W-Sitting: A Quick Guide for Families

What it is, when it's fine, and easy ways to add variety to floor play.

W-sitting is when a child sits on their bottom with knees bent in front and feet out to the sides, so the legs make a W. Most kids sit this way sometimes, especially between ages 2 and 6. It gives them a wide, steady base and frees both hands for play. Current research has not found that it causes hip problems in typically developing children. **The goal is variety, not stopping it.**

Other ways to sit during floor play



Criss-cross

Legs crossed in front. Great for books, puzzles and circle time.



Side sit

Both legs swept to one side, then switch sides. Reaching for toys builds trunk strength.



Tall kneeling

Kneeling up at a low table or couch. Hips stay strong and tall.

Make switching easy

- **Offer, don't correct.** Show a new way to sit and make the switch part of the game.
- **Use one calm cue.** "Fix your legs" with a light tap works. Keep it to 2 or 3 cues per play session.
- **Change the furniture, not the child.** A small bench, floor cushion or child-size chair for tabletop play makes the W less handy without a single reminder.

- **Mix it up.** Sit in a new position yourself and let your child copy you.

Play that builds the core



Bear crawls

Hands and feet on the floor, bottom up. Race to a stuffed animal and back.



Wheelbarrow walks

Hold your child at the hips or thighs while they walk on their hands.



Crab walks

Tummy up, hands and feet on the floor. Carry a beanbag on the tummy for fun.

WHEN TO ASK FOR A CLOSER LOOK

- The W is the only way your child sits, and they tip over in other positions.
- Your child avoids reaching across the body during play.
- Your child often slumps, leans on furniture or props up the head to play.
- Sitting or moving causes pain, or you notice a hip clunk or one leg looks longer.
- Your child has cerebral palsy, low muscle tone or a history of hip dysplasia. Follow your child's own physical therapist.

One of these in a child who is otherwise on track usually means keep an eye on it. **Two or more, or any pain, means ask your pediatrician or a pediatric physical therapist for a screen.** A baby under 18 months who W-sits is worth a mention at the next checkup.