

Ideas to support Gross Motor Development in the Early Years



Produced by The Early Years Quality Improvement Team.



HILLINGDON
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NHS Physical activity guidelines for children (under 5 years)

How much physical activity do children under 5 years old need to do to keep healthy?

Being physically active every day is important for the healthy growth and development of babies, toddlers and preschoolers.

For this age group, activity of any intensity should be encouraged, including light activity and more energetic physical activity.

Babies

- Babies should be encouraged to be active throughout the day, every day. Before your baby begins to crawl, encourage them to be physically active by reaching and grasping, pulling and pushing, moving their head, body and limbs during daily routines, and during supervised floor play, including tummy time.
- Once babies can move around, encourage them to be as active as possible in a safe, supervised and nurturing play environment.



Toddlers

- Children who can walk on their own should be physically active every day for at least 180 minutes (3 hours). This should be spread throughout the day, indoors or outside.
- The 180 minutes can include light activity such as standing up, moving around, rolling and playing, as well as more energetic activity like skipping, hopping, running and jumping.
- Active play, such as using a climbing frame, riding a bike, playing in water, chasing games and ball games, is the best way for this age group to get moving.



All children aged under 5

Children under 5 should not be inactive for long periods, except when they're asleep. Watching TV, travelling by car, bus or train, or being strapped into a buggy for long periods are not good for a child's health and development. There's growing evidence that such behaviour can increase their risk of poor health.

What counts as light activity for children?

Light activity for children includes a range of activities, such as:

- standing up
- moving around
- walking
- less energetic play



What counts as energetic activity for children?

Examples of energetic activities suitable for most children who can walk on their own include:

- active play (such as hide and seek and stuck in the mud)
- running around
- jumping on a trampoline
- riding a bike
- dancing
- swimming
- climbing
- skipping rope
- gymnastics



Energetic activity for children will make kids "huff and puff" and can include organised activities, such as dance and gymnastics. Any sort of active play will usually include bursts of energetic activity.

Physical development involves:

- Stamina – through continuous bouts/more energetic activity
- Strength
- Mobility
- Stimulating important brain connections
- Motor skills – moving with confidence & control:
 - coordinated movement
 - control
 - stability (core, shoulder, hand)
 - agility
 - hand-eye-foot coordination (the body's ability to coordinate the visual system with the motor system)
 - rhythm and timing – musicality
 - balance and spatial awareness



Physically active play can help under-5s:

- develop essential movement skills
- maintain a healthy weight
- develop strong bones, muscles and heart
- develop social and emotional skills

Tummy Time

Tummy time helps to build the muscles your baby needs for sitting and crawling. You can start doing tummy time from birth by lying your baby on your chest – but only do this when you're wide awake and unlikely to fall asleep.

Little and often is best to begin with. Gradually increase the amount of time you do this day by day. Then, when your baby is ready, try doing tummy time on the floor. If your baby has difficulty lifting their head, you can roll up a towel and put it under their armpits. Put some toys nearby for them to reach out to.

Only do tummy time when baby is awake and alert, and you're there to keep an eye on them.



How to do Tummy Time

- Bring out a play gym mat or soft but firm mattress on the floor.
- Place baby on gently his/her belly on the mat. Keep the hands in front of them and the legs folded at knee for comfort.
- Go into the same position as baby and talk to them, entertain them with toys etc.
- If baby seems upset, change baby's position by keeping him/her on your chest while you are in an inclined position.
- Change baby's head direction at every few minutes.

Wrap textures around a hoola hoop for an easy and colorful toy for babies!



Tummy Time Station
SIMPLE SET-UP FOR TUMMY TIME



Tummy Time
finger
painting



Ideas for Tummy
Time



The type of book that
can super-charge

Tummy Time



:: Sensory Play for Babies ::
Fresh Herbs Tummy Time



TUMMY TIME
ICE SENSORY PLAY



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Crawling

Most babies usually crawl on all fours between the ages of 6-9 months. Once they can roll and sit up on their own, they begin to realize their potential for getting from point A to point B. Suddenly, a whole new world opens up to them as they begin to creep along on their stomachs, scoot forward using one leg to propel themselves, and even put several different movements together, gradually inching their way across the floor.

