



Healthy
Opportunities for
Preschoolers



Early Learning
Practitioners Resource





Literacy, Education, Activity and Play

LEAP BC™ is an initiative of 2010 Legacies Now,
in partnership with the Province of British Columbia and
the University of Victoria

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Illustrated by Kristi Bridgeman, 2007 © CARCC, 2007

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Acknowledgements

The Healthy Opportunities for Preschoolers Early Learning Practitioners Resource owes much to both individuals and agencies who funded and/or participated in its development through focus group interviews or pilot workshops. Specifically our thanks go to the Vancouver Island Health Authority Childcare Licensing Branch, the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the hundreds of childcare providers who tested these activities.

Our thanks also go to the children (Aaron, Victoria, Simi, and Simon) who modeled for our artist; the LEAP BC™ Provincial Implementation Steering Committee, and the following members of the HOP Resource Advisory Committee:

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Special thanks go to: Dr. Justen O'Connor for his work on the original version of HOP; Dr. Brad Temple for design, layout, and desktop publishing; Karin Macaulay for her expert advice and editing; Debbie Leach and Lisa Forster-Coull for contributing the healthy eating key concepts, activities, and recipes; and Miss Similkameen O'Rourke for her drawings of a rocket ship, blueberry face, and cat.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Marion Taylor who championed the project from its conception to fruition; and to Paula McFadyen who helped make it happen.

Introduction

Early learning settings in which children live, learn, and play are important influences on children's behaviour. Through their actions and decisions, adults in these settings show children what they value and help children develop their abilities. Children of preschool age are developing and learning at an unprecedented rate, and they learn best when learning is active.

Young children have a natural desire to explore their environment and to participate in new activities and challenges. When activities simultaneously involve several areas of the child's development (such as physical, social, language, creative and intellectual), learning is most powerful. The activity suggestions in this book capitalize on children's desire to learn actively and naturally.

These activities are fun and provide many opportunities for early learning specialists and caregivers to spend time playfully and productively with children. Play lies at the heart of childhood and is a major source and stimulus for learning. This book describes activities and ideas that encourage play that is planned and supported.

The Healthy Opportunities for Preschoolers (HOP™) Early Learning Practitioners Resource is part of the LEAP BC™ program, which is an initiative of 2010 Legacies Now in partnership with the Province of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. LEAP BC™ provides children from birth to age five with a strong foundation in literacy, physical activity, and healthy eating. The program offers resources and training to support early learning specialists and caregivers as they actively participate in children's learning.



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Key concepts

On the pages that follow you will find the key concepts that are central to this book. Designed to support the development of three- to five-year-old children and to be a resource for early learning professionals, these ideas reflect current research and theoretical perspectives on ways to support the growth and development of children. The links to these key ideas are noted on each activity page. They remind us of just how much learning can be built into simple and enjoyable play activities. Engaging in this type of play lays a foundation of attitudes, habits, skills, and values that will last a lifetime.





PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



1. Participate with the children.
2. Provide for active play every day.
3. Encourage vigorous play.
4. Help children develop movement skills.
5. Build physical activity into the day.
6. Use physical activity to support learning and social development.
7. Promote creativity and self-expression.

LITERACY



1. Support play and activity with talk and other forms of communication.
2. Expose children to varied vocabulary.
3. Play with, and emphasize, the sounds of the language.
4. Promote pretend play.
5. Provide opportunities to count, sort, classify, and predict.
6. Invite children to draw, paint, write, and record.
7. Model your own pleasure with language and activity.
8. Honour the children's home languages.



HEALTHY EATING



1. Offer a variety of healthy foods.
2. Offer snacks and meals at the same times each day.
3. Let children's hunger and fullness cues guide you.
4. Have water readily available.
5. Join the children at the table and model healthy eating.
6. Familiarize children with foods that might be new to them.
7. Help the children develop food skills: selecting, preparing, and serving.
8. Make healthy eating part of everyday learning.





Physical activity

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



1. Participate with the children.
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3. Encourage vigorous play.
4. Help children develop movement skills.
5. Build physical activity into the day.
6. Use physical activity to support learning and social development.
7. Promote creativity and self-expression.

Physical Activity: When most of the large muscles in the body are moving (riding a tricycle, running, or digging in the garden). It does not include play such as puzzles, drawing, or video games (fine motor activities).

1. **Participate with the children:** Not only are you modeling that physical activity is fun, you are supporting children's development. As a bonus, playing with children is a great way for you to be active.
2. **Provide for active play every day:** Preschoolers need at least two hours of active movement every day. They shouldn't be inactive for more than an hour at a time, except when sleeping.
3. **Encourage vigorous play:** Preschoolers need frequent opportunities to use up energy. Running and jumping and skipping are great because they use the large muscles in the legs and trunk and burn energy. Healthy body weight, bone strength, cardiovascular fitness, and muscle strength come from large muscle activity.



4. **Help children develop movement skills:** Preschoolers need many opportunities to practice and gain confidence in basic movement skills. These skills are the building blocks of more complex movement patterns and include:
 - a. Skills to manipulate objects such as throwing a bean bag, catching a scarf, and kicking a ball. Manipulative skills are also called "eye-hand" and "eye-foot" coordination activities.
 - b. Locomotion skills such as hopping, jumping, and skipping.
 - c. Body control skills such as balancing and making shapes with their bodies.
 - d. Body awareness skills such as moving in a space and timing of movement.
5. **Build physical activity into the day:** A healthy lifestyle includes choosing active options when you can. For example, walking to drop off children at kindergarten or to visit neighbourhood sites. Young children learn from what they see us do.
6. **Use physical activity to support learning and social development:** Playtime provides children with many and varied opportunities to actively explore the environment, practice cooperating and sharing, and learn to deal with conflict. Play strengthens reasoning, and language and literacy development.
7. **Promote creativity and self-expression:** Preschoolers need opportunities to express themselves through movement and make-believe. Play that allows children to create new ideas and solutions helps develop their flexibility, inventiveness, thinking, and social skills.





Literacy

LITERACY



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4. Promote pretend play.
5. Provide opportunities to count, sort, classify, and predict.
6. Invite children to draw, paint, write, and record.
7. Model your own pleasure with language and activity.
8. Honour the children's home languages.

Literacy: Learning to interpret ("read") and use ("write") the symbol systems (letters, numbers, music, images) valued by society.

1. Support play and activity with talk and other forms of communication.

Physical activity is richly supported and enhanced by language; play and movement activities offer powerful opportunities for children to build and strengthen their language and literacy skills. Preschoolers benefit from clear, brief explanations, accompanied by demonstrations.

- a. Talk about what you're doing: **show, do, describe as you go.**
- b. Encourage the children to do the same.
- c. Read with and to the children and offer many ways for them to respond.

2. Vary the vocabulary. Preschoolers are like "language sponges" eager to absorb new words and test their meanings. Books, poems, and engagement in play provide endless opportunities for vocabulary enrichment. For example, movement activities invite a focus on:



- a. Movement words: climb, scramble, balance, race, hop, scamper, etc.
- b. Directional words: left, right, sideways, backwards, down
- c. Describing words: lightly, thunderously, rambunctiously, softly
- d. Analogies/similes: "limp like a puppy with a sore paw."

Preschoolers learn best when new words are introduced in concrete situations where they can explore their meanings by acting them out.

3. **Play with, and emphasize, the sounds of the language.** Opportunities to distinguish between sounds (e.g. "b" and "p"), and to combine and recombine them are vital preparation for learning to read and write. Playful exposure to rhyme and repetition, songs, and nonsense chants ("...and they swam and they swam, right over the dam") provides preschoolers with a natural and pleasurable way to focus on and manipulate sounds and to develop phonemic awareness.
4. **Promote pretend play.** When pretending, young children can take on new roles, new characters, and "live" through both new and familiar situations and scenarios ("Okay, pretend I'm the baby unicorn, and you're my sister."). Language is key to creating, communicating, and sustaining such play. Pretend play stretches, challenges, and frees the child's use of language... and powerfully supports learning.
5. **Count, sort, classify and predict.** Concrete, meaningful opportunities to count, tally, sort, sequence, compare, measure, categorize, and build mathematical understanding.
6. **Provide many opportunities for children to draw, paint, write, and record.** Creating lists, maps, drawings, signs, recipes, and simple graphs provides children with opportunities to explore how language works, and demonstrates how experiences can be recorded and represented. Encourage the children to add their names, then letters, numbers, and the words they know to their drawings.
7. **Modeling matters.** Young children take their cues from the models we provide. We need to model our own pleasure in language and activity ("With a wiggle to the left and a glide across the floor, watch me boogie out the door!").
8. **Honour the children's home languages.** It's important to affirm for parents that talking and reading with children in their first language provides the best bridge to competence and literacy in additional languages. Encourage parents to interact with their children in the language most comfortable for both of them.



Healthy eating

HEALTHY EATING



1. Offer a variety of healthy foods.
2. Offer snacks and meals at the same times each day.
3. Let children's hunger and fullness cues guide you.
4. Have water readily available.
5. Join the children at the table and model healthy eating.
6. Familiarize children with foods that might be new to them.
7. Help the children develop food skills: selecting, preparing, and serving.
8. Make healthy eating part of everyday learning.

Healthy Eating: Enjoying nutritious foods in a relaxed and social environment.

1. **Offer a variety of healthy foods.** When you provide food and snacks, use *Canada's Food Guide* to plan healthy meals and snacks that include vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives (yogurt, cheese) as well as meat and alternatives (fish, tofu, eggs). *Food Flair for Child Care* offers many helpful suggestions for working with families to encourage healthy eating.
2. **Offer snacks and meals at the same times each day.** Children need the routine of regular eating. Children will eat better if they do not nibble on food or drink beverages other than water between meal and snack times.
3. **Let children's hunger and fullness cues guide you.** Appetites vary from day to day. Offer small amounts and allow children to ask for more.



4. **Have water readily available.** Encourage the children to drink water to quench their thirst throughout the day, especially after being physically active.
5. **Join the children at the table and model healthy eating.** This can be a rich opportunity for conversation and enjoying each other's company.
6. **Familiarize children with foods that might be new to them.** Invite children to taste and discover new foods using their other senses (e.g. touch, feel, smell). However, no child should be pressured to taste or eat anything. It may take children 15 to 20 tries before they accept a new food. Check with the parents and caregivers about any food allergies.
7. **Help the children develop food skills: selection, preparation, and serving.** A great deal can be learned through involving children in choosing recipes and ingredients and making something to eat and share. Child-sized plates, bowls, cutlery, and utensils make it easier for children to participate. Pretend play can be fostered by providing props such as measuring cups, wooden spoons, rolling pins, and empty food containers.
8. **Make healthy eating part of everyday learning.** Activities can include food preparation, cooking, drawing, categorizing, field trips, gardening, and reading books and poems about food. These activities increase children's awareness of, and interest in, food, as well as their knowledge of where food comes from, and how to eat in a healthy way.





How to enjoy this book

The activities in this book are designed to be fun for both you and the children you work with, and have been carefully crafted to ensure that *lots of learning will be going on*.

The pages and call outs below show the main features of the activity pages.

Identifies key benefits and skills.

Recommended equipment that is low cost, easily made or accessible.

The page number directs you to the "Let's make" section for equipment and recipes.

Suggests books, usually found in your local library, to extend the activities.

"Let's play" offers many activities to choose from. Some are more challenging than others; however they are not arranged in order of difficulty.

Some words may be new to the children. These are included to help expand vocabulary. Have fun exploring and explaining these new words.

