as you pass the gift around the circle. When the song stops, whoever is holding the gift lifts it above their head the same number of times as their age.

### **Weighted Stuffed Animal**

- Place a 1 lb weight in a stuffed animal and use it for a “Hot Potato” style game. Or try passing it around at circle in different ways (through legs, over the head, etc.)

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## CORE STRENGTH QUESTIONS??

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