Why is crawling so important?

Crawling encourages the development of many developmental skills including:

- Bilateral coordination – The coordinated use of both sides of the body together to perform a task.
- Reciprocal arm and leg movements – Alternating patterns of movement using both sides of the body.
- Strength – Crawling promotes neck and core strength, arm strength, and hand strength.
- Balance
- Hand-eye coordination
- Motor planning
- Weight bearing through the hands
- Integration of primitive reflexes – A set of innate and involuntary movements infants make in response to certain stimuli.

Ideas to Support Babies' Crawling Skills

- Give babies plenty of tummy time, starting from birth. By playing on their bellies, babies develop the muscle strength in their shoulders, arms, back and trunk (torso) that helps them learn to crawl.
- Another way to help babies' muscles grow is to have them play with their hands elevated. Try putting their arms on top of a pillow or stuffed animal during tummy time. You can also encourage them to put their hands onto elevated objects (e.g. furniture or toys) while they're sitting down.



- Encourage babies to reach for the toys they are interested in. Lay interesting toys at just a short distance from them. See if they are able to move themselves toward these objects. Play tunnels are also a great way to encourage crawling.
- Make sure babies have space to explore that is safe and supervised. Take a walk through (or better yet, a crawl-through) your setting and see what potential hazards may be at babies' level.

- Help babies get a leg workout by lifting them off the floor just a bit. You can pick baby up by the arms or armpits just enough to support their body weight but not so much that their feet leave the ground. This allows baby to practice the motion of walking and will help strengthen their legs.
- Place the palms of your hands behind babies' feet when they are on all fours. This stabilizes them and gives them something to "push off" from when they are just learning to crawl.



- Let baby play in front of a mirror. They will want to investigate their own reflection, which will lead to holding themselves up and reaching out toward the mirror. These movements will help encourage baby to crawl.
- Allow babies to play on all sides - during playtime, try moving baby into different positions and allowing them to play on all sides. An even mix of right side, left side, back, and tummy will help their body become strong and healthy.



Providing different surfaces to crawl on
e.g. bubble wrap adds a sensory element



Encouraging babies to walk

Ideas to encourage cruising:



Provide items at babies' height that will support them in cruising along and between them.



Using chairs to cruise along, or push along, are also great gross motor activities for babies learning to walk. The chairs can be easily spaced to babies' comfort level – either within arms reach, a step or two away, or a bit further. Putting a favourite toy on one of the chairs helps encourage them to cruise between.



For babies that are 'sitters' (stand, step, sit) then an activity such as pushing a laundry basket or other large items is a good idea. This position encourages them to lean forward as they move along.



Tape 'treasures' to the wall with masking tape so that babies can cruise along, reaching up and pulling them off one at a time. Or provide fixed items with different textures to explore to encourage moving along the wall.

Balance and co-ordination activities – Babies and toddlers

Playing with balls

- Collect different types of balls, eg, foam, beach, Koosh, balloon ball, plastic, tennis etc.
- Place a cardboard box a short distance away and show them how to roll the ball into the box.
- Set up skittles and show them how to knock the skittles down with the ball (make skittles by partly filling plastic bottles with sand or rice).
- Dangle a ball in a sock in front of their body and encourage them to reach for other objects on the midline.
- If they're sitting unaided, gently kick a soft ball (foam, paper) towards them and encourage them to kick at it.



Balance and body awareness activities – Babies and toddlers

Singing and dancing games

- Use finger play with puppets, sing songs and nursery rhymes which encourage using different parts of the body, e.g. 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes,' 'If you're happy and you know it clap your hands' 'Row, row, row your boat,' 'Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake,' 'Two little dicky birds.'
- Play different types of music and dance with baby in arms or wriggle or rock on the floor together.



