

# Locomotor Activities

## Locomotor Rhythms

Teachers often avoid locomotor activities because they lack experience in body movement themselves or the criteria with which to select or perform appropriate musical accompaniment. The following guidelines may be of help in alleviating both of these problems. A drum beat, or clapping, is a good starting accompaniment for all locomotor rhythms.

**Walk** In walking, the child steps forward, backward, or sideways, keeping one foot on the ground at all times. When children are allowed to initiate their own walking patterns, there is a fine opportunity to observe general coordination, body rhythm, posture, and lateral dominance (the preferred foot will usually be used to start out). Look also for an even heel-toe movement, no dragging feet, weight evenly distributed, and the forward swinging of the right arm with the left foot (and vice versa). Appropriate musical accompaniment will most often be found in moderate  $4/4$  and slow  $2/4$  meters with the accented beats more often felt than emphasized. Tempo should be slow enough to be comfortable for all, but ideally not too draggy. Children with poor ambulation skills may find it easier to step to every other beat. If a scatter formation is used, this will not interfere with those children who are able to step to every beat.

**March** Snappy marches are usually written in  $2/4$  or *alla breve*, and in lively tempo. Although it is possible to find recordings of this type of march that are slower than the 120 cadence of the marching band, many will need to be investigated before finding some that are suitable. Stepping to every other beat can create a balance problem and therefore may not be a viable alternative. A piano accompaniment is best, but a drumbeat will also make it possible to adjust tempo to children. Be sure the children make a distinction between walking and marching. In marching, knees should be lifted high and arms swung more vigorously. Contact with the floor is made with a toe-heel sequence, although you may prefer not to introduce this technique to children who are chronic toe-walkers. Slow, stately marches, or promenades, are in slow  $2/4$  and  $4/4$  meters and will be challenging for children with balance problems.

**Slide** In sliding, one foot moves along the floor; the other foot closes up beside it. This is usually done sideways; it may be even or uneven.

**Trot** In trotting, small steps are taken while lifting knees high. Arms can be extended forward or held up with elbows bent and held close to the body. Quick duple meters are the best sources for trotting music.

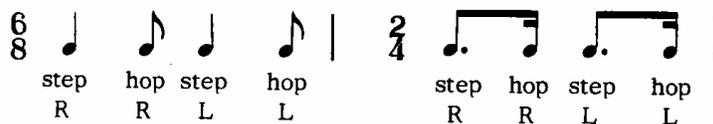
**Run** Moderate to fast tempos in duple meters are more suitable. Light, thinly scored instrumental music with contrasting slower sections is ideal. Running steps are executed basically on the balls of the feet with the heels making very light, if any, contact with the floor. Arms are held close to the body for short running, but swing more on long strides.

**Gallop** In galloping, the legs move forward in a combination of a run-walk. Since the same foot always leads, practice should be given in starting out on each foot. The starting foot walks forward; the back foot "tries to catch up" with a run. Usually, the rhythm for galloping is  $\frac{6}{8}$ .

**Jump** Jumping is a springing movement executed with *both* feet leaving and returning to the floor *at the same time*. Watch for one-foot landings or uneven weight distribution that will affect balance. The children should land with knees slightly bent. Jumping can be accompanied by any meter, but the rhythm pattern should include space (rests) between even beats to be satisfactory for extended periods.

**Hop** Hopping is unlike jumping in that it is executed on one foot at a time. Both feet should get practice, however. A moderate to fast tempo is suitable. Some children may need to build up endurance gradually to sustain a hopping movement for more than four consecutive beats.

**Skip** Skipping is a complex movement and often, in teaching, it must be broken down to its component parts. Basically, it is a walk-hop (or bounce) on the *same* foot. Care must be taken to ensure that the children understand that the hop or bounce is a "traveling" movement to the next step. Targets such as hoops or pillows can be placed on the floor to give the children something to move toward. Feet *alternate* on the strong beats, which particularly makes this a difficult movement for children with laterality problems. They often lapse into a galloping step when they keep the same foot leading. Although it is possible to skip to other duple meters, music in  $\frac{6}{8}$  is usually most suitable. The rhythm pattern is the most important criteria (i.e., the relationship of the step to the hop).



**Roll** Rolling is one way for nonambulatory children to move from one place to another. It is done in reclining position on the floor. Usually, the head turns first; arms, trunk, and legs follow in that order. Duple meter accompaniments probably give a better rolling effect, but some fast triple meters are acceptable. Children should be able to begin a roll starting on either the left or right side. When arms are extended overhead, their use in supporting the turning body is eliminated, therefore presenting a greater physical challenge.