Poems are included to encourage movement and imagination while adding fun with language.


hop

My friend beanie

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (body and spatial awareness); cooperation
 Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (location words: on, under, between; and action words: sag, wiggle, wag); counting; predicting
 Equipment: 1 bean bag per child (beanie)
 Where: Indoors or outdoors
 Let's make: Bean bags (see page 137)
 Book link: *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle

Let's play

❖ With the children, explore all sorts of ways to balance the bean bag on different parts of the body. For example: **on** the head, shoulders, nose, ear, bottom; **between** the legs, knees, toes, elbows. Use the "Body Language" poem for ideas about where to put beanie. Invite the children to find other ways to balance "beanie" on their bodies.



BODY LANGUAGE

Hips wiggle	Hearts pump
Tummies sag	Noses twitch
Shoulders shrug	Hands clap
Tongues wag	Elbows bend
Feet patter	Fingers snap
Scalps tingle	Skin wrinkles
Teeth chatter	Knuckles crack
Chests heave	Knees knock
Backs ache	Lips smack
Hair curls	Thumbs twiddle
Nails break	Eyes blink
Arms fold	Heads nod
Legs jump	Brains think!
Ankles sprain	

- Anonymous

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Including books, poems, songs, and stories in other languages that you know will add rich language experience to the activities.

If you find you don't have some of the equipment or ingredients, or your library doesn't have the particular book, go ahead and substitute, modify, or invent your own way.



You'll find tips on how to help the children with a skill or activity where you see the HOP rabbit.



On some pages you'll see dotted pictures like this bear. This shows that pretend play is encouraged.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & LITERACY



Try this way

- ❖ Challenge the children to invent tricky balance positions for beanie on their bodies. Ask them to predict how many seconds they can hold beanie in place before it drops — then try it.
- ❖ Play "pass the package" by passing the bean bag back and forth with a partner. For example, pass the beanbag from foot to foot and back again. Try again, using elbows, or holding beanie between shoulder and chin, etc. Pretend the bean bag is magic and it will splatter and shatter if dropped; take great care not to let it hit the ground.
- ❖ Read *From Head to Toe* and play "Copy Cat." Take turns showing different tricks with beanie for others to try.

"Try this way" offers variations in activities, including links to books to support language and literacy development.

Illustrations show the main activity ideas.





Bean bag golf

Physical activity links: Participating with the children; developing movement skills (eye-hand coordination); playing actively

Language/literacy links: Counting; drawing; vocabulary (e.g. days of the week, sea creatures); pretending; predicting

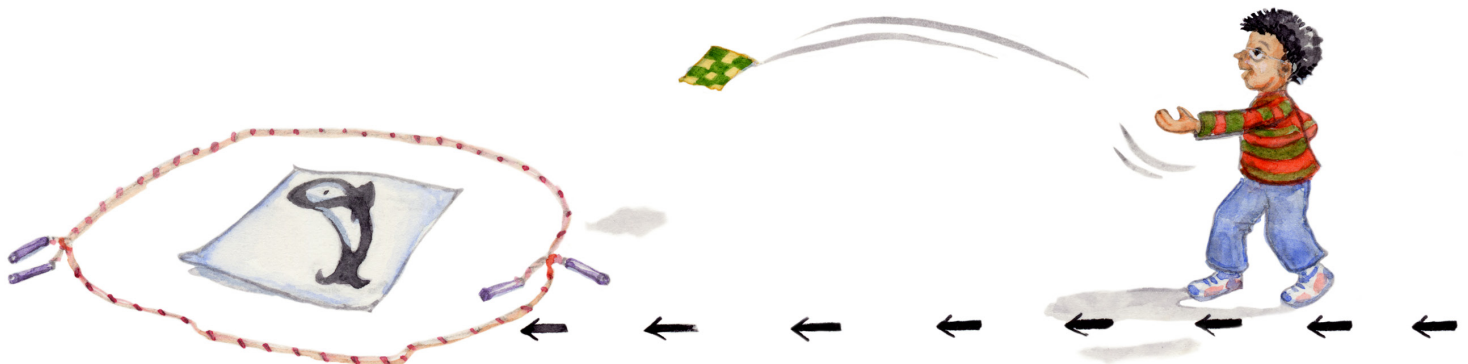
Equipment: 1 throwing object (such as a bean bag or tennis ball) per child; 2 or more start markers (tees); 2 or more hoops or old tea towels (holes)

Where: Outdoors

Let's make: Bean bags (optional) (see page 137)

Let's play

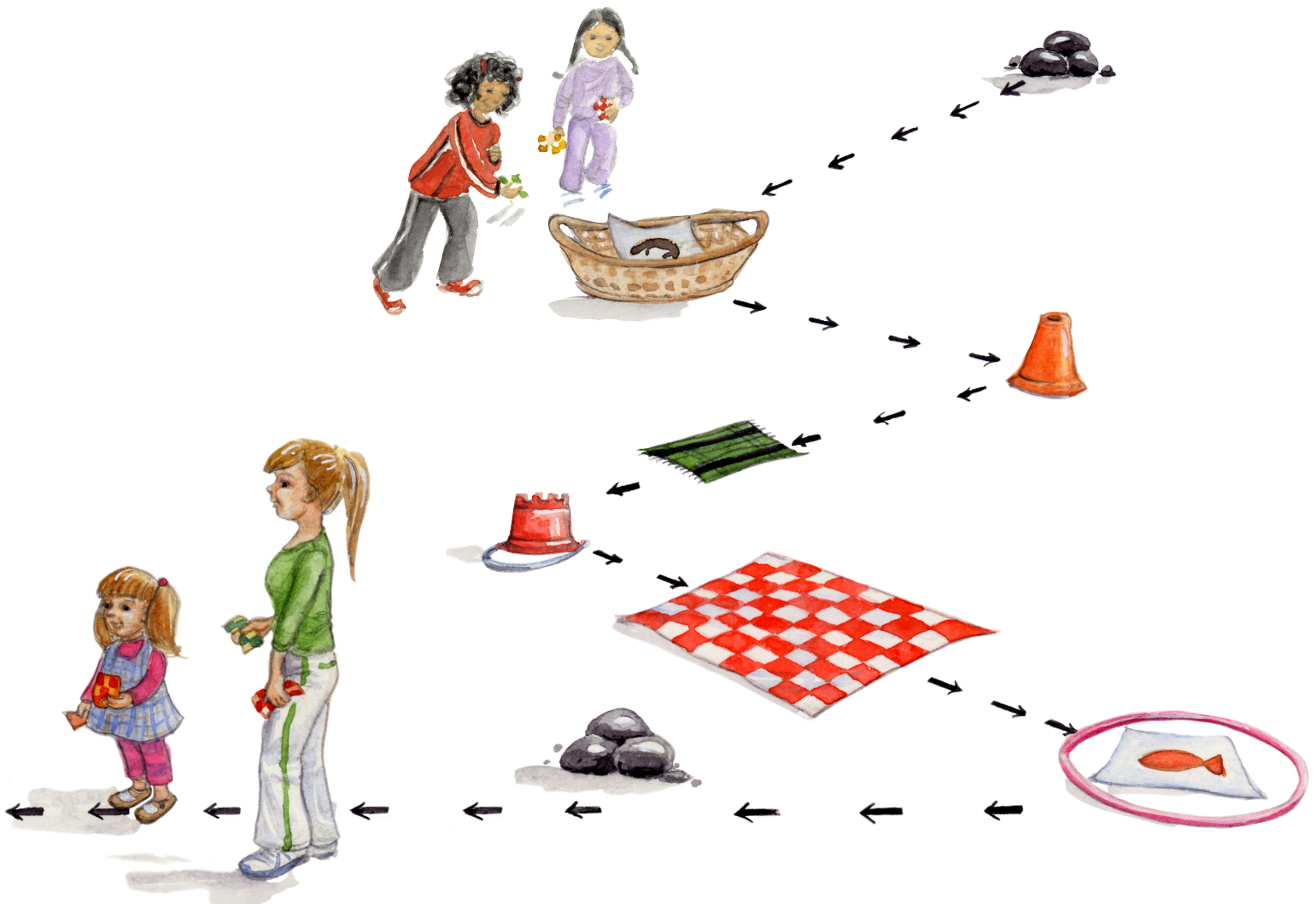
- ❖ Set out a golf course with the start markers (tees) about three to four metres away from the hoops (hole). Make as many golf holes as you wish.
- ❖ Start at the first tee and throw the object overarm or underarm towards the first hoop.
- ❖ Continue to throw the object and count how many throws until it lands inside the hoop.
- ❖ Move to next tee.
- ❖ With multiple players, the child whose object is furthest from the "hole" throws first each time. Others wait behind this thrower before moving to the next closest bean bag.





Try this way

- ❖ Vary distances between the tees and hoops. Have the children predict how many throws it will take to get the bean bag into each hoop. Throw to see if the prediction is confirmed.
- ❖ Have the children draw pictures of sea creatures they might see in an aquarium. Ask them to put the pictures they have drawn into each hoop. Add pretend by inviting the children to imagine they are feeding the fish and mammals at the aquarium. The task is to make sure the food (bean bag) reaches the sea creatures. Some creatures may need more food than others, so throw lots of objects.
- ❖ Set out a scarf or sheet for a hazard/trap. If the bean bag lands in the hazard, it can only be picked up while standing on one foot.
- ❖ Have seven tees and holes, one labelled with a card for each day of the week, but not arranged in order. The task is to play the holes in sequence from Monday to Sunday.
- ❖ Encourage the children to design their own golf course.





Bocce

Physical activity links: Participating with the children, developing movement skills (throwing, eye-hand coordination), developing social skills (turn taking, cooperation)

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (movement words: e.g. slide, toss, close, far, near); counting and measuring; predicting

Equipment: 1 small ball (jack), several bean bags or soft toys per child, an everyday object for measuring

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Bean bags (optional) (see page 137)

Let's play

- ❖ Place small ball or "jack" a few metres away from starting point.
- ❖ Have the children take turns to underarm throw or slide their bean bags toward the "jack," trying to get the bean bags as close to the "jack" as they can.





Try this way

- ❖ Have the children find an object such as block, toy car, or shoe to use as a measure. Play the game, and then help the children measure how close each bean bag is to the "jack."
- ❖ Before tossing the bean bags, guess the distance of the closest and the furthest bean bag from the jack. Measure to confirm.
- ❖ For a child with vision impairment, ask him or her to walk back from the "jack" to the starting point so that child knows how many steps away the "jack" is. Give clues to the accuracy of the throw (e.g. "one step too far").





