

# Missouri Early Learning Standards for Physical Development, Health and Safety

Content Component	Process Standards
I. Physical Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Uses gross motor skills with purpose and coordination.</li><li>2. Uses fine motor skills with purpose and control.</li><li>3. Responds to sensory input to function in the environment.</li></ol>
II. Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Practices healthy behaviors.</li></ol>
III. Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Practices safe behaviors.</li></ol>

children flourish in a learning community where they can directly act on objects and interact with people

## Organization

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he standards cover the broad scope of child development and are organized by:

- I. **Content Component** — the specific content area to be addressed, such as physical development, health or safety.
- II. **Process Standards** — identifiable competencies or capabilities in the process of physical development, health and safety, such as using fine motor skills with purpose and control or practicing healthy behaviors.
- III. **Indicators** — observable milestones in the development of competencies, such as controlling body movements and showing independence in personal hygiene.
- IV. **Examples** — specific behaviors children may exhibit in their development such as balancing on one foot or engaging in active play.

This structure provides us with an accessible way to see how the standards fit into our curriculum and teaching practices.



## Introduction for Teachers

**T**his guide, along with the *Parent Handbook*, is a companion piece to the *Missouri Early Learning Standards for Physical Development, Health and Safety*. It is intended for all adults who work with preschool-age children and their families — teachers, caregivers and/or parent educators. The guide explains the standards and contains practical suggestions for creating engaging, developmentally appropriate learning communities where each child's physical development, health and safety is fostered.

Why is it important to have such standards? In Missouri, the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 called together a group of master teachers, parents and policy-makers from around the state. The Show-Me Standards were the result of that group's work. Those standards are designed for students in kindergarten through grade 12 and serve to ensure that graduates of Missouri's public schools have the knowledge, skills and competencies to lead productive, fulfilling and successful lives.

However, we all realize that the foundations for learning are laid well before a child enters kindergarten. Research tells us that the early years provide crucial opportunities for educators and caregivers to influence children's growth and development. If our goal is that every child enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed, pre-kindergarten educational standards can provide us with shared understandings about the competencies critical for this to occur. In addition, pre-K standards provide a direct link to the Show-Me Standards, so we know that we are preparing children for the high expectations they will encounter as they progress through school.

To this end, the *Missouri Early Learning Standards for Physical Development, Health and Safety* describe the competencies most children should demonstrate by the time they enter kindergarten. They represent a shared set of expectations for preschool children that were developed by drawing upon current research about how young children develop and learn. It is important to keep in mind, however, that children develop and learn in their own unique ways. While research demonstrates that these standards are appropriate for most children who are about to enter kindergarten, our responsibility as educators is to assess where each child is on the developmental continuum and build on what that child knows and can do.

Educators can determine this only through ongoing observational assessment. This guide illustrates some indicators that teachers can reliably assess to show each child's progress over time. This data can be used to plan meaningful, engaging learning experiences that promote both physical development, health and safety and active, sustainable learning communities. You will also find information about creating supportive environments and partnering with parents and families to promote safe, healthy, active living and an enthusiasm for learning. A list of helpful resources is included.





# I. Physical Development

Children love to move and physically explore their environments. This standard refers to children’s abilities to manipulate their bodies and large muscles in increasingly purposeful and skillful ways.

## 1. Uses gross motor skills with purpose and coordination.

Indicators	Examples The child ...
<b>a. Moves from one point to another.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• walks, runs, jumps, gallops and hops on one foot.</li></ul>
<b>b. Controls body movements.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• bends, stretches, turns and twists body parts.</li><li>• rolls body in one direction.</li><li>• “stops” or “freezes” then changes directions while playing a game.</li><li>• balances on one foot (on a balance beam or variety of surfaces).</li></ul>
<b>c. Uses large muscle movements to manipulate objects.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• bats at a ball or balloon with hands or equipment.</li><li>• throws, kicks, bounces and catches a ball.</li><li>• rides a tricycle/bicycle or wheeled toy with pedals.</li></ul>