**Crawl** A slow to moderate tempo in duple meter is best. Children should be able to move arms and legs on the same side of the body together, and in opposition (i.e., left arm with right leg).

**Leap** The momentum for a leap is usually begun with a run. Take off is on one foot high into the air. The forward foot is straightened out as much as possible

for distance. The melodic contour of good leaping music is as important as the rhythm, which must allow for time spent airborne.

**Lunge** Lunging is a giant step forward with bent knee. Lunging can be executed in place, in which case the lunging foot is returned to the starting position. Melodic contour and dynamics are important in selecting good music to accompany this movement. Tempos should be fairly slow.

### Variations on Locomotor Rhythms

- a. In place
- b. Forward
- c. Backward
- d. Sideways
- e. Around obstacle course
- f. Turn at end of phrase
- g. On heels
- h. Cross over step
- i. With knees bent
- j. On tiptoe
- k. Little steps
- l. Giant Steps
- m. With hands on head, hips
- n. With arms outstretched to sides, front, overhead
- o. With head turned side to side
- p. With eyes closed
- q. While blindfolded
- r. While bouncing ball
- s. While playing an instrument
- t. While clapping

### Walk

- 1. See items a-t above
- 2. Bride's walk (step forward on one foot; bring other foot up to meet it before stepping forward on opposite foot).
- 3. Combine items b-h with i-t where appropriate.

### March

- 1. See a-f, m-q, s-t.
- 2. With accented left (or right) foot.
- 3. With "baton" extended forward, overhead, to side.
- 4. In lines, rows.

### Slide/Gallop

- 1. See b-f, m-o, s-t.
- 2. While slapping thighs

**Trot**

1. See a-f, m-q, t.
2. With partner extending arms back as reins.
3. With partner and hoop as rein.

**Run**

1. See a-f, j-o, r, t.
2. With scarves, streamers.

**Jump**

1. See a-f, k-q.
2. In circle.
3. Into, out of, through a hoop.
4. With a partner.
5. Straddle jump (spread legs apart and raise hands overhead; return to standing position).

**Hop**

1. See a-f, k-q.
2. In circle.
3. Into and out of hoop laying on floor.
4. With a partner.
5. On each foot separately, then alternately.

**Skip**

1. See b-c, e-f, m-o, r-t.
2. With partner.

**Roll**

1. See b-c, f, p.
2. Diagonally.
3. To a target.
4. On various surfaces (i.e., wood, tile, rug, grass).
5. Left to right, right to left.
6. With hands under body, or outstretched overhead.

**Leap/Lunge**

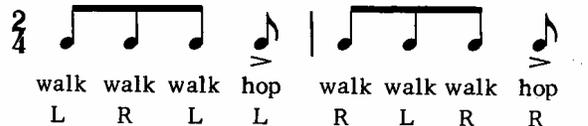
1. See b, d, m-o, r, t.
2. With each foot separately, then alternatively.
3. With scarves, streamers.

**Simple Dance Steps**

**Waltz step** This is done in triple meter. Develop by having children bend knee of the stepping foot on the first beat, and raise up on toes while stepping on the second and third beats. Accompany this rhythm with high- and low-pitched drums or by striking one drum in the center for "one," and on the rim with the

stick part of the mallet on "two, three." The bending step will alternate from left to right foot within each measure.

**Schottische** Develop skill by having children first walk to a steady drumbeat, stopping when the beat stops. Play a game of stop-and-go, varying the number of beats between stops. Gradually begin repeating a pattern of three beats walking followed by a one-beat rest. When the children do this easily, add a hop on the rest using the *same* foot.



When the step is secure, this dance can be done with partners. In circle formation, partners join hands, facing the same direction. (Both hands can be held crossed – left with left, right with right – if children are capable.) Group proceeds around the circle clockwise. For a greater challenge, some children may want to try facing partners to do the dance. In this situation, formation is scattered and one partner begins by stepping back while the other moves forward. Children should turn on the phrases in order to give each partner the experience of stepping backward. Also, in this position, each partner will begin on a different foot so that forward and backward steps are taken on the same side.

