Things you need to know about Playpak

Part 1: Starting strong –
3 essential early positions

30th March 2016
Panellist: Nick Mant, PT Flying Start Children’s Therapy
Moderator: Clare Greer
Aims of today’s webinar:

1. To explain how the early building blocks within child development link together.

2. To outline how Playpak can be used to practice positions in the 3 essential, early positions: back lying (supine), tummy lying (prone) and sitting.

3. To answer as many questions as possible – we’ll do this at the end of each section!
Part 1: Starting strong – 3 essential early positions

1.1 Back Lying (Supine)
Back Lying: Why is it important?

• First position that enables you to have interactive play with your child.

• Supports children with physical difficulties, when working in a flexed position, to find their middle, their hands and legs and to look around.

• Encourages movement of arms and legs independently of each other – leading to activities such as crawling.

• Active movement in back lying positions can help strengthen tummy muscles and helps children develop awareness of their own body by themselves.
Back Lying: Common difficulties

• Too much straightening (extension) due to increased muscle tone (hypertonic muscles).

• Trunk is floppy (hypotonic) making it hard to lift away from surface.

• Head often stretches back (extends) and turns to one side making it hard for children to learn what and where the rest of their body is, and how their eyes/head relate to it.

• Struggle to bring their shoulder joints and blades (shoulder girdle) away from the supporting surface – hard to use hands and develop mid-line awareness.

• Heavy legs, (due to possible low tone or spinal problems) will weigh down the pelvis and bottom of the trunk.

“Supporting a more flexed position will make it easier for a child to use their tummy muscles (abdominals) and progress to moving away from back lying.”
Back Lying: Solutions

By making a ‘nest’ for baby, we are helping them come to a flexed position.

This will help them to use their tummy muscles and keep head in the middle.
Back Lying: Solutions

The shoulder girdle is forward making it easier to lift the arms. Hips are flexed, easing movement of the legs.

We can easily work on looking at objects being moved from left to right and reaching games with the arms. Looking at our feet is an excellent way to introduce them to baby.
Back Lying: Aims

Support to the shoulder girdle can help baby maintain mid-line of their head, allowing them to focus on a toy and giving them the opportunity to reach.
Back Lying: Have you considered...

Did the child ever get a chance to take their hands to their mouth or reach objects above them? This early skill/opportunity can really help a child then progress to rolling and propping in prone and sitting – then onwards to crawling.

How can we learn to sit if we are unable to place our hands forward?

How can we roll if our arms are pinned to the floor by the weight of our shoulders?
Back Lying Questions?
Part 1: Starting strong – 3 essential early positions

1.2 Tummy Lying (Prone)
Tummy Lying: Why is it important?

• Works on lots of aspects of development at once.

• Helps to develop head control and skills essential for crawling.

• Teaches weight transfer, putting all weight through one arm to allow baby to release the other to play with objects.

• Sometimes we advise against tummy time – if you have concerns, contact your therapist.
Tummy Lying: Common difficulties

• Can be a hard position for a child to develop. Not being able to lift their head or push through their arms can make tolerating the position difficult.

• If a child’s preferred pattern is to straighten all the time (over-extending), placing them in prone can actually reinforce this – seek advice from your therapist to discuss the best way to do tummy time.

• Floppy (low toned) children will struggle to lift their head and push through their arms for support.
Placing chest over a roll will help to bring the forearms down to the floor.

If you assist with keeping the arms tucked under it will encourage baby to push through them.
Tummy Lying: Solutions

If still unable to lift head you can assist with your hand on top of head, gently easing up to say ‘hello’.

A strap over the pelvis with a child who is still quite flexed in the lower limbs will help stabilise it so baby can concentrate on lifting their head.
Tummy Lying: Solutions

Tolerance of tummy time is often limited. Increase it with toys and objects that the child is interested in.

“If your child does not like tummy time, try to persevere.”

“Seconds at a time can be a success initially, and remember they will build to minutes.”
Tummy Lying: Aims

Initially we want baby to move their weight from chest down to abdomen, so giving support both under the shoulders and over the pelvis to help baby lift and turn head.

Placing weight firstly through forearms and then pushing up to straight arms.

As they improve in this they can progress to moving weight over one arm at a time to play with the other.

All these early skills link – think baby learning to prop in sitting and move their arms when crawling.
Tummy Lying: Have you considered...

How can we crawl if we have never moved our weight over one hand to lift the other?

How much harder is it to maintain a sitting position if we don’t naturally place our hands in front to prop?

How much easier will it be to play with toys if we have built up the strength in our arms to lift them?
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Tummy Lying Questions?
Part 1: Starting strong –
3 essential early positions

1.3 Side Lying
Side Lying: Why is it important?

• Makes it easier for hands to come together for early static play without fighting against gravity.