Bounce it

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (bouncing, eye-hand coordination); participating with the children

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (speed and height words: e.g. high, medium, low; fast, slow); chanting; counting; writing numbers

Equipment: 1 medium sized ball; 1 tennis ball; 1 beach bucket per child

Where: Outdoors or large indoor space

Book links: *Bouncing* by Shirley Hughes; *Bouncing on the Bed* by Jackie French Koller; *Bouncing Time* by Patricia Hubbell

Let's play

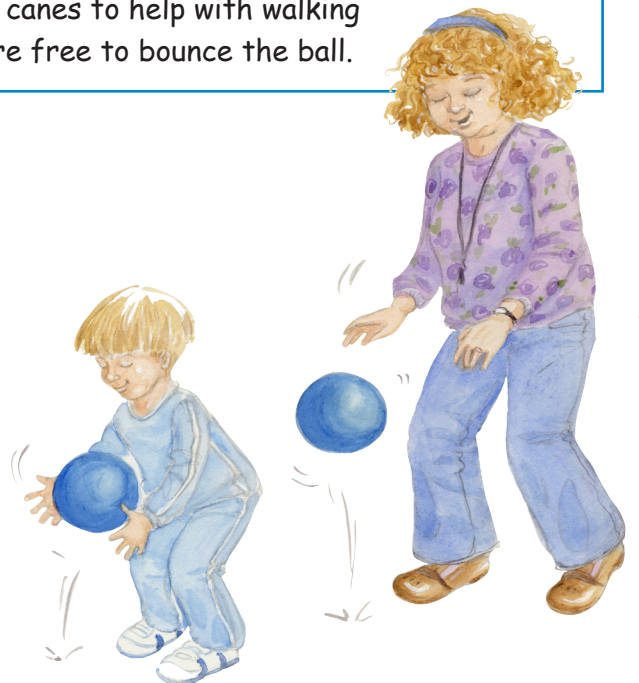
- ❖ Show the children how to drop and catch a medium-sized ball while standing.
- ❖ Encourage them to drop and catch as many times as possible in a row. Count the number of bounces and try to match or beat that number the next time. Help them write down the highest number reached.
- ❖ Keep count by chanting:

One, two, three, ball bouncing,
Four, five, six, still bouncing,
Seven, eight, nine, keep going...
Get to ten... begin again.
- ❖ Share the poem "Big" with the children. Invite discussion of new things they can do now they are BIG.
- ❖ Children who use a walking frame, crutches, or canes to help with walking will benefit from sitting down so their hands are free to bounce the ball.

BIG

*Now I can catch and throw a ball
And spell
Cat. Dog.
And Pig.
I have finished being small
And started
Being Big.*

- Dorothy Aldis





Try this way

- ❖ Try bouncing and moving (e.g. follow a line, play follow-the-leader).
- ❖ Change the rebound height by bouncing hard and soft. "Bounce low, tummy high, and reach for the sky."
- ❖ Older children might like to try bouncing a medium-sized ball with one hand (like basketball).
- ❖ Count and bounce on every second or third number (e.g. one, **two**, three, **four**; 1,2,**3**,4,5,**6**...).
- ❖ Bounce a tennis ball with one hand, holding a beach bucket or plastic container in the other hand. Catch the ball in the bucket.
 - As you do this, recite "Five Little Monkeys"... and bounce and catch the ball with the bucket each time the phrase "and bumped his head" comes around.
- ❖ Read any one of the books about bouncing with the children.

FIVE LITTLE MONKEYS

Five little monkeys

Jumping on the bed

One fell off and bumped his head, [bounce and catch the ball in the bucket]

Momma called the doctor and the doctor said [retrieve the ball from bucket]

"No more monkeys jumping on the bed!" [wag finger at the bucket]

Four little monkeys... etc.

- Anonymous





Bubble chase

Physical activity links: Active play; developing spatial awareness; eye-hand coordination; participating with the children

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary development (describe and explain); predicting, emphasizing the letters and sounds of the language

Equipment: Bubbles; bubble wand or pipe cleaners shaped into a wand

Where: Outdoors

Let's make: Bubble recipe and bubble wands for different types of bubbles (see pages 130-131)

Book link: *Pop! A Book About Bubbles* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Let's play

- ❖ Encourage the children to take turns blowing bubbles; while one blows the others try to pop the bubbles before they hit the ground.
- ❖ Pop the bubbles using different actions (e.g. karate chop, tickle) or body parts (e.g. knees, elbows, fingers).
- ❖ Sing "Pop Goes the Weasel" while you play.
- ❖ Try to catch the bubbles back onto the wand without breaking them.

POP GOES THE WEASEL

*All around the cobbler's bench
The monkey chased the weasel.
The monkey thought 'twas all in fun -
Pop! Goes the weasel.*

*Johnny has the whooping cough,
Mary has the measles.
That's the way the money goes -
Pop! Goes the weasel.*

*A penny for a spool of thread
A penny for a needle.
That's the way the money goes -
Pop! Goes the weasel.*

*All around the mulberry bush,
The monkey chased the weasel.
That's the way the money goes -
Pop! Goes the weasel.*

- Anonymous



Try this way

- ❖ Read the poem "My Big Balloon," then conduct an experiment to see how blowing differently (e.g. hard, soft; steadily, in puffs) changes the bubbles. Have the children describe what they saw and explain what happened.
- ❖ For more ways to play with bubbles, read *Pop! A Book About Bubbles*.



MY BIG BALLOON

*I can make a big balloon,
Watch me while I blow.
Small at first, then bigger,
Watch it grow and grow.*

*Do you think it's big enough?
Maybe I should stop.
For if I blow much longer,
My balloon will surely pop!*

- Jackie Silberg and Pam Schiller



Cloud catching

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (eye-hand coordination, catching, throwing; body and spatial awareness); creativity

Language/literacy links: Pretending; vocabulary (body part words, metaphor)

Equipment: 1 scarf, tissue, handkerchief or paper towel per child

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *Once Upon a Cloud* by Rob D. Walker

Let's play

- ❖ Read the poem "Clouds," then toss the scarf (cloud) in the air and let it fall to the ground.
- ❖ Try catching the "cloud" with different body parts: head, knee, back, foot. Invite the children to suggest other possibilities... elbow? bottom? chin?

CLOUDS

White sheep, white sheep
On a blue hill,
When the wind stops
You all stand still.
When the wind blows
You walk away slow.
White sheep, white sheep,
Where do you go?

- Christina G. Rossetti





Try this way

- ❖ Add actions before catching: clap hands then catch; squat down then catch; touch nose then catch; turn around then catch. Add challenge by trying to do two or three actions before catching.
- ❖ Toss a scarf back and forth to a partner. Try throwing two scarves at the same time and catching each other's scarf.
- ❖ Read the poem "My Kite." In pairs, one child pretends the scarf is a kite and the other pretends to be a tree. One child runs across a big space with the "kite" above her head and then lets it go. The other child runs behind and catches the kite in his "terrible tree branches"... then swap over.
- ❖ Read *Once Upon a Cloud* with the children and talk about clouds (e.g. the different shapes and colours, where clouds come from, what they are).

MY KITE

It was splendid,
 My kite —
 It flew and it flew
 When we let out the string
 In the wind,
 And we knew
 It would fly with the birds —
 It would fly to the sea —

 Then its tail
 Tangled up in a
 Terrible tree.

- Myra Cohn Livingston





Creative balances

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (body awareness and manipulation, balance); creativity

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (e.g. sit, squat, cross-legged, balance, juggle); number knowledge; support activity with talk and sign (interpreting instructions)

Equipment: None

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book links: *The Little Red Hen and the Grains of Wheat* by L. R. Hen and Jago; *Make it Balance* by David Evans and Claudette Williams

Let's play

- ❖ Show the children different ways to balance. Invite them to copy your actions (e.g. stand on one leg; on tiptoes; two knees and one hand; bottom and two hands; cross-legged; knees and one elbow, etc.).
- ❖ Play "Puzzle Balances." Ask the children to show how they can balance on different combinations of body parts (e.g. "balance on your bottom and two elbows"; "balance on one foot and one hand"; "balance on a part that has no toes"). Call out a number for how many parts can touch the floor.
- ❖ Read the "Upside Down" poem together and invite the children to suggest tricky balances and challenges to try.

UPSIDE DOWN

*It's funny how beetles
and creatures like that
can walk upside down
as well as walk flat.*

*They crawl on a ceiling
and climb on a wall
without any practice
or trouble at all.*

*While I have been trying
for a year (maybe more)
and still I can't stand
with my head on the floor.*

- Aileen Fisher





Try this way

- ❖ Invite the children to create new ways of balancing (e.g. "Can you think of another way to balance?") and describe what they've done (e.g. "Look, I'm on one knee and two elbows!").
- ❖ Read *Make it Balance* for more body balance ideas, then try some of the experiments and challenges shown in the photos (e.g. building a tower by balancing books and plastic cups).
- ❖ Have the children balance by leaning on or away from each other, matching hands, backs, bottoms...
- ❖ Read *The Little Red Hen and the Grains of Wheat* with the children and have them identify where balancing is happening in the different illustrations. Help the children distinguish between balancing, swinging, and juggling; and balancing when still and when moving.





Follow the trail

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (body control skills and spatial awareness); creativity

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (position words: over, under, through, beside, between, along); pretending

Equipment: Ten metres of string, wool, or rope

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen

Let's play

- ❖ Outline a winding trail on the floor, carpet, grassy area or down the hall. Have the children follow the trail using crawling and creeping actions.
- ❖ Suggest, or ask the children to suggest, different ways of moving along the trail (e.g. scampering like a squirrel, stalking like a cat, creeping backwards).
 - Some children have difficulty inventing movement ideas; they can benefit from copying other's responses before creating their own movements.
- ❖ Read the "Caterpillar" poem together, and take turns doing snail tickles up each other's backs.





Try this way

- ❖ Arrange the trail to go over, under, between and around objects. Out loud, describe where the trail goes and invite the children to do the same. Have the children design the trail.
- ❖ Introduce number sequences: "creep three paces forward; crawl back four; shake like a wet dog, then crawl forward six more."
- ❖ Older children can work in pairs, one child leading the creeping/crawling while the other child follows behind holding onto the leader's ankles; take turns and rotate positions.
- ❖ After reading *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, pretend the rope is the trail to the bear's cave... and join the children in sequencing and reversing all the actions along the way.

CATERPILLAR

"Who's that ticklin' my back?" said the wall, (crawl fingers up the child's back)
"Me," said a small caterpillar, "I'm learning to crawl."

- Anonymous





Freeze dance

Physical activity links: Vigorous play; creativity and self-expression; social skills; developing movement skills (e.g. locomotor and body control)

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary development; support play with talk and sign (e.g. interpreting directions); pretending

Equipment: Music (e.g. CD player, radio, singing)

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *Slither, Swoop, Swing* by Alex Ayliffe; *Animmachines* by Debora Pearson

Let's play

- ❖ Invite the children to move to the music (e.g. walk, skip, roll, twirl, sway). Stop the music and call "freeze." The challenge for the children is to stay perfectly still until you start the music again (e.g. three to four seconds).
- ❖ Play freeze dance differently by:
 - Calling out different characters or objects and have the children move like: an ice-skater spinning; a puppy with a sore paw; a cat stalking a bird; a sleek racing car; a donkey pulling a very heavy load...





Try this way

- ❖ Read the book *Slither, Swoop, Swing* or and act out the movements in the pictures. Take turns coming up with and calling out movement ideas. Use these actions in freeze dance.
- ❖ While playing freeze dance have the children interpret feeling words with movement: happily, sadly, energetically, solemnly, mysteriously, joyfully, etc.





Head, shoulders, knees and toes

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (body awareness, rhythm, and timing)

Language/literacy links: Learning the sounds of the language (rhyme, chanting); support activity with talk and sign (interpreting instructions); vocabulary (body parts)

Equipment: None

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *Eyes, Nose, Fingers and Toes* by Judy Hindley

Let's play

- ❖ Sing or say the following while touching each body part with both hands:
 - Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes
 - Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes
 - And eyes and ears and mouth and nose
 - Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes
- Children who use crutches or canes for mobility will be able to do this activity more easily if they sit down.
- ❖ Read and make up the actions for "Wiggle Waggle" and "I Use My Brain." Touch each body part mentioned and have the children do the same.

I USE MY BRAIN

*I use my brain to think, think, think.
I use my nose to smell.
I use my eyes to blink, blink, blink.
I use my throat to yell.
I use my mouth to giggle, giggle, giggle.
I use my hips to bump.
I use my toes to wiggle, wiggle, wiggle,
And I use my legs to jump.*

- Jackie Silberg

WIGGLE WAGGLE

*Waggle my fingers
And wriggle my toes,
Waggle my shoulders
And wiggle my nose.*

- Margaret Mayo



Try this way

- ❖ Repeat verse from "Let's Play"; progressively leave out singing each body part but still perform the actions. For example, the next verse would be:

____, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

____, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

And eyes and ears and mouth and nose

____, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

Ultimately the children will perform actions only.