Outdoor play

- Ride-ons – as balance improves, these are good for sitting on and pushing along.
- Slide – place them half way up the slide or slide down with them on your lap.
- Sit with them on a swing or, if they can sit unaided, swing alone.
- Let them explore and play with natural materials and containers – water, sand, soil.

Movement (locomotor) activities - Walkers

These include:

Crawling, swinging, spinning, wading, rolling, running, walking, jumping, side-stepping, slithering, climbing, skipping, swimming, galloping, dancing, creeping, hopping

Energetic activity ideas:

- Use the space at your setting or in your local area to let children experience the freedom of running around spontaneously and experiencing whole body movement.
- Provide space for children to run around on different surfaces and play with different small equipment e.g. skipping ropes, balls.
- Blow bubbles for children to chase.
- Running activities – in and out of cones, through pathways drawn with chalk or ropes on floor, enjoying open space, natural areas. Play games with playground markings or use equipment to set up activities e.g. obstacle courses.
- Visit the local playground to use fixed play equipment e.g. climbing frames, slides, swings etc. Encourage children (where possible) to walk to the playground, or part of the way.



- Provide large equipment – logs, 'A' frame, tyres, slide, rope ladders, planks, crates, tunnels, barrels, obstacle courses, dens, large fixed equipment.



Chasing and energetic games

The following games are suitable for larger spaces or outdoors.

Corner game

Four colours designated to four corners. Children run to that corner when the colour is called out.

Beans game

- Children find a space.
- When you or a child calls out one of the following 'beans' the children respond with corresponding actions:
 - jumping bean – jump up and down
 - runner bean – run on the spot or in a circle
 - beans on toast – lie down
 - broad bean – make a wide shape
 - jelly bean – shake and wobble around
 - string bean – stand up tall and reach up high.
- For older children – add more beans and actions:
 - chilli bean – shiver and shake
 - frozen bean – stand still
 - bean sprouts – stand on tiptoes and make yourself as tall as possible
 - bean casserole – children all join hands and walk around in a circle.

Traffic lights

- Children stand in a space.
 - When 'green light' is called the children run around the activity area.
 - When 'red light' is called out everyone stops still.
 - When 'yellow light' is called out, children walk around on tiptoes.
 - You could hold up coloured scarves or cards when you call out the colours.
- For older children – challenge them by changing the activity they have to do when 'yellow' is called out, eg, skip, march, hop, jump, move sideways.

Stuck in the mud

- Children stand in a space.
- Choose a child to be 'it'.
- When this child touches someone else, they freeze and stand with their feet apart.
- The only way to 'unfreeze' this child is for another child to crawl under their arms.
- The game continues until everyone has been frozen, or when someone has been frozen three times and becomes 'it'.

Tag

- Let a child chase you.
- Tuck a scarf into the back of your clothes (waistband) and allow them to pull it out when they catch you.

Pass the tag

To challenge children further:

- Choose a child to be the tagger.
- Choose a child to hold an object e.g. beanbag.
- The tagger tries to tag the person holding the beanbag.
- The person holding the beanbag passes (or throws) it to another child when they're in danger of being tagged.
- The beanbag needs to stay on the move.
- If the person tagged is holding the beanbag, they become the tagger.

Relay races

- Encourage different ways of moving: running, hopping, jumping, skipping, but don't make it a competition. Keep the teams and distances small so the children are kept active a lot of the time.

Sharks

- Two children are chosen to be sharks and stand in the middle of the activity area.
- Other children are divided into small groups and each group is given the name of a fish.
- You call out names of fish and those children have to run around the sharks in the middle (who stay at their base).
- Sharks can leave their base to give chase only when you call out 'sharks'.
- The shark who catches the most fish can choose to stay as a shark or become a fish.
- The other shark joins one of the fish groups and another shark is chosen to begin again.



Beanbag relay

- Place a number of beanbags randomly around the activity area.
- Stand children in small groups behind the start line.
- On a given signal, the first child from each group runs to collect a beanbag and returns, dropping it in their group's hoop or bucket.
- Then the next team member runs and repeats the process.
- The game continues until there is a signal to stop or all the beanbags have been collected.