• It’s a transitional position so it helps us move from one position to another, e.g. when learning to roll, and when moving from back to tummy lying (supine to prone).

• Essential for developing movement for side-sitting which is used when transitioning from lying to sitting.
Side Lying: Common difficulties

- Difficult position to maintain. Balancing on the side of the body can increase tone due to the challenge it presents.

- Children with low tone will struggle to keep their hips in a side lying position as they will have a tendency to roll forwards or backwards.
Side Lying: Solutions

Early side lying can work on upper limb skills.

Support as pictured with a strap to help control the pelvis, and a roll to keep the head forward, will make this easier for baby to do.
Side Lying: Solutions

As baby improves in side lying we can lower the support to keep the pelvis on its side, freeing the top half of the trunk. This will allow games reaching forward and backward.
Side Lying: Aims

Maintaining side lying initially will help a child learn how to use their hands in the mid-line of the body – they don’t have to hold them up against gravity, and can see them easily.

Moving in side lying with the pelvis supported, reaching forwards and backwards will develop the muscles and movement patterns needed to learn how to roll.
Side Lying: Have you considered...

How will a child learn what their side is if they have never experienced it?

How can we control rolling if we cannot move whilst on our side?

How can we learn how to transition away from the floor if we can’t move when we’re on the floor?
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Side Lying
Questions?
3 essential positions

Using Playpak, we have practiced the earliest postures which help a child learn how to maintain strong and essential positions, as well as learning how to move and become more active within them.

“I will work on as many of these skills as possible with all children, even if I know they will not reach certain milestones, to ensure the best possible building blocks are in place for them to succeed at more challenging postures and abilities.”
Resources

- [www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak](http://www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak)
- Playpak Videos
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- Playpak FAQs
- Nick’s Blog Posts
- Things you need to know about Playpak: Part 2. Sitting pretty – transitioning from the early positions
Final Questions?
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Things you need to know about Playpak

Part 2: Sitting pretty – helping achieve independent sitting

13th April 2016
Panellist: Nick Mant, PT Flying Start Children’s Therapy
Moderator: Clare Greer
Aims of today’s webinar:

1. To explain how to transition from the early positions to sitting positions.
2. To outline how Playpak can be used in early sitting and more advanced sitting positions.
3. To discuss the challenges children face with sitting and provide techniques to assist your child to transfer from lying to sitting.
4. To answer as many questions as possible!
Part 2: Sitting pretty

2.1 Early sitting
Early sitting
Why is it important?

• Helps to build your child’s tummy and back muscles.
• They can begin to participate in more social activities with siblings.
• Develops your child’s body and spatial awareness.
• Helps them control their arm and leg movements.
• Improves their communication skills.
Early sitting: Common difficulties

- Children with low tone often slouch when sitting, and take a long time to develop stability in their tummy and back muscles to maintain this position.

- Children with high tone often increase their tone when challenged and will adopt poor posture if they are not supported adequately.

- Children do not choose to adopt these positions; and are not the most comfortable way to sit. It is their over-active muscles forcing them into unwanted positions.

“Sitting is a difficult position to maintain. Therefore work within the limits of your child or with guidance from your therapist”
Early sitting: Solutions

- By reclining the sitting position of the Playpak, the child can reach for toys.
- As the baby becomes more comfortable in this position, the roll at the base of the horseshoes can be removed.
Early sitting: Solutions cont.

- The strap can be placed over their pelvis to provide support.
- From the reclined position we can also do baby pull-ups encouraging them to maintain their own head control.
Early sitting:

**Aims**

• Develop your child’s core stability so they can sit up themselves.

• Aim for head control – reclined sitting is ok, as fully upright sitting is difficult to maintain.

• Encourage your child to use their hands in sitting - it is essential that the trunk has adequate support, which can be provided by the Playpak horseshoes, strap and rolls.
Early sitting: Aims cont.

- Encourage hands to come forward - this can be achieved by doing the activities discussed in the previous blog. This will help baby to prop up their trunk, until they achieve adequate trunk control.

- Hands on knees or playing with feet are ideal, and when enough trunk support is provided or control is gained, then hands can be used to play.
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Early sitting
Questions?
Advancing sitting postures

• When baby has enough ability to maintain their own sitting postures, they can start to improve on this.

• With Playpak, support can be progressively taken away so the child is more active on their own.

• Many of the difficulties at this stage have been overcome at the early sitting stages.
Advancing sitting postures: *Solutions*

- Take away the second horseshoe so the upper trunk is not supported as shown in picture 1.
- Picture 2 shows the wrong way to sit in the support.
Advancing sitting postures: *Solutions cont.*

- This position will still maintain the correct leg position – preventing looped sitting.
- Looping sitting is when a child’s legs roll outwards from their hips and knees and their feet touch forming a loop.
- Long legged sitting is encouraged to assist with side to side movement – the horseshoe helps with this.