- ❖ Read the book *Eyes, Nose, Fingers and Toes* together.





Helicopter

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong bones and muscles); and developing movement skills (jumping, timing)

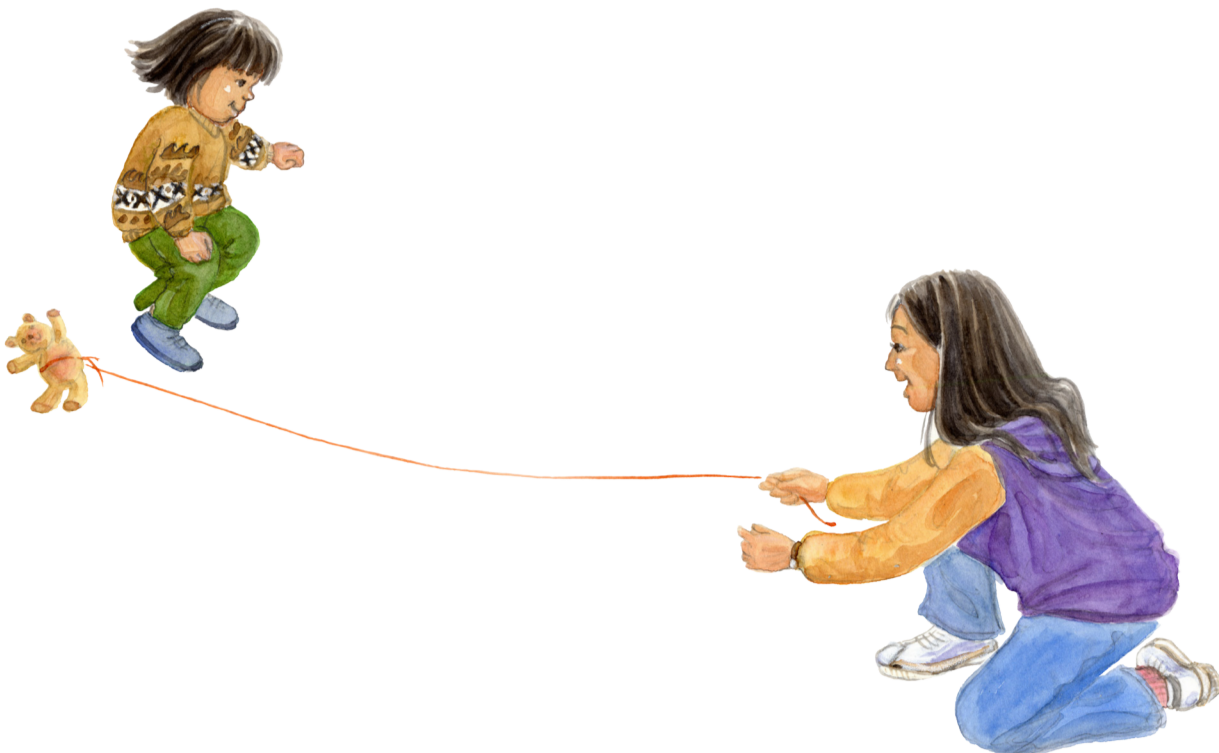
Language/literacy links: Support activity with talk and sign; playing with the letters and sounds of the language (chanting, counting rhymes, spelling)

Equipment: A skipping rope weighted with a soft object (e.g. a bean bag) at one end

Where: Outdoors or large indoor space

Let's play

- ❖ Holding the skipping rope at one end, kneel or bend down and slowly move the rope in a circle around your body. To keep the rope moving without spinning yourself around, you'll need to pass the rope from hand to hand. Keep the rope low to the ground.
- ❖ Invite the children to jump over the rope when it reaches them.
 - If this is too difficult sway or wiggle the rope back and forth for the children to jump over.
- ❖ Each time a child jumps over the rope, call out one letter of the child's name (or the name of animals, friends, etc.) until the word is complete (R H E E N A); invite the children to take over the spelling.





Try this way

- ❖ To increase the challenge you can turn or wiggle the rope faster.
- ❖ Accompany the spinning of the rope with skipping rhymes and chants:
 - Around and around
 - and around we go,
 - Where we'll end up,
 - Nobody knows!
- ❖ Count each jump backwards to blast-off!
 - Ten - nine - eight - seven - six - five - four - three - two - one - blast-off!
- ❖ Share the poem "Just Watch" with the children as you transition to, or from, the jumping activity.



JUST WATCH

Watch

How high
I'm jumping,

Watch

How far
I hop,

Watch

How long
I'm skipping

Watch

How fast
I stop!

- Myra Cohn Livingston



Hippity hopscotch

Physical activity links: Play vigorously, build strong bones and muscles, developing locomotor skills (hopping, jumping)

Language/literacy links: Number and alphabet letter recognition; days of the week vocabulary; pretending

Equipment: Chalk, or hopscotch patterns on sheet, or felt squares for the carpet, and bean bags

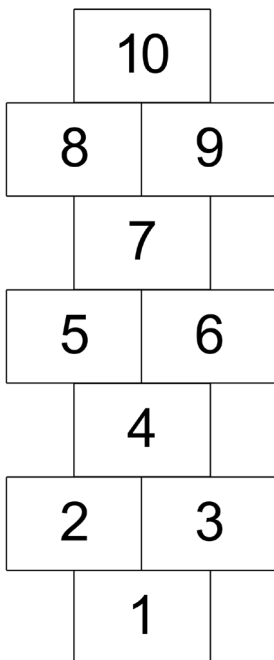
Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Hopscotch patterns (see page 135)

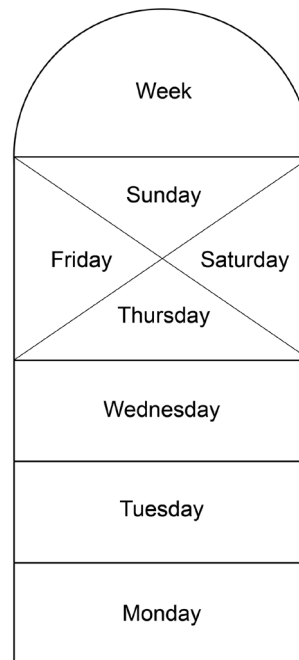
Book link: *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* by Joy Cowley

Let's play

- ❖ Draw a variety of hopscotch patterns (see examples below and Let's Make page 135) or use prepared sheets. Land in each square by jumping or hopping forward. Turn around and jump and hop back to the beginning.
- ❖ Use the "10-step" or the "Days of the week" pattern. Challenge the children to hop in the single squares or triangles, and jump in the double squares or long rectangles. Have the children call out the number or day of the week as they go.



10 -step



Days of the week



Try this way

- ❖ Explain that the square with the bean bag is dangerous and can't be landed on. Have two or three children select a bean bag each. Taking turns, the first child throws the bean bag into square one and jumps or hops over it to the second one. The child moves to the end and back. When they get back to square two, they bend down and pick the bean bag up from the "dangerous" square and hop or jump home. Have the next child do the same. In the next round, square two becomes the "dangerous" square, and so on.
- ❖ Children can decorate pre-drawn hopscotch patterns on an old sheet. This may also double as a "parachute" and eliminates problems with hopscotch patterns inside.
- ❖ Encourage the children to invent their own hopscotch patterns.
- ❖ Read *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* with the children. Then go to a playground together and draw a giant snake hopscotch pattern with chalk. Invite the children to pretend they are Red-Eyed Tree frogs as they hop and jump along the snake's body.





Hit the target

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (throwing, eye-hand coordination)

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (number or letter recognition); counting and addition; measurement; drawing and writing

Equipment: Throwing objects; targets (paper or sponge balls for indoors)

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Bean bags (optional) (see page 137)

Book link: *One Bright Monday Morning* by Arline and Joseph Baum

Let's play

- ❖ With the children, create and set up a variety of targets (e.g. empty milk cartons to knock down, paper targets on the wall). Throw underarm or overarm to hit the targets.
- ❖ Have the children decide which target to aim for, and whether to throw underarm or overarm (e.g. "overarm at the pink heart," "underarm to the juice bottle").
- ❖ Read the poem "Throw the ball" together, and pretend the targets are the sun and the moon.



HOW TO THROW A BALL OVERARM

Stand side on,
Make a star,
Point your finger,
Throw it far.





Try this way

- ❖ Put the children in charge of setting the distance to the targets. Invite them to measure and mark the distance by measuring with footsteps; help them count and record the number.
- ❖ Change target size, colour, shape, height from ground; and have the children aim from largest to smallest; from closest to furthest; from lowest to highest, etc.
- ❖ Put numbers 1 through 5 on targets (there may be several of each) and:
 - Aim to hit each target in sequence, taking turns until the first one is hit, then the second, and so on.
 - Hit number 1 once; number 2 twice, number 3 three times, etc. Then read *One Bright Monday Morning* to discover another number pattern.
 - Have three throws each and help the children total the number of points scored ($1 + 4 + 2 = 7$).



THROW THE BALL

*Let's throw the ball at the sun,
Make it laugh and sigh,
See it hide and smile and run,
Then fall from the evening sky.*

*Let's throw the ball at the moon,
And watch it falling down,
Then catch it with a silver spoon
In the middle of the town.*

- Edwin Thumboo



How far is far?

Physical activity links: Use physical activity to support learning

Language/literacy links: Counting and predicting; vocabulary (distance, length, numbers, fewer and more)

Equipment: Masking tape; paper and pencils

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book links: *One is a Snail, Ten is a Crab. A Counting by Feet Book* by April Pulley Sayre and Jeff Sayre

Let's play

- ❖ This activity is designed to be an experiment. The goal is to compare how many steps are taken between two points using different ways of walking (giant steps, regular steps, and heel-toe steps).
 - Explain to the children what an experiment is. One reason for experimenting is to get an answer to a question by measuring.
 - Ask the children why it is important to start and end in exactly the same place each time if they are going to compare fairly.
- ❖ Have the children identify and mark a starting point and a finishing point (about 5 metres apart in a straight line).
- ❖ First try giant steps. Have each child predict and record how many giant steps it will take them to get to the finish. Have them test their prediction, counting and recording their actual number of steps.
- ❖ Now try regular walking steps; record and test as above.
- ❖ Next, read the "Heel to toe" rhyme and predict how many heel-toe steps it will take to reach the finish. Once again, record and test as above.
- ❖ Encourage the children to explain why the numbers are different.





Try this way

- ❖ Read *One is a Snail, Ten is a Crab* with the children to introduce the concept of equivalence. In the book for example, 30 = 3 crabs or 10 people and 1 crab. Now invite each child to discover how many heel-toe steps it takes to go the same distance as one of their giant steps. This will help the children experience equivalence. For example, a giant step might equal 4 heel-toe steps.
- ❖ Vary the distance the children walk, or vary the shape of the path (wiggling line, zigzag line).
- ❖ Graph the results of "Let's Play" with a simple bar graph.



HEEL TO TOE

Heel to toe and
Heel to toe and
Leave no space between
Walking this way slows me down
As I count how far I've been

One step, two steps, three steps, more
Heel to toe across the floor.
Heel and toe, here I go
Counting, measuring,
Careful and slow

- Anonymous



Join the band

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (body and spatial awareness, rhythm, timing); playing actively

Language/literacy links: Playing with sounds (distinguishing, creating, describing); pretending

Equipment: Homemade instruments; CD player (optional)

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Musical instruments (see pages 132-134)

Book link: *Nicholas Cricket* by Joyce Maxner

Let's play

- ❖ With the children, experiment with the instruments to find out the different sounds they can make. Play loudly, softly, quickly, slowly.
- ❖ Encourage the children to play along in time to rhythmic clapping or music (e.g. on CD or tape), moving all around the space. Stop the music or clapping every now and then and change instruments. Vary the rhythm and encourage the children to try to keep the beat.





