

# Crawling and Creeping

In neurodevelopmental terms crawling means army crawling on your belly while creeping means on your hands and knees.

Crawling and creeping are crucial to later stages of neurodevelopment. If a baby completely skips either the crawling or creeping stage or goes through the stage too fast and so doesn't perfect either crawling or creeping, the chances they will experience some type of learning issue later on increases. Conversely, we often discover that children with a variety of learning disabilities and eye issues are unable to crawl and/or creep in an organized way. In particular, folks with dyslexia often completely skipped crawling or creeping or both. People who have had a stroke or traumatic brain injury often lose their ability to crawl, creep, and even walk and run in a good cross pattern. This will affect their ability to think clearly as well, so it is important to work not just on getting speech, etc. back but also on retrieving these lower level brain functions.

Crawling and creeping are good exercise and practice for everyone (and won't hurt anybody), so we often recommend that the whole family does the crawling and creeping exercises along with the client. It's more fun and healthy!

**Crawling** – Spend 2-3 minutes, 1-2 times a day crawling around the house on your belly. It is important that this is done with a good cross pattern. That means when the left arm goes forward the right leg goes forward and vice versa. The head should turn toward the hand that is forward. Your hands should be flat on the floor (not fisted) and your toes should dig into the floor in order to propel you forward. If a child is having trouble getting the idea of this, you can assist them by putting your hand on their foot and moving it into the correct position. Let them push against your hand to propel themselves forward. Then do the same thing with the other foot. It's OK if you have to work up to perfect form very gradually. Older children often have to consciously slow themselves down in order to figure out if their form is good.

**Creeping** – Spend 2-3 minutes, 1-2 times a day creeping around the house on your hands and knees. Again, it is important that this is done with a good cross pattern. That means when the left arm goes forward the right leg goes forward and vice versa. The head should turn toward the hand that is forward. Your hands should be flat on the floor (not fisted) and your feet should drag along on the floor behind you (not be up off the floor at an angle). It's OK if you have to work up to perfect form very gradually. Older kids often have to consciously slow themselves down in order to figure out if their form is good.

If your child is really not able to either crawl or creep, you should work on learning to crawl first and add creeping later on. If your child can do both activities but needs to work on form, it's OK to work on both simultaneously. If your child is well past traditional crawling and creeping age and is really not getting the idea of either activity, that's a great indication that an evaluation would be a good idea.