- Using Playpak backwards encourages upright sitting and activates back and tummy muscles.
Advancing sitting postures: *Solutions*

- Placing objects at the side of the support and removing the lap strap encourages the child to reach over the edge and roll their legs to the side.
- This process is the start of side sitting.
- This is an essential transitional position we move through to get up from lying to kneeling.
- This process teaches your child saving reactions if they were to fall from sitting or later on from standing.
Early/advanced sitting: Have you considered...

Looped sitting is a natural way that babies learn to sit, as it gives them a large base of support. However, how can a baby move from side to side if their feet are touching each other, making a loop with their legs?

How can we learn to sit if we are unable to place our hands forward?
Part 2: Sitting pretty

2.2 Lying to sitting
Lying to sitting: Why is it important?

• We often work with children in static positions, however the movement between the positions is just as useful if we are at the point of being able to achieve it.

• You can assist with rolling by assisting at the top of the arm or hips.

• Lying to sitting is a complex movement that children complete in a variety of ways.

• As mentioned in the last webinar, it is important to work on movement patterns in order to avoid destructive postures.

• You should be able to try this transition if your child is able to sit with head control and requires support around hips only.

• Your therapist can provide guidance if you are unsure if your child is ready to progress to these skills.
Lying to sitting: Common difficulties

- Children need to repeat movements many times before they are properly learnt. This is difficult for children with any kind of movement difficulty.
- It is important not only to master the back lying, tummy lying and side lying positions, but also the transitions between them.
- Transitions involve movement through many planes, with the body bending, straightening, turning and moving limbs in isolation to each other.
Lying to sitting: Solutions cont.

• Lie your child on their back, hold one hand and assist them into the side lying position by taking their hand across their body.

• Gently lead their arm away from the floor and they should start to lift their body and put weight through their elbow.

• It is important to assist and not do all the work for them.
Lying to sitting: 

*Solutions cont.*

• You will be able to tell if your child is pulling back (bracing) with the arm you are assisting with.

• They should be able to hold their head up themselves and move their body to assist.

• As your child improves you will be able to reduce the amount of help provided.

• With your assisting hand, ease the child slightly forward and to the side in the direction they need to go to sit themselves up more.
Lying to sitting: *Solutions cont.*

The child should now be putting weight through their hand – and pulling on your supporting hand.

If they stop pulling on your hand you can place your other hand on their body and ease them into the sitting position.

“Remember children move into sitting positions in many different ways.”

“If they get themselves into the sitting position they may still need a hand to get their balance.”
Lying to sitting:

**Aims**

- From these early positions we have taught great movement patterns; rolling and moving to sitting.
- We have hopefully avoided ‘cheating’ and ‘destructive’ patterns of movements early on in your child’s journey.

“If the early building blocks are set well, the later building blocks will fall much more easily into place!”
Lying to sitting: Have you considered...

How can we master such a complicated position if we can’t master the individual transitional positions?

How can we move from lying to sitting if we have never put weight through our arms before?
Lying to sitting
Questions?
Transitioning from the early positions

Using Playpak, we have practiced the transitions to early and advanced sitting postures, which help a child learn how to move and become more active when seated.

“I will work on as many of these skills as possible with all children, even if I know they will not reach certain milestones, to ensure the best possible building blocks are in place for them to succeed at more challenging postures and abilities.”
Resources

- [www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak](http://www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak)
- Playpak Videos
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- Playpak FAQs
- Nick’s Blog Posts
- Things you need to know about Playpak: Part 3 Moving on – kneeling and crawling position. 4th May 2013.
Final Questions?
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Things you need to know about Playpak

Part 3: Moving on - Kneeling and Crawling positions

4th May 2016

Panellist: Nick Mant, PT Flying Start Children’s Therapy
Moderator: Clare Greer
Aims of today’s webinar:

1. To understand how the Playpak can assist with more challenging positions of 4-point kneeling and sitting.
2. Understand that children develop in different ways, but we can still work on the positions in Webinar 1 and 2 to create the best building blocks to succeed with these more difficult positions.
3. To answer as many questions as possible – we’ll do this at the end of each section!
3.1 Kneeling and 4-point kneeling
4-point kneeling: Why is it important?

- This position develops power in the shoulders and hips which will be used when crawling.
- Encourages independent movement and weight transfer through arms and legs – leading to activities such as crawling.
- Encourages mid-line play, if the child is supported correctly using the Playpak.
- Children need to transition through this position to stand.
4-point kneeling: Common difficulties

• 4 point kneeling requires weight bearing through all 4 limbs. This position requires a good level of balance for the child to release one arm and then the other.