### Teacher strategies to promote children’s gross motor skills include:

- providing ample time and space for vigorous outdoor and indoor play.
- supplying a variety of playground equipment (e.g., swings, slides, climbing structures, tricycles, wagons, large blocks) for children to actively explore. For safety reasons, playground surfaces should be “soft” (i.e., composed of loose fill such as mulch or pea gravel or with rubber-like material).
- supplying a variety of indoor equipment (e.g., balance boards, large blocks, large foam wedges, ramps, crawl-through shapes, hoops, balls, foam or plastic bats, paddles) for play that increases gross motor skills.
- constructing a mini obstacle course (e.g., with blocks, ramps, balance beams, crawl-through shapes) for children to negotiate.
- providing space and equipment (e.g., pendulums, beanbag targets, plastic bowling balls and pins) for aiming activities.
- engaging children in activities that involve gross motor skills such as imitating the movements of insects (e.g., butterflies, beetles) or animals (e.g., elephants, lions, puppies).
- scheduling daily opportunities for movement experiences in addition to indoor and/or outdoor free play. These experiences need not be whole group activities; they may be short (5- to 10-minute) activities, arranged in various “stations” around the classroom or playground, that children may choose to participate in according to their interests and skill levels.
- planning movement experiences that allow children to participate according to their abilities (e.g., encouraging children to jump as high as they can or to dance expressively to music). These activities should be open-ended and experimental rather than competitive.
- adapting play equipment and the classroom environment so that all children, including those with special needs, can participate in movement experiences.
- engaging the children in movement activities accompanied by music or to a rhythm (e.g., marching, dancing, clapping, stomping, swaying).

plan movement experiences that allow children to participate according to their abilities

# I. Physical Development

During the preschool years, children begin to build their fine motor skills and their hand strength. Individual children at this age exhibit a wide range of abilities with regard to fine motor skills. However, fine motor activities can be a source of frustration if children are directed to perform tasks (e.g., practicing writing letters and numbers for extended periods) that they are not ready for developmentally. Rather, supporting children’s fine motor skill development during the preschool years should focus on providing children with materials to explore and manipulate during play or through open-ended learning experiences such as sorting or art activities. As children engage in these activities, they build the fine motor skills they will need in kindergarten for handwriting, etc.

## 2. Uses fine motor skills with purpose and control.

Indicators	Examples The child ...
<b>a. Performs fine motor tasks.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• squeezes wet sponges, a glue bottle or a catsup bottle.</li> <li>• works with play dough or molds clay.</li> <li>• uses hands and fingers to open clothespins, uses staplers, uses a paper punch, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>b. Uses fingers and hands to accomplish fine motor tasks.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fastens buttons, zips zippers, fastens fasteners or snaps snaps on clothing.</li> <li>• strings beads, macaroni or “O”-shaped cereal.</li> <li>• sorts small shapes in a shape sorter.</li> <li>• builds with small connecting blocks.</li> <li>• laces shoes or lacing cards.</li> <li>• holds paper with one hand and cuts with the other.</li> </ul>
<b>c. Uses tools in a functional manner.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses paintbrushes, scissors and eating utensils.</li> <li>• holds writing tools with fingers to draw or write.</li> <li>• uses woodworking tools with supervision (e.g., hammer, saw).</li> </ul>
<b>d. Exhibits coordination of facial muscles.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attempts to wink an eye.</li> <li>• blows bubbles through a bubble wand or blows out candles.</li> <li>• tries to whistle.</li> <li>• imitates or makes silly faces.</li> <li>• speaks clearly.</li> </ul>