Try this way

- ❖ Read *Nicholas Cricket*. Pretend to be a marching band and swing and strut and sashay as you march and play. Step out with heavy steps to strong beats and light ones to soft beats.
- ❖ Model different musical moods: happy sounds; gentle sounds; angry sounds, etc. Invite the children to identify the feelings that fit the sounds created... and to create sounds for you to describe with words. Call out different "moods" (e.g. happy; tired; giggly; angry) and have the children respond with music, varying instruments, rhythm, and volume.
- ❖ Read or sing and enjoy "BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! OOMM - PAH! - PAH!" and play all the imaginary instruments.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! OOMM - PAH! - PAH!

*We can play on the big bass drum
And this is the way we do it:
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
Goes the big bass drum,
And that is the music to it.*

*We can play on the xylophone
And this is the way we do it:
PING! PONG! PONG!
Goes the xylophone,
And that is the music to it.*

*We can play on the silver flute
And this is the way we do it:
TOOT! TOOT! TOOT!
Goes the silver flute,
And that is the music to it.*

*We can play on the big fat tuba
And this is the way we do it:
OOMM - PAH! - PAH!
Goes the big fat tuba,
And that is the music to it.*

*We can play on the tambourine
And this is the way we do it:
JINGLY - JING!
Goes the tambourine,
And that is the music to it.*

- Margaret Mayo





Knock down

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (rolling, kicking, throwing, hockey pass skills, eye-hand and eye-foot coordination); supporting learning (problem solving skills)

Language/literacy links: Letter, number identification; vocabulary (shape, color)

Equipment: 1 ball per child; targets to knock down such as shoe boxes; plastic hockey stick or rolled up newspaper

Where: Outdoors or large indoor space

Let's play

- ❖ Stand the targets up like bowling pins and draw a line two to five metres in front of the targets for the bowler to stand behind.
- ❖ Invite the children to knock over the pins by rolling the ball.
 - Children with vision impairment can be assisted to know the location of the pins by having music playing behind the pins or a fan blowing air from the pins to the child.
- ❖ Together with the children, rearrange the pins to make them more difficult to hit, e.g. further apart, further away.





Try this way

- ❖ Invite exploration by asking, for example: "How else can you knock the pins down?" or "What other parts of your body can you use to knock the pins down?" or "Can you kick the ball or use a hockey stick to push the ball?"
- ❖ Decorate targets with shapes or letters. Have the children name the shapes or letters on the targets they've knocked over.
 - Try and knock down pins in sequence, such as first D, then G, then X.





Laundry basket ball

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (throwing, eye-hand coordination)

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (number, letter recognition); counting and addition; measurement; drawing and writing

Equipment: Paper balls, sponge balls, or soft toys; laundry baskets; something to mark a line to throw from (e.g. chalk, rope, cones)

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's play

- ❖ Read "Dunking" to introduce the game.
- ❖ Place baskets against a wall or fence. Have the children stand behind a line a few metres from the baskets. Give each child several balls or soft objects to throw.
- ❖ Demonstrate for the children how to underarm or overarm throw the ball so that it bounces off the wall and into the basket.
- ❖ When all the balls are thrown, have the children hop or skip to the basket to collect them. Go again.

DUNKING

ALLEY-alley-oop

To the basketball hoop;

Dunk it like a donut

With a holler and a whoop!

- Dennis Lee





Try this way

- ❖ Have the children turn their backs to the wall and toss the ball over their head.
- ❖ Invite the children to invent different ways to toss the ball at the wall e.g. between their legs.
- ❖ Conduct an experiment to see which is easier:
 - Throwing directly into a basket placed in open space (away from a wall) or bounced off the wall (as in Let's Play).
 - For the experiment:
 - ❖ Make sure the throwing distances are the same.
 - ❖ Have each child make ten throws; five against the wall and five at the basket in open space.
 - ❖ Before they throw, invite each child to predict where they will score the most. Encourage the children to keep a written tally; then check their prediction. Talk about the results.
- ❖ Invite the children to invent a different experiment and test it.



HOW TO

Stand side on; Make a star; Point your finger; Throw it far.

If you don't have a clear wall to throw against you can hang a curtain or sheet over a book case or cupboard to serve as the backboard.





Leap frog

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong bones and muscles)

Language/literacy links: Counting; alphabet letters; vocabulary (in, on, over words)

Equipment: Cushions, felt squares, or small towels

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *Puddles* by Jonathan London

Let's play

- ❖ Scatter cushions (lily pads) around area.
- ❖ Invite the children to squat like a frog and leap frog over the towels, moving around the area. Have them count how many lily pads they can clear without touching them.
- ❖ Play "SPLASH!" — the children jump over the puddles except when you call out "Splash!" ... and then they have to land in the nearest puddle.
 - Children with mobility difficulties can move around the towels using their preferred way of moving.





Try this way

- ❖ Challenge older children to call out an alphabet letter for every lily pad they jump over. See how far along the alphabet they can get before getting "all puffed out."
- ❖ Every time a child jumps over a towel, encourage him or her to call out, in sequence, a letter of their name (J O R D I N).
- ❖ Read *Puddles* and arrange the towels to make a trail of "puddles." Challenge the children to leap from puddle to puddle without landing on dry ground.





Let's fly

Physical activity links: Participating with the children; vigorous play; developing movement skills (e.g. jump, leap); body and spatial awareness

Language/literacy links: Pretend play; playing with the sounds of language

Equipment: Chalk, wool, or small ropes

Where: Outdoors or large indoor space

Let's play

- ❖ With chalk or ropes, mark out a series of lines with different distances between the lines.
- ❖ Invite the children to move across by hopping or jumping without touching the lines.
 - Encourage children with a mobility difficulty to cross the lines using their preferred mobility strategy.



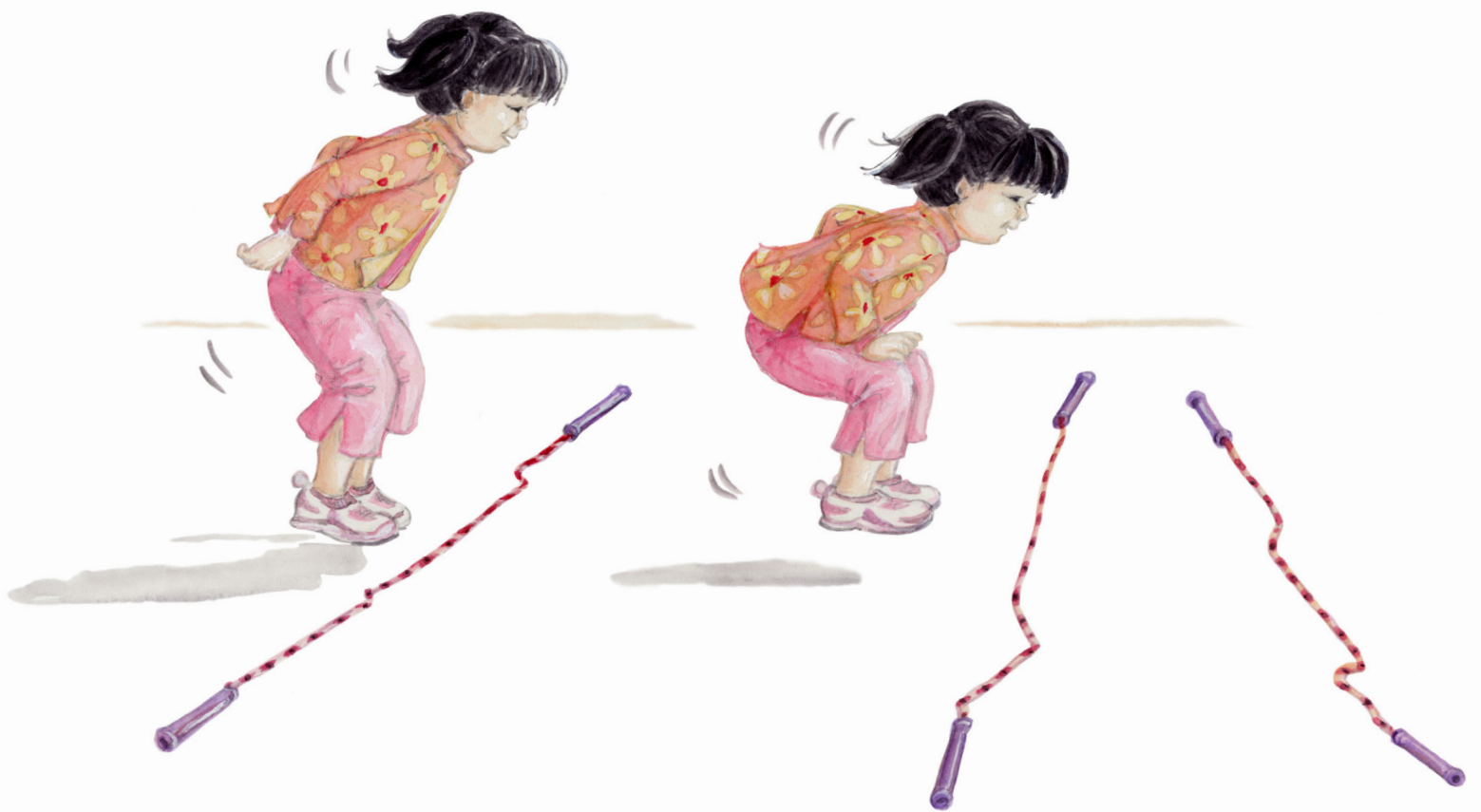


Try this way

- ❖ Together invent new ways to move across the lines (e.g. "Show me a different way to get to the other side").



*Swing your arms up so that you fly,
bend your knees to softly return from the sky.*





Loop the hoop

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong bones and muscles); developing movement skills (e.g. jump, crab walk); body and spatial awareness; cooperation

Language/literacy links: Pretend play; speculative and descriptive talk; vocabulary (through, in, out, beside, etc.)

Equipment: Hoops

Where: Outdoors or large indoor space

Let's play

- ❖ Provide each child with a hoop in their own space.
- ❖ Have children explore ways to move in and out of the hoop, e.g. "Show me how you can jump in and out of the hoop"; "What other ways can you get in and out of the hoop?" (e.g. hop, step, frog jump, crawl).
- ❖ Ask the children to respond to instructions in relation to their hoop: e.g. "Stand beside your hoop"; "Jump over your hoop"; "Crawl through your hoop"; "Stand inside your hoop and raise it over your head"; "Run around your hoop," etc.
- ❖ Add pretend play by inviting the children to imagine the hoop is a washing machine. Invite them to tell a partner how they got dirty.

PLACES

*There are Go-through places
(Arches and doorways).*

*There are Crawl-under places
(Fence or wall).*

*But the Climb-up places
(Clear to the tiptops)*

Are the very best places of all!

- John Travers Moore



Try this way

- ❖ Read the poem "Places" and talk about all the different places they can think of that are "go through places"; "crawl-under places"; and "climb-up places." Talk about favorite places... which ones do they think are the "very best places of all?"
- ❖ In groups of three. Two children hold their hoop perpendicular to the ground to make a "go-through" tunnel. The third child crawls through the hoops and runs back to the beginning. Change roles until everyone's had a turn. Children can crawl backwards, crawl like a crab, or bear walk, etc.