Games with line markings

Use any existing markings to encourage movement or play games, and use different movement vocabulary to encourage the children to move in different ways. Use chalk to mark out if there aren't any markings.

For example:

- hopscotch
- moving onto different shapes, colours, numbers when they're called
- balancing on lines
- finding ways to move along lines in different ways
- follow the leader

Jumping and hopping activities

These should be interspersed with other activities as they're quite demanding.

Jumping:

- on different colour spots/carpet squares
- up to catch bubbles, a scarf, hit a dangling object
- over paper wands (height) and two parallel ropes 'a river' (distance) and into a hoop 'pond'
- from a box/bench and landing safely
- over elastic, chalk lines
- to music/rhymes to encourage jumping e.g. 'One Little Speckled Frog'



- Jumping in and out of hoops laid on the ground. Try different ways of jumping – one foot to the same foot (hopping), one foot to the other foot (leaping), one foot to two feet (jump), two feet to two feet (jump), two feet to one foot (jump).
- Jumping onto spots, from one spot to another, over a river (two ropes) and into a pond (hoop).
- Jumping into a hoop 'if you have brown hair,' 'are four years old', 'are wearing red' etc.
- Jumping over raised elastic/paper wands.
- Jumping from a step, bench or box.
- If a sandpit's available, let children jump in and see the marks they've made. Can they jump further next time?
- Jump or hop on the spot (change legs) in time with you clapping, or along to some music.
- Play hopscotch games.
- Pretend to be an animal that jumps e.g. frog, kangaroo, flea, cricket.
- Multiple jumps (advanced) – Make up some jumping and hopping patterns e.g. jump, hop, jump, hop, hop, jump.

Obstacle courses, treasure hunts and activity trails

- Set up courses which encourage children to climb over objects, crawl through tunnels or slither under equipment and move around obstacles in different ways e.g. run in and out of cones, jump between beanbags, skip to a fixed point.
- Soft play equipment can be great for encouraging rolling, sliding and crawling.
- Children can make up their own courses and challenge others to have a go.
- Set up simple courses using markers or cones that encourage children to weave in and out of obstacles. Try challenging them to travel in and out of the markers in a variety of ways e.g. skipping, jumping, hopping.



- Set up treasure hunts around your setting. This could involve some picture clues or simple questions e.g. where can you find a saucepan? (in the home corner). Children could hunt and collect coloured stars in pairs or small groups and return them to a central point before being given the next picture/clue.
- Activity trails – work with children to set up trails for others to follow using natural objects e.g. pebbles, sticks, pine cones.
- Play hide and seek. The children hide, and one seeks out the rest. You could also hide a toy for the children to find.

Imitation and mirror games

Play games pretending to be different animals, e.g. slither like a snake, move like a lion on all fours, stomp around like an elephant, move sideways like a crab, float around lightly like a butterfly, jump like a kangaroo, make some picture 'prompt' cards to build anticipation.

Sit or stand opposite children and get them to copy your movements e.g. bending sideways, crouching down, hands above your head, hands crossing the front of your body.



Follow the leader

- Make different body shapes e.g. tall, small, wide, for children to copy.
- Demonstrate different ideas for moving around e.g. jumping, hopping, skipping, running and stopping, then starting again, suddenly changing direction. Vary the speed (fast and slow) and level (high, medium, low).
- Demonstrate different actions e.g. stretching up tall, clapping hands, touching toes.
- Encourage children to be creative and to take it in turns to be 'the leader' and demonstrate as many different ways of moving and actions they can while saying out loud what they are doing.
- This can be an indoor and outdoor activity.

Music and movement activities

In the following games, rather than the children being 'out', let them dance in an area aside from the game.

Musical statues

- Children dance to music and stand as still as they can when the music stops.

Musical bumps

- Children dance to music and sit on the floor as quickly as possible when the music stops.

Musical cushions

- The same as musical bumps except children sit on a cushion when the music stops. Use one less cushion than the number of children taking part.