**Polka** Using the gallop step, develop skill by playing the stop-and-go games to a drumbeat. Vary the number of beats between stops and starts. Gradually repeat a pattern of two beats (gallops) and stop. When gallop is resumed, the lead foot is *changed*. To proceed in the same general direction, children will have to turn their body 180 degrees. Gradually work into a rhythm of two gallops, changing (and turning) after each set of two. As children become comfortable with this and the tempo is increased, they will automatically put in a hop on the turn. When ready, the step can be done with a partner in either circle or scatter formation. Partners hold inside hands and start out on *outside* feet. When outside feet are leading, partners face each other; when inside feet are leading, partners turn away from each other (still holding hands). When children are ready for a greater challenge, have partners face each other holding both hands, turning together, and changing lead feet every two steps.

### Indian Dance Steps

**Toe-heel Step** This step is performed to a drumbeat that is alternately loud and soft. On the first (loud) beat, the left foot moves forward and the left toe lightly touches the floor. On the next (soft) beat, the left heel is brought down hard. The step is repeated with each foot alternating.

**Drag Step** This is also performed to a drumbeat that is alternately loud and soft. The first step begins on the *soft* beat by stepping forward and touching the



**Dog** Both hands and feet touch floor; arm and leg on *opposite* side of body move together. Run on hands and *feet* (not knees). For lame dog, hold one hand up.

**Crab** Squat; place hands flat on floor behind body. Lift hips off floor; extend head and neck down toward floor. Hands and legs on same side move *together sideways*. (This will be too difficult for some children.)

**Rabbit** Crouch, hands touching floor between legs. Jump forward, landing in same position.

**Kangaroo** Crouch with fingers touching floor between knees. Jump *up and forward* with body straight out, landing in crouched position.

**Seal** Lie face down on floor, hands placed beside shoulders. Straighten arms and move forward, using *hands only*.

**Duck** Waddle in crouched position, palms together behind back. Spread fingers open for tail.

**Inchworm** Lie face down on floor, hands close to shoulders, and *balls of feet* touching floor. Straighten arms. Walk forward, keeping knees straight until feet reach hands; move hands until trunk of body is again stretched out.

**Elephant** Clasp hands; bend forward at waist. Take heavy steps with arms swinging loosely toward the stepping side.

**Giraffe** Clasp hands together and stretch arms overhead; walk on tiptoe with legs apart and knees stiff. Sway arms and trunk, but maintain upward point.

**Bird** Place feet together. Take little jumps forward keeping knees together. (holding an object between the knees helps.)

**Horse** Practice galloping, trotting, and running.

**Cat** Get into crawl position, back rounded; stretch.

**Monkey** Take straddle stance, knees slightly bent and arms extended forward. Bounce up and down, moving arms up and down alternately (as in climbing a rope).

**Frog** Squat; spread knees apart, hands touching floor between knees. Jump *forward and up* staying in crouched position.

## **Ball, Balloon, and Hoop Activities**

**Ball activities** In selecting balls, consider the size, weight, and texture of the ball. Large balls (8-10 inches in diameter) are easier to catch than small

tennis-size balls; small ones are easier to throw; heavier balls are sometimes better for kicking than lightweight balls. Experimenting with a variety of types is recommended for children who have difficulty in ball handling.

### ***Roll***

- To a target or partner; gradually increase distance
- With both hands, one hand
- Catch a rolled ball with two hands, then one hand

### ***Bounce***

- With both hands; each hand separately; alternately
- In sitting position between knees
- In kneeling position
- To a partner or target (e.g., hoop)
- Catch bounced ball in front, to sides, high, low
- Step forward, then backward, then sideways, while bouncing

### ***Throw and catch***

- Underhand; overhand; with each hand separately; with both hands
- To a partner or target
- In front, to sides, high, low
- With arms extended overhead; from crouched position  
(Substitute a beanbag for children unable to grasp a ball.)

### ***Kick***

- With each foot separately, then alternately
- From stationary position
- From moving position
- While ball is rolling
- To a partner or target

### **Balloon activities**

- Substitute a balloon for ball activities (rolling, throwing, and kicking).
- Keep balloon aloft by hitting it on the beat.
- Hit balloon with each hand separately, then alternately.
- Keep balloon aloft by bouncing it off various body parts (head, knees, elbows, etc.).
- Keep balloon aloft by hitting only on the strong beats of a three-beat accompaniment (e.g., waltz).

### **Hoop activities**

- Substitute hoop for rolling ball activities.
- Balance hoop on hand, stick, knee, foot.
- Twirl hoop around with hand or stick.
- Rotate hoop around body by swiveling hips.
- Jump through, into, over hoop.