My friend beanie

- Physical activity links:** Developing movement skills (body and spatial awareness); cooperation
- Language/literacy links:** Vocabulary (location words: on, under, between; and action words: sag, wiggle, wag); counting; predicting
- Equipment:** 1 bean bag per child (beanie)
- Where:** Indoors or outdoors
- Let's make:** Bean bags (see page 137)
- Book link:** *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle

Let's play

- ❖ With the children, explore all sorts of ways to balance the bean bag on different parts of the body. For example: **on** the head, shoulders, nose, ear, bottom; **between** the legs, knees, toes, elbows. Use the "Body Language" poem for ideas about where to put beanie. Invite the children to find other ways to balance "beanie" on their bodies.



BODY LANGUAGE

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Hips wiggle</i> | <i>Hearts pump</i> |
| <i>Tummies sag</i> | <i>Noses twitch</i> |
| <i>Shoulders shrug</i> | <i>Hands clap</i> |
| <i>Tongues wag</i> | <i>Elbows bend</i> |
| <i>Feet patter</i> | <i>Fingers snap</i> |
| <i>Scalps tingle</i> | <i>Skin wrinkles</i> |
| <i>Teeth chatter</i> | <i>Knuckles crack</i> |
| <i>Chests heave</i> | <i>Knees knock</i> |
| <i>Backs ache</i> | <i>Lips smack</i> |
| <i>Hair curls</i> | <i>Thumbs twiddle</i> |
| <i>Nails break</i> | <i>Eyes blink</i> |
| <i>Arms fold</i> | <i>Heads nod</i> |
| <i>Legs jump</i> | <i>Brains think!</i> |
| <i>Ankles sprain</i> | |

- Anonymous



Try this way

- ❖ Challenge the children to invent tricky balance positions for beanie on their bodies. Ask them to predict how many seconds they can hold beanie in place before it drops — then try it.
- ❖ Play “pass the package” by passing the bean bag back and forth with a partner. For example, pass the beanbag from foot to foot and back again. Try again, using elbows, or holding beanie between shoulder and chin, etc. Pretend the bean bag is magic and it will splatter and shatter if dropped; take great care not to let it hit the ground.
- ❖ Read *From Head to Toe* and play “Copy Cat.” Take turns showing different tricks with beanie for others to try.





Obstacle course

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong bones and muscles); developing movement skills (body and spatial awareness)

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary: location words (e.g. through, over, under, on, beside); map drawing and labeling; pretend play

Equipment: Cushions; rope; chair; hoop; cardboard box; stool; towels; pool noodle

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *Little Mouse's Trail Tale* by JoAnn Vandine

Let's play

- ❖ Set up an obstacle course with the children and talk about all the ways of moving through it (e.g. crawl under a chair, jump over cushions, log roll along a towel, stand on and jump off a low bench, walk backwards along a rope, move around a toy box, crab walk across a rug, etc.).
- ❖ Read "Comin' Through," then invite the children to create an obstacle course and have them describe the movements needed to get through it.
- ❖ Have the children draw a map of the course and trace with their finger: a) their favourite, b) the easiest, c) the hardest, etc. route through it.



COMIN' THROUGH

Over, under,
between, around,
Lots of ways
to cover the ground.

Crawling, creeping,
leaping, too
Watch out now,
I'm coming through!

- Anonymous



Try this way

- ❖ Together read the poem "Condo Kid" and make a course to match the actions (e.g. down, up, over, under, between, through, around, out); call out the lines of the poem as the children move through the course.
- ❖ Pretend to be a snake, a cat, a cow, or the mouse in the *Little Mouses Trail Tale*. Design a course for that animal.

CONDO KID

*In our condominium
Down goes the garbage
Up goes the elevator
Over goes the airplane
Under goes the motor car
Between goes the balcony
Through goes the pussy cat
Around goes the rainstorm
Out goes the puppy dog
And
In goes Me!*

- Sonja Dunn





Orienteering

Physical activity links: Playing actively; supporting learning

Language/literacy links: Interpreting oral and pictorial directions, drawing

Equipment: Map of area with space for drawing, picture cards or objects, crayons, clipboards for each child

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Child-sized clipboards (see page 136)

Book links: *I Spy Super Challenger!* by Jean Marzollo and Walter Wick; *I Spy Shapes in Art* by Lucy Micklethwait

Let's play

- ❖ **Preparation:** Prepare and photocopy maps that show checkpoints; hide pictures at checkpoints.
- ❖ This activity is best suited for small groups of children.
- ❖ Explain that orienteering is an activity where you use clues on a map to find your way to a sequence of checkpoints.
- ❖ Give each child a map attached to a clipboard. The map can be the same for each child or the sequence of checkpoints can be put in a different order on different maps (to encourage the children to follow their own map rather than each other).
- ❖ Help each child locate where they are on the map. Explain that their task is to read the map to figure out where they need to go first (i.e. checkpoint #1).
- ❖ At the checkpoint have them find the object or picture you previously left or hid there. They then each draw it on their map sheet in the box that matches the number of the checkpoint.
- ❖ Orienteer to the next check point... and so on.





Try this way

- ❖ Read the two "I Spy" books listed above to one or two children at a time and explain how "I Spy" works. Read the items they are to try to find, and challenge them to look very closely to locate them. Invite the children to select an item for a partner to try to find.
- ❖ Support the idea of creating clues by playing "I Spy." Have the children take turns being the one who chooses what is to be looked for. Model using sound, colour, letter, and number clues ("I spy something that has more than 2 legs"; "I spy something that makes a roaring sound").
- ❖ Play "Clever Clues." Instead of using a map for orienteering, provide oral cues to the location of the objects or pictures ("Behind the smallest bush"). For older children, directions can have multiple cues (e.g. "Under the box that's behind something growing taller than a giraffe").





Paint the house

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong muscles); creativity and self-expression; developing planning and sequencing skills

Language/literacy links: Support play with talk and sign (e.g. describing and story telling); vocabulary (colours); pretend play

Equipment: A bucket or bowl with water; paintbrush; chalk (optional)

Where: Outdoors (Note: warm weather)

Let's play

- ❖ Show the children areas they are allowed to paint with water. These might include paths, trees, play equipment, and the fence. Place a bucket of water nearby and invite the children to use their imagination and paint those areas however they like.





Try this way

- ❖ Use chalk to outline each child's first initial, a picture, or shape for them to paint.
- ❖ Ask the children to tell you about what they painted. This can be a wonderful prompt for story telling.
- ❖ Help the children imagine some of the many different colours they could use: red, green, orange. Introduce some colour words that might be unfamiliar: violet, scarlet, turquoise, rose, lilac, canary yellow, etc.
- ❖ Invite the children to dip the brush into the "magic paint pot" and name the many different colours that you find there. Encourage the children to describe the colour by naming something that is that colour: the red of a fire-engine; the green of a frog; the red of watermelon, etc.





Parachute lift off

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (timing, planning); cooperation skills

Language/literacy links: Playing with the sounds of the language (chanting; rhymes)

Equipment: 1 sheet or tablecloth for a parachute; light balls, rolled up socks, yarn balls, or soft stuffed animals

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's play

- ❖ Spread out the parachute with the children, and sit or stand holding the edge with two hands. Lift the parachute up and down together. Ask the children to describe the feeling of the rushing air. Then recite the wind poems as you whoosh the parachute up and down.
- ❖ Play "Popcorn": place light balls, rolled up socks, or soft toys in the centre. Together, quickly lift the parachute up and down. The "balls" will then begin to jump off the sheet. Continue until all the "balls" have been bounced off. Chant the "Popcorn Chant" poem while you do this.

POPCORN CHANT

*You put the oil in the pot
And you let it get hot.
You put the popcorn in
And start to grin.
Sizzle sizzle sizzle sizzle, POP!*

- Anonymous





Try this way

- ❖ Play "Row, row, row your boat." Everyone sits down with legs stretched in front, under the parachute. Those on one side row by pulling the parachute towards them, and those on the other side then pull it back towards them in a rowing back and forth motion. Sing the "Row, row, row your boat" song as you do this.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.



WEATHER

*It is a windy day.
The water's white with spray.
And pretty soon, if this keeps up,
The world will blow away.*

- Marchette Chute

WIND ON THE HILL

*No one can tell me,
Nobody knows,
Where the wind comes from,
Where the wind goes.*

- A. A. Milne



Place and space

Physical activity links: Developing body and spatial awareness

Language/literacy links: Pretend play; movement vocabulary; collective nouns

Equipment: One hoop per child (hoop, felt or carpet square for "own space" activity)

Where: Outdoors or large indoor space

Let's play

- ❖ Put one hoop (or felt or carpet square) for each child in a space with defined boundaries.
- ❖ While standing or kneeling and without moving outside the hoop (or off the square), invite the children to see how far can they trace with their finger. Have them reach out forward, reach up high, kneel down and reach. Next try it sitting on their bottoms, tracing with their toe (on floor and in the air).
- ❖ Talk about the space where each can reach as being "your own space."
- ❖ Have everyone stand up, holding their hoops horizontally. Choose two or three children to be "navigators." Their task is to move around the open space without touching any of the other hoops. The goal is to demonstrate "respecting each other's own space." Children take turns being the "navigators."

FISH

Look at them flit

Lickety-split

Wiggling

Swiggling

Swerving

Curving

Hurrying

Scurrying

Chasing

Racing

Whizzing

Whisking

Flying

Frisking

Tearing around

With a leap and a bound

But none of them making the tiniest

tiniest

tiniest

tiniest

tiniest

sound.



- Mary Ann Hoberman



Try this way

- ❖ Sing "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." Invite the children to imagine they are stars in a galaxy. Define the boundaries of the space within which the children can move. Have each child find their own spot in this "space." On your signal, everyone moves around the open space, being careful not to bump into any of the other stars. Add challenge by placing a space themed picture (e.g. moon, satellite, Saturn, space station) on each boundary "wall." When you name the picture "Saturn," everyone must move toward it without touching others. Before the children get to "Saturn" call out another picture name... and repeat. On the signal "meteor shower!" the children must stop and fold into a small ball.
- ❖ Read the poem "FISH," and talk about schools of fish and how they move without bumping into each other. Have the children move the way the fish are described ("wiggling, swiggling, swerving, curving," etc.).
- ❖ Discuss other collective nouns for animals e.g. herd of goats, gaggle of geese, pride of lions, murder of crows. Have the children speculate about why they're described this way.





Playful parachute

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (timing, planning); developing social skills (cooperation, turn taking)

Language/literacy links: Sounds of the language (letter knowledge); pretending

Equipment: 1 sheet or tablecloth to act as a parachute, bean bag, yarn ball, or rolled up pairs of socks

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's play

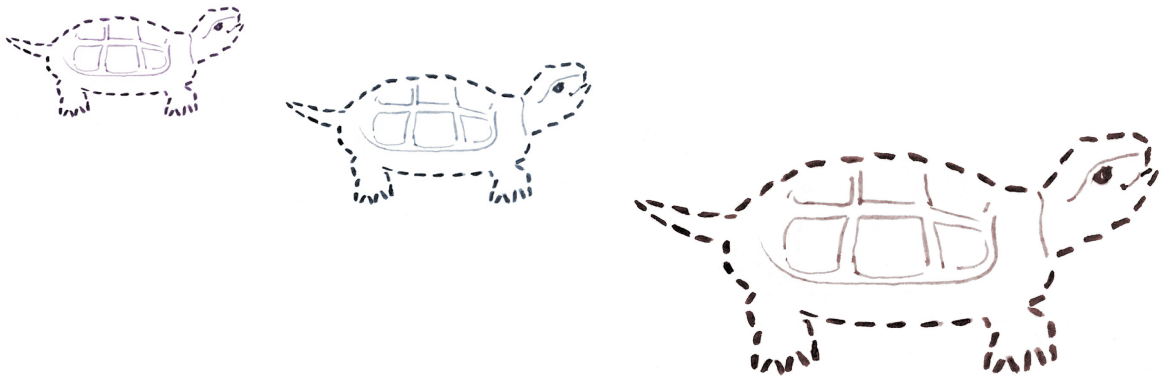
- ❖ Spread out the parachute and have the children evenly spaced around the edge. The children hold the parachute at waist level using an overhand grip (knuckles on top).
- ❖ Together the children lift the parachute up and down counting one, two, three. On "three" the parachute is lifted above the head. Let the parachute fall naturally rather than pulling it down.
- ❖ When the children are comfortable with the first action, invite them to take one or two steps in when the parachute is high to create a mushroom shape. As the parachute falls, move back out. When everyone is comfortable with this basic action they are ready to play many other parachute games... see "Try this way."