### Teacher strategies to support children’s development of fine motor skills include:

- arranging the daily schedule so that children have sufficient time to deeply engage in activities. Teachers should also model activities, invite children to try new activities and engage in play with the children.
- supplying the math center with various manipulatives and engaging the children in sorting and/or counting activities.
- arranging a well-equipped writing center (e.g., with pencils, alphabet letters, staplers, tape, different-sized markers, various kinds of paper including notepads, receipts or order forms) where children can explore and experiment with writing.
- setting up a woodworking or construction area with various tools for the children to work with under supervision.
- supplying a sand and/or water table with various pieces of equipment (e.g., measuring cups, funnels, scales, scoops, sponges) for the children to use.
- providing a well-equipped art area and plenty of opportunities for children to experiment with art materials (e.g., paint, play dough, scissors, glue, materials to make collages). The focus should be on children making their own creations rather than assembling teacher-made “crafts.” In this way, children have the opportunity to express themselves and solve problems; in addition, they are not so concerned with something not looking “the same” as everyone else’s, which is an expectation that can lead to frustration.
- providing a game and/or puzzle center.
- arranging a well-equipped block area, out of the way of classroom traffic, with enough space for children to build substantial projects. Placing this area near the dramatic play area can also encourage more complex play.
- supplying the classroom computer with appropriate software for the children to explore.
- serving snacks or meals “family style” so that children have the opportunity to pour their own drinks, serve themselves and use eating utensils.
- engaging the children in finger plays, songs, rhythm activities and stories that involve movement, making faces, imitating animals, etc.
- supporting children’s efforts to dress themselves, brush their teeth, clean up, etc.

# I. Physical Development

This standard refers to the child’s ability to take in information from the environment through his senses. Children need to develop their perceptual abilities (e.g., touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing) and learn to interpret and integrate this sensory information. This will help children develop a sense of how their bodies relate to others and the physical environment. As their sensory awareness becomes more refined, they will exhibit their own preferences and learn important safety concepts.

## 3. Responds to sensory input to function in the environment.

Indicators	Examples The child ...
<b>a. Exhibits sensory awareness.</b>	<p><b>Touch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies hidden objects in a “feely” bag by touch.</li> <li>participates in messy play activities (e.g., finger painting, working with clay or play dough).</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>follows verbal directions while playing games such as Simon Says.</li> <li>responds to environmental sounds (e.g., attends when name is called, investigates unusual noises such as a siren or breaking glass).</li> </ul> <p><b>Sight</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>finds details in illustrations in books (e.g., <i>I Spy, Each Peach Pear Plum, Where’s Waldo?</i>).</li> <li>arranges objects by color, size, texture and/or shape.</li> <li>aims a ball or beanbag at a target.</li> <li>follows a line with a finger or pencil.</li> </ul> <p><b>Smell</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>says, “This marker smells likes grapes.”</li> <li>says, “I smell the popcorn.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Taste</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>licks ice cream on a cone.</li> <li>remarks that a food tastes good.</li> </ul>
<b>b. Exhibits body awareness.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies body parts through finger plays and songs (e.g., <i>Hokey Pokey; Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes; Where Is Thumbkin?</i>).</li> <li>creates different shapes with his body (e.g., makes a circle with fingers, makes a bridge with another child).</li> <li>imitates animals with movement of body parts (e.g., uses arms for wings, slithers like a snake).</li> </ul>
<b>c. Exhibits spatial awareness.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>moves body forward, backward, sideways, up, down.</li> <li>plays games involving movement and directions (e.g., Duck, Duck, Goose; Tag; Hide and Seek; Mother, May I?).</li> <li>moves through a room without bumping into people or furniture.</li> <li>negotiates an obstacle course.</li> <li>puts puzzles together or fits blocks into a defined space.</li> </ul>
<b>d. Exhibits temporal awareness.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>moves his body to a rhythm (e.g., clapping, stomping, swaying, marching).</li> <li>adjusts body movements to the tempo (e.g., fast, slow, start, stop).</li> <li>kicks a rolling ball.</li> <li>catches a ball.</li> <li>follows a sequence or pattern in songs or finger plays (e.g., <i>B-I-N-G-O; The Itsy, Bitsy Spider; Where Is Thumbkin?</i>).</li> </ul>

