

Spatial Awareness

Spatial awareness can be defined as the **awareness of the body in space** (how they fit into a space), and the child's **relationship to objects in the space** (how they fit into a space in relation to another/other objects or people).

Children will need to have adequate **body awareness** before they will be able to develop spatial awareness. If they do not have an awareness of how the parts of their body fit together, they might find it difficult to understand how their body fits into a space. Once they have good body awareness they will then be able to form the relationship of their body with other objects/people within a space.

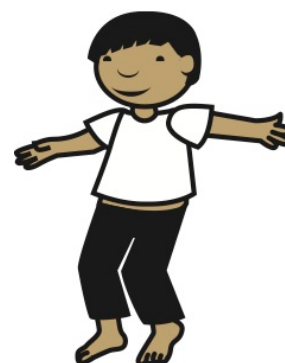
The best way to support the natural development of spatial awareness and body awareness is to allow babies and children to **freely explore their environment**.

However, there are various situations that might inhibit or prevent the natural development of spatial awareness, such as:

- Children with developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD), autism, and cerebral palsy - amongst other **conditions**- have poor spatial awareness owing to difficulties with perception.
- Children not receiving adequate **opportunity to explore** their environment freely.
- Children **missing out** on key developmental stages - this can be for various reasons such as illness.

Activities to Help Develop Spatial Awareness

- Ensure they have good body awareness – do activities where they have to use different body parts
- Target games (throwing beanbags into objects or over lines/objects)
- Obstacle courses where children need to fit into spaces
- Movement to music
- Hopscotch
- Action songs using parts of the body
- Climbing large equipment/climbing frame
- Instruction-based activities e.g. Simon Says; What's the Time, Mr Wolf?, etc.



Impact on Older Children

If older children have not had the opportunity to develop spatial awareness in the early years they may be faced with one or more of the following issues:

- Can be unsure of how to arrange information on a page
- Struggle with structuring and organising written work
- Have some visual perception difficulties
- Appear clumsy and bump into objects and others when moving around
- Have difficulty playing games, doing physical activities and using apparatus
- Find mathematics difficult
- Confuse positional language such as left, right, over, under, etc.
- Struggle to follow directions that use positional language
- Let children explore and play freely to naturally develop spatial awareness.