• If your child has not enjoyed tummy time this position can be difficult. Persevere!! This position develops head control and arm stability which can improve fine motor tasks in later years.

• Children with low tone may require help to gain head control and hold up their trunk. Children with high tone may extend away from the support or bend into it.

Strike a balance between challenge and ability!
4-point kneeling: Solutions

Supporting the trunk with the rolls and horseshoe prevents the legs from extending or falling out of position. The child has more of a chance to push up with their hands and gain more head control. Try to encourage the child to lift their head.
4-point kneeling: Aims

- Equal weight through arms and knees.
- Form and maintain symmetrical positions with the child's back being straight or slightly curved.
- The shoulders should be gaining stability so that the child can play and eventually crawl independently if possible.
- The child's head control will improve, allowing it to lift and turn both ways.
4-point kneeling
Questions?
3.1-Tall (High) Kneeling
3.1-Tall (High) Kneeling

• High kneeling allows the child to take more weight through their pelvis and push up from being sat on their feet.

• This movement uses muscles the child started to develop when lifting out legs away from the floor in back lying.

• High kneeling is an important transition between crawling and standing.

• Again check with your therapist before completing this task if you are unsure of positioning.
Tall (High) Kneeling: Common difficulties

• Support needs to be provided to prevent W sitting (knees bent in front and feet by the side of their bottom) as this leads to bad hip development.

• This can be resolved by pushing your child’s knees and feet together, so they sit on top of their legs as opposed to the side. Use Playpak to provide support to the side of their legs, and maintain weight through their knees as shown in the photo on the right.
Tall (High) Kneeling: Examples

• Using both horseshoes the body is given enough support for the child to lean over. The strap can hold the bottom slightly, however don’t let the strap restrict the child from pushing up onto their knees.

• Toys can be placed in front of the child which will encourage more of a 4-point position. The trunk is supported and there should be no arching of the back.
Tall (High) Kneeling: Examples

- A small roll can be used to help keep the child's bottom off their feet. This will encourage a more upright kneeling position.
- Try to encourage the child to actively push themselves up onto their knees lifting their trunk away from the support.
Tall (High) Kneeling: Aim

- Initially your child will rest their feet on their bottom. We want to encourage them to actively push up onto their knees and hold their trunk upright.
- You can play with toys (balls and blocks) to encourage them to put weight through their arms while stacking objects.
- Kneeling can help develop skills missed in earlier positions if your child did not like tummy time or crawling positions.
4-point/Tall (High) Kneeling: Have you considered...

- How can a child try and crawl if they have never had the experience of kneeling or transferring weight between hands?
- How can they transition effectively to stand without going through high kneeling?
- How can they push to stand if they can’t push up from their bottom?
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3.2 Sitting to 4-point kneeling
Sitting to 4-point kneeling: Possible difficulties

- Children need to repeat movements many times before they are learnt.
- Children with movement difficulties struggle to do this and can develop abnormal movement patterns in order to achieve different postures.
- This can be prevented by teaching and repeating normal movement patterns.
- A child needs to move their arms, shoulders, legs and feet independently of each other.

- This is a hard movement to master but if we learn the static positions, whilst improving with the transitional postures such as side sitting and side lying then half the battle is won.
Sitting to 4-point kneeling: Solutions

• Start with the child sitting in between your legs.

• Get the child to focus on a particular side and get him/her to reach to that side turning their body and shoulders.

Use toys to stimulate the child and make it fun
Sitting to 4-point kneeling: Solutions

You can then progress by helping them to move their legs into a side seating position, which will help the body to turn, and reach both arms towards the desired toy.

When both arms reach over the trunk, pelvis will generally follow. If not, give a little more help to move the legs. You can then fold up your leg to act as a horse shoe to support the child in a 4-point position.
Sitting to 4-point kneeling: Have you considered...

How much easier is it to learn this transition if we have practiced previous positions such as side sitting?

How much harder is it to maintain a sitting position if we don’t naturally place our hands in front to prop?

How much easier will it be to play with toys if we have built up the strength in our arms to lift them?
Sitting to 4-point kneeling

Questions?
Complex positions

Using Playpak, we have practiced the more complex positions which will develop the muscles required to crawl and then stand, whilst continuing to practice the easier positions.

“I will work on as many of these skills as possible with all children, even if I know they will not reach certain milestones, to ensure the best possible building blocks are in place for them to succeed at more challenging postures and abilities.”
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- Nick’s [Blog Posts](http://www.fireflyfriends.com/playpak)
- **Things you need to know about Playpak: Part 1: Starting strong in three essential positions.**
- Part 2: Sitting pretty – transitioning from the early positions.
- Part 3: Moving on – kneeling and crawling positions
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