Try this way

- ❖ **Mushroom:** Make the parachute “mushroom” as described in Let’s Play. When the parachute is high the children take two steps toward the centre. As the mushroom collapses the children pull the parachute behind their back to sit on it, inside the parachute.
 - While everyone is under the parachute sing a song together.
- ❖ **Changing sides:** Choose one child each time to walk under the parachute to change sides.
 - Identify the child whose turn it is with a letter clue: “Someone who has a name that begins with the letter B... yes, Brad, that’s you... come on through!”
- ❖ **Treasure:** Put a bean bag or rolled up socks (treasure) under the parachute. Instead of changing sides have the chosen child go underneath and collect the hidden treasure; then have the child describe for the others what this imaginary treasure is.
- ❖ **Turtle:** Ask the children to imagine the parachute is a turtle shell. Have the children go under the spread out parachute on their hands and knees. The challenge is to crawl in one direction together without the parachute falling off.



- ❖ **The Wheel:** With all children sitting or standing, have the children identify the section of the parachute they are holding (e.g. which color). The challenge is to have the parachute turn one full circle clockwise. The children need to cooperate and pass sections through their hands without letting go of the parachute. Try moving the parachute counter clockwise.
 - If you’re playing these games with children with mobility difficulties, all players can sit down to play some games; the child can change sides or collect the “treasure” using their preferred way of moving.



Punchinello

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (body control and body awareness); playing actively; promoting self-expression; cooperation

Language/literacy links: Classification; vocabulary expansion

Equipment: None

Where: Outdoors or large indoor area

Book link: *Jump!* By Steve Lavis

Let's play

- ❖ Read "Superhero" with the children to give them some ideas for different ways to move when they become "Punchinello."
- ❖ Children form a circle with one child in the centre as Punchinello.
- ❖ The other children watch and copy Punchinello's actions as they sing or chant.

Singing	Actions
Verse 1. What can you do Punchinello, Punchinello? What can you do Punchinello, funny you?	Punchinello does an action e.g. hopping on one foot, twirling, moving up and down, while the children sing/chant and clap.
Verse 2. We can do it too, Punchinello, Punchinello, We can do it, too, Punchinello, funny you!	Children in circle copy the action that Punchinello is doing.
Verse 3. Choose one of us, Punchinello, Punchinello, Choose one of us, Punchinello, funny you!	Punchinello selects another child as Punchinello, and then takes that child's place in the circle.





Try this way

- ❖ Read *Jump!* to the children and discuss and act out the movements made by the jungle animals. Next, invite them to suggest animals they would a) find on a farm, b) find in the forests in Canada, and c) find in the ocean. Write the animal names on the board and have the children tell you which category (farm, forest, ocean) to place them into. All together, act out the movements or use the actions for another game of Punchinello.



SUPERHERO

*If I were a superhero I could:
Fly without an aeroplane
Run as fast as a train
Swim underwater without oxygen, or
Jump so high it might rain*

- Anonymous



Push around

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (eye-foot coordination, ball control); developing social skills (turn taking, cooperation)

Language/literacy links: Support activity with talk and sign (describing actions)

Equipment: 1 ball; a bean bag or soft toy; a plastic hockey stick or rolled and taped up newspaper for the stick

Where: Outdoors or large indoor area

Book link: *The Mole Sisters and the Wavy Wheat* by Roslyn Schwartz

Let's play

- ❖ Holding onto the stick with two hands, the children push the ball or object along the ground, moving around the whole area.
- ❖ Draw lines on the ground to make a "race track" for them to follow.





Try this way

- ❖ Instead of using a stick, the children can tap a ball gently with their foot to move around the area. Create an obstacle course for some extra fun and challenge.
 - Encourage the children to describe out loud progress around the course: "around the bucket, then over to the cushion, next between the stuffed bears, etc."
- ❖ Play follow-the-leader. Go where the leader goes; stop your body and the ball when the leader stops. Take turns being the leader.
- ❖ Challenge the children to move around the course in a different sequence, or pattern, each time; challenge them to circle around each object without the ball touching it.
- ❖ Read the *Mole Sisters and the Wavy Wheat* and talk about the directions the sisters take.





Rainbow scatter

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong bones and muscles); developing body control and movement skills

Language/literacy links: Support activity with talk and sign (sequenced directions); vocabulary (letter, colour, and number identification, negation terms)

Equipment: Coloured cards or felt squares with a number, a letter, a colour word or shape on each card (Note. these can be made by the children)

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's play

- ❖ Start a conversation about colours by reading the "Spring Song" poem. Have the children identify and categorize other colours in their environment. For example: colours they can find inside or outside; colours that are bright or pale; winter, fall, summer, and spring colours.
- ❖ Scatter cards around area. Call out a sequence of colours to move to. For example: "red, blue, then green." Then extend this activity to numbers or letters.
 - If a child has difficulty identifying the colours, letters, numbers, or remembering the sequence, do the activity together. For example, ask the child to identify the red card. Point to red and then move to the red card together. Then identify the blue card, and so forth.

SPRING SONG

*Have you ever seen
such green, such green?
Have you ever seen
such blue
as the woods in April
when they blink
and a bit of the sky
looks through?
And the light — the light
is tiny and bright
in every blob
of dew?
Have you ever seen
such green, such green?
Have you ever seen
such blue?*

- Jean Kenward



Try this way

- ❖ Call out different ways for the children to move to the cards - e.g. hop, skip, jump, leap, gallop, crawl, stay low.
- ❖ Give letter cues: "move to a letter that's in your name"; "move to a letter that makes the sound a snake makes"; "move to a letter that the word 'Dad' starts with"; etc.
- ❖ Add challenge by including negatives. For example:
 - "Run and touch four cards, but DON'T touch the number 3."
 - "Walk between the cards, when I clap my hands land on any card EXCEPT a blue one."
 - "Jump around two different cards, which DON'T have the letters B or G on them."



Encourage children to watch where they are moving to avoid collisions. Using duplicates can provide more options so they all don't go to the same card.





River bank jump

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong bones and muscles); developing movement skills (body and spatial awareness, jumping, leaping)

Language/literacy links: Pretend play; playing with the sounds of language

Equipment: Chalk or small ropes

Where: Outdoors or large indoor area

Let's play

- ❖ With chalk or ropes, mark two lines to make a river; wide at one end, narrow at the other. Encourage each child to choose the width he or she feels comfortable jumping.
- ❖ Invite the children to jump in and out and over the river. Call out: "on the bank"; "in the river"; or "across the river."
 - For children with a mobility difficulty invite them to cross the lines using their preferred mobility strategy.
 - Some children have difficulty imagining a river. You can make the river more real by using something different from the floor as the river (e.g. a towel on the carpet).





Try this way

- ❖ Introduce an element of suspense and peril by pretending the river has hungry alligators in it. Set the mood by reciting or acting out "Three Little Monkeys."



*Swing your arms up so that you fly,
bend your knees to softly return from the sky.*



THREE LITTLE MONKEYS

*Three little monkeys swinging from a tree,
Teasing Mr. Alligator, "Can't catch me!"
Along came Mr. Alligator slowly as can be
Then ... SNAP!*

*Two little monkeys swinging from a tree,
Teasing Mr. Alligator, "Can't catch me!"
Along came Mr. Alligator slowly as can be
Then ... SNAP!*

*One little monkey swinging from a tree,
Teasing Mr. Alligator, "Can't catch me!"
Along came Mr. Alligator slowly as can be
Then ... SNAP!*

- Anonymous



Rocket launch

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (e.g. catching technique, hand-eye coordination, timing)

Language/literacy links: Counting; vocabulary (e.g. colour, pattern words); play with the sounds of the language (e.g. rhyme and rhythm)

Equipment: 1 bean bag (rocket) per child; rocket launcher

Where: Outdoors

Let's make: Rocket launcher (see page 138)

Let's play

- ❖ Place a bean bag or soft toy on the end of the rocket launcher; invite a child to stomp on the other end.
- ❖ Watch the rocket blast into space; catch the rocket on the way down.
- ❖ Chant:

Zoom Zoom Zoom!
 We're going to the moon
 We'll hop into our rocket ship
 And get there SOON!
 (stomp when you say the word SOON)
 - Anonymous



DOWN ON THE LAUNCH PAD
 (to the tune of Down by the Station)

Down on the launch pad
 Early in the morning
 See the big rocket, ready to go
 Hear the launch director
 Check for any problems
 3, 2, 1, and it's off they go.

- Anonymous



Try this way

- ❖ Launch a hat and challenge the children to try to catch it on their head!
- ❖ Launch two or three bean bags of different colours or patterns together; call out which one to catch ("green"; "checkered"; "polkadot"). Have the child call out the colour of the one he or she intends to catch.
- ❖ Before launching sing "Down on the Launch Pad."
- ❖ Vary the count downs:
 - Forwards (1, 2, 3, 4, 5! Blast off!)*
 - Backwards (5, 4, 3, 2, 1! Done!)*
 - By twos ("2, 4, 6, 8, 10 - off to the moon and back again!")*





Simon says shape shifting

Physical activity links: Participating with the children; creativity and self-expression, developing body control skills

Language/literacy links: Support play with talk and sign (e.g. interpreting instructions to apply rules of the game; discussion); pretending

Equipment: None

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book links: *Simon Says!* by Shen Roddie; *Animachines* by Debora Pearson

Let's play

- ❖ Read the "Can You" poem together and invite the children to copy the movements of the animals, adding the sounds each animal makes. Think of different animals and, together, move as they do. Read "If" and have the children pretend to be a grizzly bear and a teddy bear.
- ❖ Use some of these movements and sounds in a game of Simon Says. Move only when the leader begins by saying "Simon Says" - otherwise stay still. For example, if the leader says "Simon Says be a bear," the children should move like a bear, but if the leader says "Be a bear" the children shouldn't move a muscle. Take turns being the leader.
 - If children with hearing impairments are playing, use sign and/or show cards illustrating the animals and another card showing "Simon says."



CAN YOU

Can you...

Snap like a crocodile

Curl up like a snail

Stretch out like a starfish

To the tips of your nails?

