

ARTICLE REVIEWED

What are fundamental motor skills and what is fundamental about them?

Newell, K. M. (2020). What are fundamental motor skills and what is fundamental about them? *Journal of Motor Learning and Development*, 8(2), 280-314. <https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/jmld/8/2/article-p280.xml>

THE PROBLEM

Over the past few decades, an array of motor skills have been classified as *fundamental*. The term fundamental suggests that a skill is foundational and takes precedence for the development of other complex motor skills. However, many motor specialist have classified movements as fundamental motor skills without a consensus about what is meant by the term fundamental in the motor skills context.



Research Summary:

The purpose of this paper was to review previous literature, taxonomies, and related nomenclature to describe the ambiguity of the term fundamental. Motor skills have been classified according to function and context (e.g., dance, exercise) or as contrasting categories (e.g., fine, gross motor skills; discrete, serial, continuous movements). Some skills are identified as fundamental motor skills from a lifespan motor development perspective and others according to their utility in applied settings. In essence, many classification systems exist and were developed in accordance with the historical and theoretical perspective of the time. Additionally, terms with the word fundamental such as such as motor skills, movement patterns, and movements are discussed. Given that there are many perspectives of motor skills classifications and many skills have been labelled as fundamental, Newell provides a working definition of the term fundamental and examines fundamental movements from evolutionary and developmental perspectives.

Conclusion:

Considering these issues, three criteria are proposed to determine if a motor skill is fundamental. First, the skill must have unique characteristics that distinguish it from other skills. Second, the skill must be universally occurring among a healthy population. Third, the skill is foundational to more complex motor skills.

Key Takeaway:

In this paper, the term fundamental is described, and three criteria are proposed to determine if a motor skill is a fundamental motor skill. The author also elaborates on areas where empirical support is needed to substantiate assumptions and practices for motor skill acquisition.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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