**Teacher strategies to support development of sensory awareness include:**

- providing a sensory table stocked with various materials to explore, and regularly exchanging the materials and introducing new ones.
- engaging children in singing, rhyming or other word games that focus on language sounds.
- encouraging children to investigate and imitate sounds in the environment.
- providing children with opportunities to play with musical instruments or to make their own instruments with objects in the environment.
- asking children to find details in book illustrations during story time.
- providing children with opportunities to make collections and sort and classify objects by color, size, shape, etc.
- engaging children in aiming games (e.g., throwing beanbags at a target, playing ring toss, bowling).
- encouraging children to identify smells (e.g., examining different fruits and discussing their smells; playing a guessing game to identify items by smell).
- introducing cooking experiences into the classroom so children can touch, taste and smell various kinds of food.
- conducting talks about food preferences (i.e., tastes they like or dislike).
- playing games that involve naming or using parts of the body.
- engaging children together in music and movement experiences so that they can develop a sense of how their bodies move in relation to others.
- engaging children in outdoor games that involve equipment (e.g., bouncing balls, hitting a ball with a bat) and movement experiences where they toss and catch things (e.g., scarves, balls, feathers).
- creating a small obstacle course for children to explore; the course could include objects to walk over, climb on or crawl through.
- engaging children in rhythm games or games where they need to follow directions or perform a sequence of movements.

## II. Health

Children don't necessarily develop healthy behaviors on their own. Rather, these behaviors need to be taught and supported by caring adults. This standard reflects behaviors we would like to see in preschool children and goals we can work toward in our programs.

### 1. Practices healthy behaviors.

Indicators	Examples The child ...
<b>a. Shows independence in personal hygiene.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manages toileting.</li> <li>• washes and dries hands.</li> <li>• covers nose and mouth when sneezing.</li> <li>• uses a tissue.</li> </ul>
<b>b. Chooses to participate in daily physical activity.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plays on/with outdoor equipment (e.g., slides, balls, wheeled toys).</li> <li>• engages in active play (e.g., running, jumping, chasing, moving to music, playing with pets).</li> <li>• goes on walks with family members.</li> <li>• joins in indoor or outdoor games (e.g., musical games, Tag, Drop the Handkerchief).</li> </ul>
<b>c. Exhibits body strength and endurance.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• climbs a ladder on the slide.</li> <li>• pours liquid from a small pitcher.</li> <li>• maintains her hold while hanging from a bar.</li> <li>• engages in activities such as duck walks, crab walks, frog leaps, bear walks or wheelbarrow walks.</li> </ul>

**Teacher strategies to support the development of healthy behaviors include:**

- modeling hygienic behaviors and giving simple explanations of why we do them (e.g., saying, "I always wash my hands before I eat because I don't want to get germs in my food.").
- making sure the classroom is adequately supplied with tissues, toilet paper, paper towels, etc., and that these items are accessible to children.
- demonstrating sensitivity to children's needs for toileting and having a toileting routine that allows for children's independence and self-regulation.
- showing enthusiasm for daily physical activity and engaging with the children in active play.
- fitting in daily periods of vigorous indoor and outdoor play.
- engaging children in conversations about healthy behaviors and their importance.

### III. Safety

Like healthy behaviors, safe behaviors need to be taught and supported by adults. It is our responsibility as adults with children in our care to make sure that the environment is safe and that children are taught basic procedures to keep themselves from harm. The following indicators describe behaviors we would like to see preschoolers exhibit with the guidance of caring adults.