Dancing to music, instruments and sounds

- Use a variety of music (pop, classical) for children to dance to.
- Children move with coloured streamers, ribbons on sticks, bells, balls with bells.
- Provide opportunities for children to watch, copy, initiate and perform a range of styles of dance.
- Use a variety of stimuli for dance: music, stories, rhymes, places, animals, fireworks, transport etc.

Organise a performance area, indoors and out, so that children can spontaneously perform their dances.

- Provide different surfaces for children to dance on, so that they can sometimes hear their feet e.g. wellies in water.



Wake and shake activities

- Organise 10 minutes of physical activity e.g. at the beginning or end of a session.
- Children stand in a space and act out action rhymes, an active story or dance to music.
- This can be set up very quickly and doesn't require a lot of room, but will rely on children being able to keep in their own space.

Stability (balance) skills

This involves balancing the body when it's still (static balance) and in motion (dynamic balance). Balance takes a long time to develop and involves a child making connections between the part of the brain that controls balance and the leg and arm movements needed to stay in that position.

These include:

moving on front

cycling

moving on side

moving on back

climbing

moving along a narrow surface

sliding

using balance bikes

moving on hands and feet

swinging

balancing on one foot

scotching



Activities which encourage body awareness, balance and coordination

Use equipment to encourage the use of different body parts:

- Objects to hold, wave, shake, bang, throw, hit or catch e.g. various balls, streamers, plastic bottles containing pasta or rice (lids firmly closed), pots, pans and various containers, cardboard tubes or paper wands.
- Objects to move over, or climb through and around e.g. tunnels, boxes, carpet squares, ball pools, tyres, plastic boxes, taped catalogues/directories, rough areas including natural materials – wood stumps, logs and planks, climbing frames, low branches, ladders, stepping stones.



Balance activities

Walking along different lines and equipment to challenge balance.

These don't need to be high, and can be set up to provide a developmentally appropriate challenge depending on the child's ability. Equipment could be:

- chalk or marked lines
- planks of wood and/or logs
- wobble boards
- balance bikes

Crouching to:

- pick up toys
- choose objects from a box
- explore natural objects outside
- dig with a trowel
- collect and retrieve objects
- sweep

Explain that we can balance on large parts of our body. Ask children to show a balance on their backs, their tummies, on their sides.

Can they balance using two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot?

Play musical statues. On 'freeze', children must hold very still for a count of five. Encourage them to experiment with different positions, on different levels (high, medium and low).

A child puts their feet on top of your feet and you both hold hands. You walk backwards, forwards and sideways while they balance on your feet.

Use large exercise balls for body balancing, body rolling and pushing.



Balancing on two feet

Ask the children to stand on tiptoes and balance (stand still). Can they do it for five seconds? Get them to try walking forwards and backwards on tiptoes.

Incorporate rests into activities where they move on and off their toes, so their calf muscles don't get too tired.

Body balancing

Balancing using beanbags or small soft toys

❑ Get children to explore different balancing tricks with a beanbag or soft toy. Can they balance it on their hand, head, leg, arms, shoulders, elbow, top of the foot, thigh, knee etc? They can try these activities with two feet on the ground and then progress to standing on one foot.

❑ Can they move around an area with the beanbag/toy in different positions and not drop it? Encourage them to move in different directions (forwards, backwards and sideways) and in different pathways (straight, curving, zig-zag).

❑ If they place their beanbag or toy on the floor, can they make any shapes with their body over it e.g. a star, bridge, crab, tunnel? Can they make a shape over the beanbag or toy with a friend?

❑ A child balances a beanbag somewhere on their body. If it falls, they must stand still (freeze) until a friend has put the beanbag or toy back where it fell from and shouted out the body part. Friends then swap roles.

❑ Ask children to lie on their backs with their feet together up in the air. Balance a beanbag or soft toy on their feet. Can they keep the object off the ground?