## Balance Beam Activities

Place strips of tape on the floor 4" apart and 6' to 12' in length to simulate a balance beam. Stepping on the beat, *walk* across this simulated beam (unless otherwise indicated) forward, backward, then sideways. Use a drumbeat or music.

- With arms held sideways, overhead, on top of head, or hips
- With hands clasped behind back
- On tiptoe
- With knees bent
- With eyes closed
- With same foot leading
- Forward, stepping *over* a small object (stooping *under* a stick) midway and continuing to end without losing beat
- Forward, then backward, with something balanced on head
- Sideways, crossing left foot over right, then right foot over left; left foot behind right, then right foot behind left
- Hop the length of the beam on right foot, then left foot (forward; sideways)
- 6 beats to center of beam; kneel on beats 7 and 8
- 8 beats to end of beam
- To a familiar song, turning on phrases
- To "Stop and Go" or "A Little Flight Music" ("Stop" version), balancing on one foot on pauses
- Sideways 8 beats; turn 180 degrees and continue walking 8 beats to end (with opposite foot leading). Try with same foot leading.
- Backward 8 beats; turn 180 degrees and continue walking 8 beats to end
- Forward 8 beats; backward 8 beats
- Hop to middle of beam; turn; hop back on same foot
- Hop forward 8 beats; turn; hop backward 8 beats
- Hop to middle of beam and balance on one foot for as many beats as balance can be maintained. (Try on both left and right feet.)
- Stand on beam with feet side by side until balance is lost (do the same, standing with one foot in front of the other)
- With eyes closed, balance with feet side by side; in front of one another; on one foot
- Walk on beam like a cat, a dog, a rabbit, a kangaroo, a duck, an inchworm, an elephant, a bird
- Two children (at opposite ends) walk length of beam and pass each other in middle without breaking rhythm or falling off.

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## Nonlocomotor Activities

### Nonlocomotor (axial) Movement

**Standing rock** Place one foot forward; shift weight from front to back foot. Try with each foot in the forward position, as well as starting the rock from both forward and back feet.

**Sitting rock**            Shift weight from hip to hip.

**Standing sway**        This is a lesser movement than rocking. Keeping feet flat on the floor, sway from side to side (in standing position). Make sure that weight is never entirely on one foot.

**Sitting sway**            Maintain movement in upper trunk with no obvious weight shift.

**Swing**                Move body vigorously from side to side in an arc. Swing arms high, low, or in circles.

**Standing bend**        Bend from waist down as close to floor as possible. Bend side to side; then bend from knees to squat position and return.

**Sitting bend**            Bend head and shoulders as close to knees as possible. Sitting on the floor, bend side to side toward floor, then forward to toes, as close as possible.

**Stretch (standing or sitting)**    Extend arms overhead, stretching from waist up.

**Twist (standing or sitting)**        Place hands on waist; twist trunk of body to the right so left elbow follows right shoulder, then twist to the left. Try with hands clasped overhead, then with arms folded.

**Twirl**                Move feet in circular direction in place as body turns. A hoop may be used to help confine movement to body axis.

## **Hand and Arm Movements**

Where appropriate, try all hand/arm movements left, right, together, separately and/or alternately, to the left and to the right.

- Touch index fingers to nose.
- Cover eyes with hands.
- Snap fingers.
- Make hand gestures (i.e., "come," "stay," "go away").
- Clench and open fists.
- Touch thumb to each finger on same hand.
- Extend fingers one at a time from clenched fist.
- Clasp hands together with fingers laced; extend forward, overhead, then over each shoulder.
- Fold arms across chest.
- Touch shoulders with hands on same side, on opposite sides.
- Clap hands in front, on each side, in back below knees, overhead, at shoulder level.
- Extend arms forward at shoulder height; to sides at shoulder height.

- Pat palms on table, knees.
- Hold palms up/down; turn in/out; circle each.
- Outline imaginary shape (e.g., triangle, square) in air, showing all points.
- Touch top/bottom of imaginary vertical line, horizontal line.
- With arms extended forward, move up/down/to the sides.
- Swing arms forward/back.
- Slap fist into open palm of opposite hand.
- Tap fists together, one on top of the other; side by side; rotate.
- Make circles in the air with arms extended forward, overhead, to the sides.
- Make hitchhiking gesture over each shoulder.
- Wave hand with fingers held straight; twist wrist; do overhead, at waist level, etc.
- Point elbows to side.
- Make circles with elbows.
- Slap thighs with open palms.
- Extend fists forward; move up/down.
- Slap forearms with open palms.
- Swish palms together.