#### 1. Practices safe behaviors.

Indicators	Examples The child ...
<b>a. Listens to and follows adult directions during emergencies.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• participates in emergency drills (e.g., fire, intruders, natural disasters) at school and home.</li></ul>
<b>b. Follows vehicle, street and public safety.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• uses appropriate car restraints.</li><li>• stays with an adult when crossing the street, in parking lots and/or in public places.</li><li>• practices bike safety (e.g., wears a helmet, rides in a safe place).</li><li>• stays away from machinery (e.g., lawn mower, power tools, farm equipment).</li></ul>
<b>c. Recognizes personal danger.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• knows that objects such as weapons, syringes, matches, etc., can be dangerous and should not be touched.</li><li>• displays caution around water, fire, unsafe heights and unfamiliar people or animals.</li><li>• knows not to eat unknown substances such as medicines, poisons, household cleaners, etc.</li></ul>
<b>d. Knows how and when to seek help.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• asks an adult for help when made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe by another person.</li><li>• calls for help during emergencies (e.g., shouts for an adult, asks an adult for help in an emergency, calls 9-1-1).</li><li>• recognizes trusted adults (e.g., police officers, firefighters).</li></ul>

#### Teacher strategies to promote safe behaviors in children include:

- modeling and discussing the importance of safe behaviors (e.g., saying, “I always wear my seat belt when I’m in the car. Why do you think that’s important?”).
- regularly conducting emergency drills and fire drills with the children regularly and making sure they are familiar with emergency procedures.
- reading stories to the children that involve safety issues and/or the roles of police officers, firefighters, etc., and discussing these issues with the children.
- inviting police officers, firefighters, animal control personnel and/or veterinarians into the classroom to explain their roles.
- teaching children basic safety procedures (e.g., how to call for help; not to touch sharp objects, weapons or syringes; what to do if an adult makes them uncomfortable) and role playing these procedures with them.
- including items (e.g., hard hats, bike helmets, doll car seats) that reflect safe behaviors or roles in the pretend-play area.
- teaching children the basic symbols (e.g., poison symbol, EXIT sign) for danger and safety.

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or the roles of police officers and firefighters

# Creating an Environment That Promotes Physical Development, Health and Safety

## Physical Development

It is important to recognize that supporting children's physical development has as important a place in the curriculum as does supporting cognitive and language development. Thoughtfully planned movement experiences, along with periods of vigorous outdoor and indoor activities, should be a part of each day's schedule. Often, however, preschool teachers feel challenged in this area due to lack of space and/or resources. There are creative ways to overcome these challenges. If space is an issue, rather than having the whole group engage in physical activities, these activities can be designed for small groups or individuals at stations around the room or playground. Equipment can be fashioned from recyclable materials (e.g., empty 2-liter soda bottles can serve as bowling pins, a beanbag target can be made from a cardboard box, assorted cardboard boxes covered with contact paper can serve as blocks). Families are often wonderful resources as well. Many families are more than willing to donate time and/or materials to create or equip a playground or to contribute used games and sports equipment to the classroom.

## Health and Safety

The children in our care deserve environments that are safe and encourage healthy living. It is up to us as adults to make sure our classrooms comply with safety and health standards and that children are properly supervised at all times. That said, it would indeed be a perfect world if accidents never happened. Unfortunately, this is not the case, so we must continually model and exhibit how to practice safe and healthy behaviors so that children can observe and imitate these behaviors and can know what to do if there is an accident or emergency. In addition, we can encourage children to practice these behaviors independently at home and at school.

It is also important to model healthy living practices and teach children the importance of good hygiene, a healthy diet and the need for exercise. Children often come to us with strong — and limited — food preferences. Introducing a variety of healthy foods and allowing children to choose among them or involving children in cooking experiences with healthy foods can help expand children's ideas of acceptable foods. A daily routine that balances children's needs for periods of activity and rest is important, and so is helping them recognize their own physical reactions (e.g., ask, "How do you know when you are getting tired?"). Maintaining a social environment in the classroom that supports children being able to meet their own physical needs (e.g., getting a tissue to blow their noses, being able to wash and dry their hands when they feel they need to) also helps promote children's independent practice of healthy behaviors.