Other equipment to encourage balance

- Stilts
- Stepping stones
- Balance boards
- Single seesaws
- Beams/planks
- Climbing frames
- Rockers
- Balance bikes
- Dinosaur feet
- Saturn balls
- Traversing walls
- Tyres





Balancing on one foot

- Ask the children to balance on one foot for a count of five. Then, change legs and repeat. Repeat again and try to balance for longer. Let them rest when they've managed a count of 15. Ask them to try this with one eye closed, then two. Ask what happens when they do this.
- Play musical statues, and when the music stops ask the children to balance on one leg. Keep the music breaks short.
- Get them to place one foot on a large ball and balance on the other leg, then hold for a count of five. Change legs and repeat. Repeat again and try to hold for longer. Let them rest when they've managed a count of 15.
- Ask them to place a tennis ball under one foot, and, while they're balancing on the other leg, roll the ball from heel to toe with the sole of their foot. Repeat five times and swap legs.

Tightrope walking

- Set up two parallel ropes on the floor about one metre apart.
- Ask the children to walk heel to toes between the two ropes without stepping on the ropes.
- Gradually bring the ropes closer together to make it harder.
- Ask them to repeat the activity trying to keep a beanbag on their heads.
- Repeat the activities walking along tile lines, wooden floor/laminate lines or a chalked line or length of tape. Get them to try different ways of moving along the line and staying on it e.g. lifting their knees higher, walking backwards, taking big strides.
- Let the children walk along benches, if you have them. Some children may need or want your support until they feel more confident. Support them as they walk along other low raised surfaces e.g. walls, trim trails and climbing equipment in parks.

Object control skills

These involve controlling or manipulating implements and objects such as balls, bats, ribbons, by hand, foot or with any other part of the body.

These include:

Driving a wheeled vehicle

Kicking

Throwing

Catching

Flinging

Heading

Rolling

Dribbling

Striking

Bouncing

Activities using balls (of various sizes and textures)

- Roll a large ball close to a child and encourage them to bend and pick up and throw it back.
- Aiming at targets (on floor, wall, bucket or objects).
- Kicking.
- Throwing:
 - at objects and for distance
 - towards a person to catch
 - in the air and catching it themselves (beach ball or other large ball).
- Catching (on their own or with a partner).
- With a partner – use a large, soft ball e.g. beach ball or foam ball, stand facing the child with a small gap, ask them to make a basket with their arms, and gently throw the ball into their arms.
- Striking – hang balls at different heights. Use hands or cardboard wand/small bat to strike them with.

Position balls:

- high to strike at
- medium to hit at waist height
- low for kicking balls or striking e.g. hitting a balloon and moving it along the ground.



Ball activities

Rolling and retrieving a ball

- Ask children to select from a variety of balls, to roll, chase after, collect and return them to the original spot.
- Sit them in pairs (straight backs) with legs apart and roll a ball to each other, grasp it and return it to their partner.
- Sit them in pairs with legs crossed (straight backs) and repeat the activity. Children need to be more accurate with their rolling now.
- Can they find another position to roll from e.g. kneeling, one-leg kneel, squatting, crawling position?

Trapping a ball

- Ask the children to stand fairly close together in pairs. One child rolls or kicks a large ball to the other, who aims to stop the ball by bending their knee down toward and over the ball.
- Next, ask them to trap the ball with their foot before returning it. As they improve, increase the distance between them.

Guided discovery ball activities

- Set out a variety of balls of different shapes, sizes and textures and ask children to pick one.
- Ask them to find different ways of making their ball move (by rolling, throwing, kicking, pushing with a part of their bodies, using another implement to push it along).



Target games for accuracy

☐ Children throw a variety of objects e.g.

balls, beanbags:

- on the floor to hit a target e.g. cone, skittles or land in a target e.g. bucket, basket, bin, ring above the ground
- at the wall e.g. shapes drawn on paper. These should be at different heights for different levels of development. They can be square or circular but the width should be about 0.75m. The centre of the target should range between 1.2m and 1.8m above the ground
- to knock down skittles or bottles (filled slightly with sand or coloured water)
- to each other – children stand very close together and must understand that they need to help their partner catch the object by throwing gently. If they catch it, they can take one step back.



