

Climbing



Some children seem to need to climb... often before they are ready. They will climb on chairs, tables, bookcases, gates etc and very rarely understand how to get down safely. We recognise that climbing frightens a lot of parents, especially if it leads to lots of accident forms recording bumps and bruises.

Children are learning as they climb – they are developing their core strength, coordination and gross motor skills, keeping fit, learning about balance, judgement, perseverance and much more. Often, little ones need to be guided to learn where it is safe to climb, and we need eyes in the backs of our heads until they learn how to safely dismount.

Parents often ask us how they can stop their child from climbing – the answer is, they can't stop their child from climbing if they are driven to explore this way of moving. It's called a schema – a repeated pattern of play – and it is important to the child's development. What parents can do, however, is provide lots of safe opportunities for climbing practice such as cushions on the floor, a grassy bank on a walk, a climbing frame in the garden or regular visits to the park etc where their child can climb safely. We are also keen to get children out of buggies and chairs and moving as quickly as possible, so they find their own challenges on rocky ground and clambering over tree stumps in the woods.

We do everything we can to keep children safe including fixing big pieces of furniture that might be climbed to the wall. We encourage young children to remember dangerous situations by saying, 'Feet on floor' rather than 'get down' each time the child climbs on something that is dangerous. Toddlers will be gently guided away from places which are dangerous. As children get older, they can be involved in their own risk assessments, thinking about safe climbing and how to keep themselves safer by, for example wearing the correct shoes or holding on safely. This helps the child to learn about safety and boundaries, especially if it is followed up by a suggestion to use an alternative place to climb.

As the child learns to climb safely and starts to recognise safe places where they can climb and practice their new skills, getting down safely and controlling their movements while making safe decisions, they will have lots of new knowledge which they can build on in other types of play.

If you have any questions about different types of play, please ask for more information.