## Involving Parents and Families

**T**eachers and parents/families together can be a powerful force to promote children's health, safety and physical development. However, this can only happen when there is open and trusting communication between teachers and families, particularly when it comes to health and safety. Teachers can provide parents with resources concerning safety and health issues (e.g., posting a notice on the class bulletin board that the fire department will be installing child car seats on a certain date, or sending home leaflets about good nutrition, vaccination programs, etc.). Offering suggestions for physical activities that parents and children can do together or sponsoring events such as a family picnic or game night is another way to involve parents. Health and safety are everyone's concern, and open, respectful communication with parents and families can go a long way to furthering these goals.



# Resources

## Books and Articles:

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- Sweet, J.E., and Jacobson, M. (2001). *365 Activities for fitness, food, and fun for the whole family*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
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- Weikart, P.S. (2002). *Movement in Steady Beat: Activities for Children Ages 3 to 7*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
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### Children's books:

**Physical Development:** *A Picture Book of Jesse Owens* — David A. Adler and Robert Casilla; *Each Peach Pear Plum* — Allan Ahlberg and Janet Ahlberg; *My Five Senses* — Alike; *My Hands* — Alike; *Barn Dance* — John Archambault, Ted Rand and Bill Martin Jr.; *Here Are My Hands* — John Archambault, Ted Rand and Bill Martin Jr.; *Moondance* — Frank Asch; *Clifford's Sports Day* — Norman Bridwell; *Hand Rhymes* — Marc Tolon Brown; *Making Faces* — Nick Butterworth; *From Head to Toe* — Eric Carle; *The Very Quiet Cricket* — Eric Carle; *Clap Your Hands* — Lorinda Bryan Cauley; *Parade* — Donald Crews; *Snow Dance* — Lezlie Evans and Cynthia Jabar; *Where's Waldo?* — Martin Handford; *Is it Rough? Is it Smooth? Is it Shiny?* — Tana Hoban; *Color Dance* — Ann Jonas; *The Lot at the End of My Block* — Kevin Lewis and Reg Cartwright; *Rhinos Who Play Baseball* — Julie Mammano; *This Is My Body* — Gina Mayer and Mercer Mayer; *Five Little Monkeys* — David Melling; *Clang, Boom, Bang* — Jane Belk Moncure and Viki Woodworth; *Benny's Big Bubble* — Jane O'Connor and Tomie dePaola; *Bearobics: A Hip-Hop Counting Story* — Victoria Parker, Emily Bolam and Vic Parker; *The Ear Book* — Al Perkins, Dr. Seuss and Bill O'Brian; *Shake My Sillies Out* — Raffi and David Allender; *What Noises Can You Hear?* — Hannah Reidy and Emma Dodd; *Morgan Plays Soccer* — Anne Rockwell and Paul Meisel; *The Body Book* — Shelly Rotner and Steve Calcagnino; *Jump Rope Magic* — Afi-Odelia Scruggs and David Diaz; *The Eye Book* — Dr. Seuss, Theo. Lesieg and Joseph Mathieu; *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* — Iza Trapani; *The Farmer in the Dell* — Alexandra Wallner; *Hop Jump* — Ellen Stoll Walsh; *Can You See What I See?* — Walter Wick; *Piggies* — Audrey Wood and Don Wood.

**Health:** *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* — Eric Carle and Leiggi; *Jamberry* — Bruce Degen; *Bread and Jam for Frances* — Russell Hoban and Lillian Hoban; *The Checkup* — Helen Oxenbury; *Gregory, the Terrible Eater* — Mitchell Sharmat, Ariane Dewey and Jose Aruego.

**Safety:** *I'm Safe! At the Mall* — Wendy Gordon and Paul Gordon; *Dinosaurs Beware: A Safety Guide* — Stephen Marc and Krensky Brown; *Fireman Small* — Wong Herbert Yee.

