

Pick **one or two** of these activities and do them just before table top activities (such as colouring or printing) to increase stability in the shoulder. When doing these activities be sure that the elbows are slightly bent and not locked straight.

Shoulder Strengthening

Playgrounds contain many kinds of equipment that strengthen arm and hand muscles. Some especially useful pieces of equipment include:

- Poles and ropes to climb
- Monkey bars, jungle gyms, and other climbing equipment
- Chin up bar – Hold onto a bar above chest level and try to lift up the feet/knees and even the body off the floor.

Any activity that involves pushing or pulling against resistance with the arms will build strength. Start with low repetitions and as strength builds increase repetitions.

Crab Walk. From a squatting position, child reaches backward and places both hands flat on the floor behind them with their fingers pointing away from the body. The student raises trunk until head, neck, and body are parallel to the floor by engaging the trunk muscles to promote spine safety. The student walks in this position alternating hands and feet.



Walrus Walk. Student lies on stomach on floor and pushes body weight up onto arms, keeping legs straight. The student moves forward on arms, dragging legs behind.

Wheelbarrow Walking. This is a great activity for strengthening shoulder and trunk muscles. Have the student walk on hands while you hold their legs. The student raises trunk until head, neck, and body are parallel to the floor by engaging the trunk muscles to promote spine safety. Make this activity more difficult by introducing an obstacle course.



The Table Pose. Have the student work on hands and knees on the floor while completing activities (such as puzzles, sorting etc.). The student raises trunk until head, neck, and body are parallel to the floor by engaging the trunk muscles to promote spine safety.

Tug of War. In a safe and clutter free environment form a centerline with tape or chalk. Play tug-of-war with the student using a blanket, rope, hula-hoop, etc. If the sides are not equally matched for strength, place the stronger student closer to the line so the weaker student has an advantage.



Rope Climb. Encourage student to climb hand-over-hand up a pole or rope as far as possible. Mark the spot by wrapping with tape; ask child to try to “beat the record” on successive days. Mark that spot with tape and write the date of achievement on each piece of tape so that progress is clearly visible as tape goes higher and higher.



Scarecrow. Partners stand with their arms out to the side. The goal is to see who can be a scarecrow the longest. Have “crows” land on the arms and push down. The student has to contract the shoulder muscles and push back up.

Hands Together. Partners place their palms and push their hands together as hard as they can.

Commando Crawling. The student pulls himself along the mat on his belly, using only his arms. Leg movements are not allowed in order to strengthen muscles in the shoulder area and help the child learn how to turn their bodies.

Wall and chair **push-ups.**

Trunk Strengthening

Sit-ups/Crunches: Do 10 sit-ups in a row, then rest for 30 seconds and do 10 more. Lower back should remain on the floor surface to prevent strain of the low back muscles.

Row-your-boat: Sing the “Row-row-row your boat” song as you and the student sit facing each other with feet touching and holding hands (or holding onto a stretchy object such as a bicycle innertube). Take turns pulling each other from laying down to sitting.

Tilting: Sit the student on your lap facing away from you. Gently raise one of your legs a few inches so that he has to use his trunk muscles to stay balanced. Make it into a game by pretending that he is on a plane ride or driving a racing car. This can also be done on a large ball instead of on your lap. Have the student on ball facing you. Hold the student at their low hip and bounce the student on the ball alternating sides. The student will be required to tighten trunk muscles in order to stay balanced.

Floor bicycle: Have the student pretend they are riding a bicycle while lying on their back on the floor. Ask the student to place their hands underneath their low back added support.