### **Seated Feet and Leg Movements**

Where appropriate, try all movements to the left, to the right, together, and alternately, to the left and to the right.

- Tap toes, then heels.
- In place: walk, march, tiptoe, heel walk.
- Keep heels together; move toes apart.
- Move feet forward, then back.
- Spread knees apart, then bring together.
- Cross and uncross legs.
- Move feet to the side.
- Cross and uncross ankles.
- Keeping toes together, click heels.

### **Partner Activities**

- Slap palms held vertically, horizontally, left, right, etc.
- Shake hands.
- Hook elbows.
- Twist a hoop in cross-extension pattern.

### **Head and Mouth Movements**

- Blink eyes separately, together, alternately.
- Wink each eye, then alternately.
- Wrinkle nose.
- Thrust tongue in and out, side to side.

- Puff cheeks; collapse.
- Smile; frown.
- Nod head up/down, side to side.
- Change facial expression (e.g., surprise, worry, fright).
- Turn head left/right; alternately left/right.
- Open/close mouth.
- Smack lips, buzz, pucker, stretch; curl them up/down.
- Do tongue clicks.
- Hiss.
- Pop cheeks.
- Turn corners of mouth up/down.

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## Instrument Specifications

Classroom instruments for use with handicapped children should include both melody and rhythm instruments. Representative playing techniques should utilize a variety of motor skills (i.e., palmar and pincer grasps, wrist movements, finger movement). Wind instruments are also important as they help to develop breath control and facial muscles necessary for speech. Some wind instruments should require very little pressure to produce a sound while others demand good breath support and diaphragm breathing. Instruments that are put into the mouth must be sterilized after each individual's use. Ideally, each child would have his or her own instrument or separate tubing to be attached to mouthpiece.

Good tone quality is a principal consideration in selecting instruments. Instruments that have poor resonating or ringing qualities are not suitable for use by children who may have difficulty processing sounds. All instruments must be of durable construction with replacement parts where appropriate (e.g., drumheads). Although deliberate abuse should never be tolerated, instruments played by children who have poor motor control and limited muscle strength do tend to be dropped more often. Instruments that are ordinarily held for playing should be constructed of lightweight materials and easily manipulated by children with small hands and underdeveloped muscles. Finally, instruments should have no sharp edges or protuberance and they should be made of materials unaffected by moisture (i.e., drooling).

### Quick Tricks with Classroom Instruments

**Tape** (masking, adhesive, plastic, etc.)

- Make a holder for instruments such as triangles, cymbals, or gongs by taping a rhythm stick or ruler to the edge of a desk or chalkboard tray to enable player with one hand to play without assistance.
  - Tape the handle of a tone block to the edge of a desk or chalkboard tray to enable player with one hand to play without assistance.
  - Tape down holes on melody flutes, recorders, to produce appropriate pitch for children unable to cover holes.
  - Code keys or bars of instruments to be played with colored tape.

- Tape small mallets or shaking instruments to the palm of a child lacking a pincer grasp. Larger mallets can be supported with a splint.

### **Tape (magnetic)**

- Attach to the back of lightweight resonator bells or other small instruments that are struck. Magnetic tape will adhere to steel surfaces (e.g., metal cabinets) or to another piece of tape placed on desk, chalkboard, lapboard, etc. Also useful for attaching visuals to magnetic boards.

### **Elastic bandages**

- Fasten maracas and other lightweight shaking instruments to forearms or palms by stapling bandage for a tight fit.

### **Velcro**

- Use to attach mallets or small instruments to a player's hand. Available where sewing aids are sold.

### **Children's mitten guards** (strip of elastic webbing with fasteners at each end)

- Use to attach triangles, hand drums, and other small instruments to player's clothing to keep from falling to the floor if grasp is lost. May need to attach a length of ribbon or cord to some.

### **Styrofoam or rubber balls** (small)

- Insert stick or mallet through the center of ball to enable child lacking pincer grasp to hold with a palmar grasp. Use also as pencil holders.

### **Extension mouthpiece for Pianicas and Melodicas**

- Use to enable child to rest the instrument on a desk or table and still see the keyboard.

### **Teething rings** (especially pretzel-shape)

- Use as strummers (for Autoharp, Chromaharp) by children lacking a pincer grasp.

### **Spray Disinfectants**

- Use with tissues or paper towels as a fast, neat way to sterilize mouthpieces, slide whistles, etc. Readily available at drugstores.