Target games for distance

- ☐ Mark a throwing line in a large space and let children practise throwing (from this line) as far as they can with a variety of different objects e.g. balls, beanbags, quoits, frisbees, wellies. Do they notice how some objects are easier to throw?
- ☐ Can they throw with both hands together and with their left and right hand separately? Which side do they find easiest?

More ideas for target games



Catching practice

- If children aren't ready for these catching activities, slow the catching action down by letting them practise self-catching with scarves or balloons.
- Progress onto beanbags or rolled up socks.

Use different objects and equipment to practise catching:

- chiffon
- bubbles
- balloons or balloon ball
- ribbons
- Koosh balls
- beanbags
- foam textured balls
- large spherical and smaller soft rugby balls

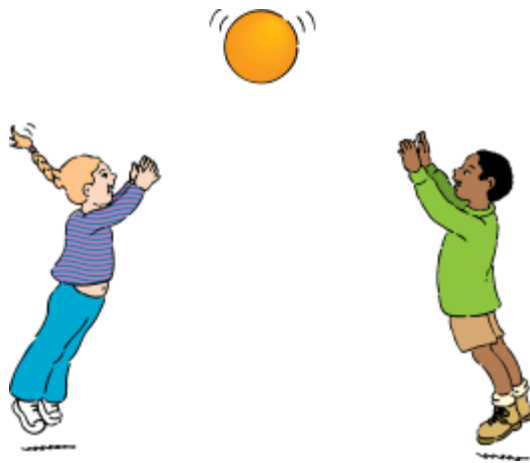
Roll hoops across an open area so children can practise running and catching a hoop.

- Can they roll the hoop to themselves i.e. chase after it, and catch it before it falls to the ground? How far can they get their hoop to roll?

Toy chase (soft toys)

- Two children select a soft toy each.
- The children stand in a circle. The children with the toys should be on the opposite side to each other.
- The children pass the toys around the circle, in the same direction.
- The aim is for the first toy to 'catch up' the second toy.





Individual bounce and catch

- Let children pick from a variety of balls and practise dropping one from waist height and trying to catch the rebound with two hands.
- If they drop it from higher, can they still catch the rebound?

Partner bounce and catch

- In pairs, can one child drop a ball from height so the ball bounces and the other child catches the rebound?
- Can the pair move slightly further apart and still bounce the ball to each other? Try this with a variety of balls.

Hot potato

- Children stand close together in a small circle and pass or throw a beanbag or large ball around the circle. They have to imagine the object is a 'hot potato' and to pass/throw it to the next person as quickly as they can.
- There are many variations to make this game easier or harder. They could start by rolling a ball to each other, then progress to passing it and then to throwing a beanbag or beach ball. Challenge them further by starting with a larger ball and then moving on to smaller balls.

Name catch

- Children sit or stand in a circle and one child chooses another child to either roll or throw the ball to. The child says the name of the second child just before they release the ball.
- Alternatively, you stand in the middle of a circle of 6-8 children and call out the name of the child you're throwing to, who catches it and then throws the ball back to you. Use a variety of balls/beanbag depending on the development level of the children.

Striking activities

Kicking

- Balloon kicking – children aim to keep a balloon in the air using only their feet, either on their own or in pairs.
- Rebound kicking – children take turns kicking a large ball against a wall.
- Kicking into a goal – children practise with a variety of balls kicking into a netted or man-made goal set up in front of a wall. As they become more successful, the goals can be narrowed to make it more difficult.



Striking

- Hang some old DVDs/CDs (or soft balls in socks) from a low tree branch or washing line, using string to hang them at different heights. Ask the children to hit them with a rolled up newspaper or cardboard tube.

Hitting

- Can the children keep a balloon up in the air by hitting it with their hands? How many hits can they manage before it falls to the floor?
- Give the children a cardboard tube. Can they keep their balloon in the air using the cardboard tube?
- Progression to harder hitting – Give the children a foam ball and bat and ask them how many times they can hit the ball up into the air. Can they do this with both palm up and palm down?



Balloon Tennis