- Margaret Mayo



Try this way

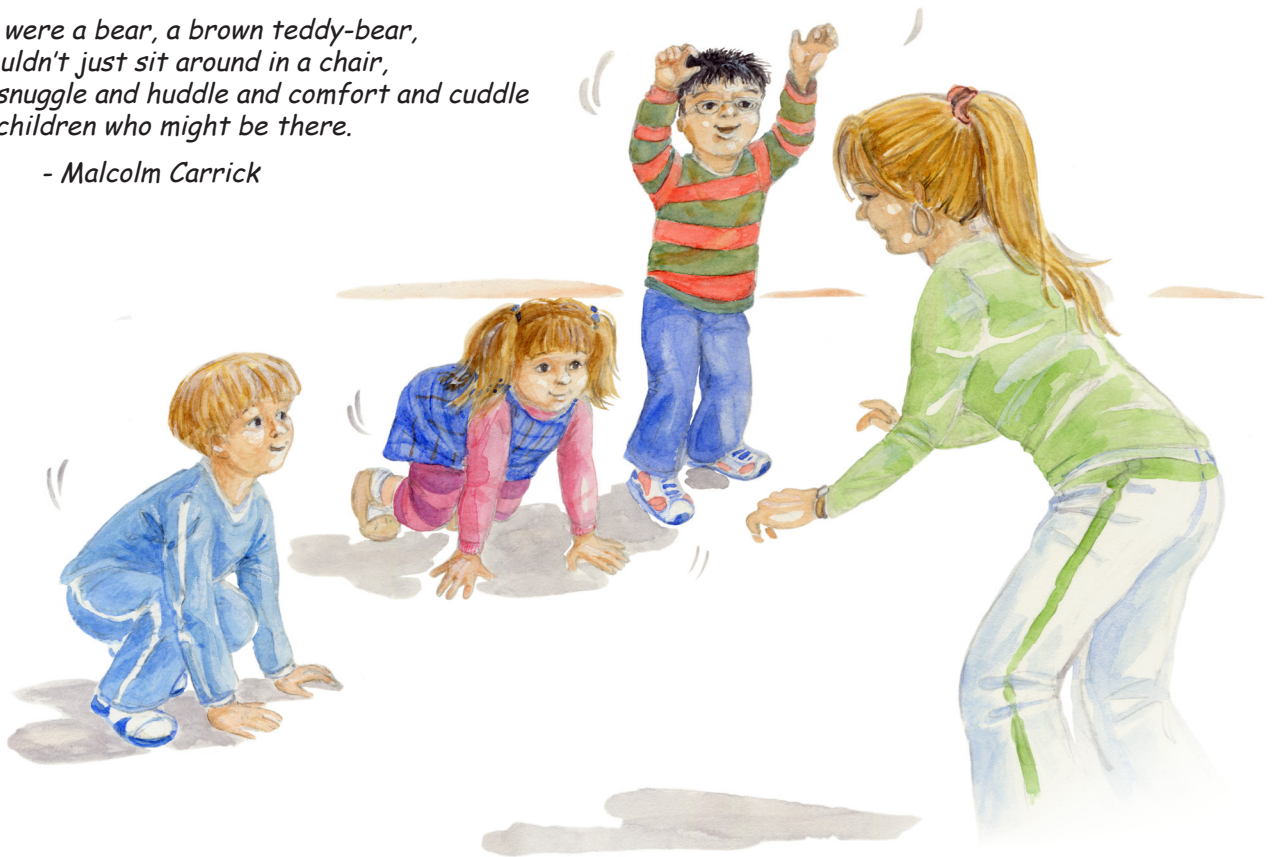
- ❖ Move like different machines. Read *Animachines* for some ideas. For example; move like a pump, a wheel, a crane, a cement mixer, a washing machine, etc. Use machine movements in Simon Says.
- ❖ Invite the children to pretend they are using: skates, skis, stilts, a scooter, a bike, etc. – and move on these at different speeds and in different directions (e.g. "Zig-zag on roller-blades").
- ❖ Read *Simon Says!* and invite the children to tell you if they think the animals were playing the game fairly or not, and why.

IF

*If I were a bear, a grizzly bear,
I wouldn't politely pull, I'd tear,
and rip and growl and grunt and scowl
and make all the squirrels stare.*

*If I were a bear, a brown teddy-bear,
I wouldn't just sit around in a chair,
but snuggle and huddle and comfort and cuddle
any children who might be there.*

- Malcolm Carrick





Snow play: Tricky tracks

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building muscles and cardiovascular fitness)

Language/literacy links: Pretend play; vocabulary: movement words (slide, glide, roll, pitch); directional words (right, left, sideways, backwards, forwards); support play with talk and sign

Equipment: Snow!!

Where: Outdoors

Book link: *Stella, Queen of the Snow* by Marie-Lousie Gay

Let's play

- ❖ Outside, take turns making a pathway for the others to "follow in the footsteps." Have fun making the path change direction, crisscross itself, and change the distance between the footprints so that some are close together and some need a jump to reach.
- ❖ Talk about how snow makes things look different.
- ❖ Write letters and numbers and names in the snow.





Try this way

- ❖ Introduce the many ways of playing in the snow by reading *Stella, Queen of the Snow* with the children. Talk about things you used to do in the snow when you were little. Investigate and describe the way snow feels, looks, and the sounds you can make as you scrunch through it.
- ❖ See if you can find animal tracks, or look in a book to see what the tracks of different animals look like... and try to copy these in the snow.
- ❖ Have fun inventing creatures (e.g. animals, machines) with extraordinary tracks... make the track and challenge each other to imagine and describe the creature that made it.





Special deliveries

Physical activity links: Vigorous play, creativity and self-expression

Language/literacy links: Pretend play; writing, counting, mapping

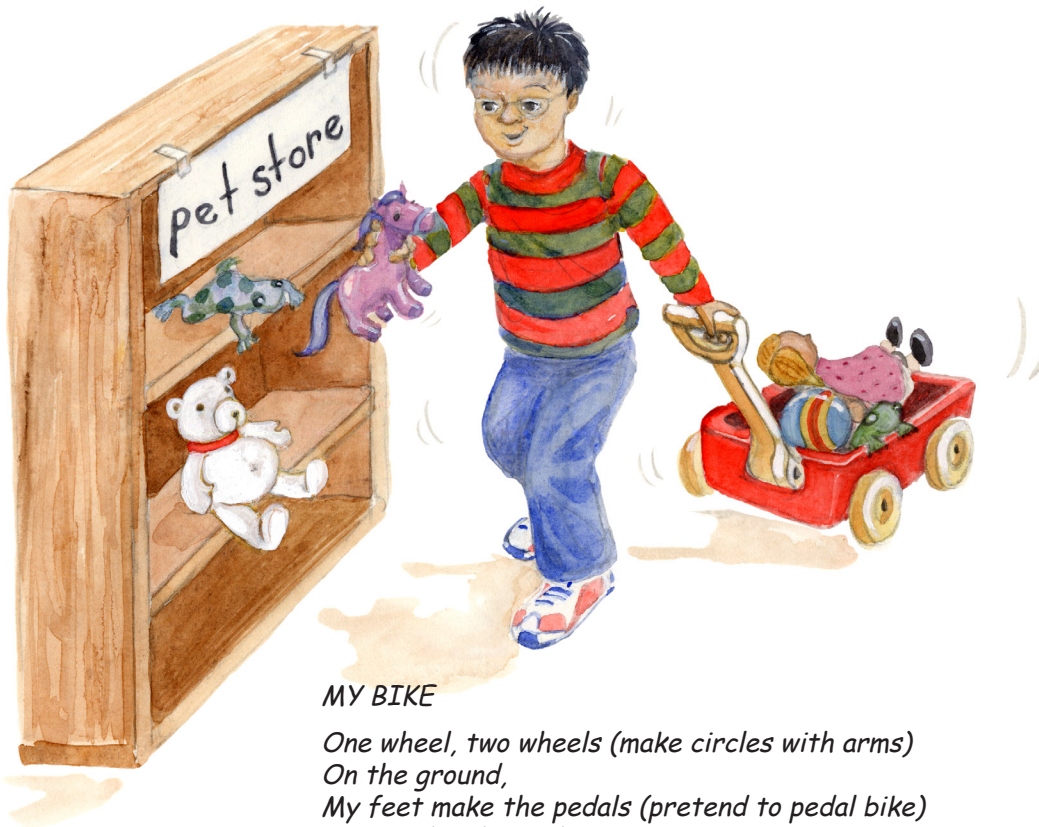
Equipment: Tricycle, wagon, or bag, "parcels" for delivery

Where: Outdoors or indoors

Book link: *The Jolly Postman* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

Let's play

- ❖ Have the children imagine their tricycle or wagon is a delivery truck or their bag is a mail carrier bag. Invite the children to design a delivery and pick up route. Have them ride or walk around the route, picking up and delivering packages.
 - Invite the children to describe the route to you.
- ❖ Read "My Bike" and invite the children to do the actions.



MY BIKE

*One wheel, two wheels (make circles with arms)
On the ground,
My feet make the pedals (pretend to pedal bike)
Go round and round.
The handlebars help me (pretend to steer)
Steer so straight,
Down the sidewalk (shade eyes as if looking at something in the distance)
And through the gate.*

- Anonymous



Try this way

- ❖ Ask the children what else they could add to the route (e.g. parking bays to reverse into and park; traffic lights so they need to stop and go).
- ❖ Help the children make signs (e.g. words or pictures or both) for the stops along the route: perhaps a gas station; library; lumberyard; restaurant; car dealership; hardware, shoe, grocery, pet, toy store; doctor's or dentist's office.
- ❖ Before setting off, get the children to count the packages to make sure there are enough for each stop on the route.
- ❖ Have the children draw a picture or a map of their route and customers.
- ❖ Create signs for the route that *The Jolly Postman* took: the bear's cottage, the witch's home, the beanstalk giant's house, etc. Encourage the children to pretend to be the Jolly Postman and make all the deliveries; you, or other children, can play the different characters receiving their letters.





Stilt walking

Physical activity links: Playing with the children; developing balance

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary: describing words (tight, taught, wobble, sway); pretend play

Equipment: Stilts

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Stilts (see pages 139-140)

Book link: *Make it Balance* by David Evans and Claudette Williams

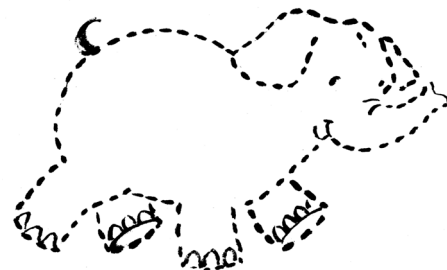
Let's play

- ❖ Show the children how to pull the rope tight to keep the cans in contact with their feet. Practice standing up straight when walking on the stilts.
- ❖ Encourage the children to walk in different ways (e.g. step sideways, walk in a circle).
- ❖ Invite the children to use their stilts to interpret the poems. For example:
 - Read the "Elephant" poem together and pretend to be an elephant and sway slowly, majestically.
 - Stretch tall after sharing "The Yellow Giraffe."
 - Read "Skyscraper," then encourage the children to imagine what being tall would let them do.

ELEPHANT

*Right foot, left foot, see me go
I am grey and big and slow
I come walking down the street
With my trunk and my four big feet*

- Anonymous





Try this way

❖ Read *Make it Balance* and choose some of the experiments to try.

THE YELLOW GIRAFFE

*The yellow giraffe is as tall as can be.
His lunch is a bunch of leaves off a tree.
He has a very long neck and his legs are long too.
And he can run faster than his friends in the zoo.*

- Anonymous



SKYSCRAPER

*Skyscraper, skyscraper
Scrape me some sky,
Tickle the sun
While the stars go by.*

*Tickle the stars
While the sun's climbing high,
Then skyscraper, skyscraper,
Scrape me some sky.*

- Dennis Lee





Swoop and scoop

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (cardiovascular fitness); playing actively; developing spatial awareness and body control skills

Language/literacy links: Counting; vocabulary (number recognition, direction words); graphing

Equipment: Bottle scoop, paper scrunched up into balls and a bucket or basket

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Bottle scoops (see page 141)

Let's play

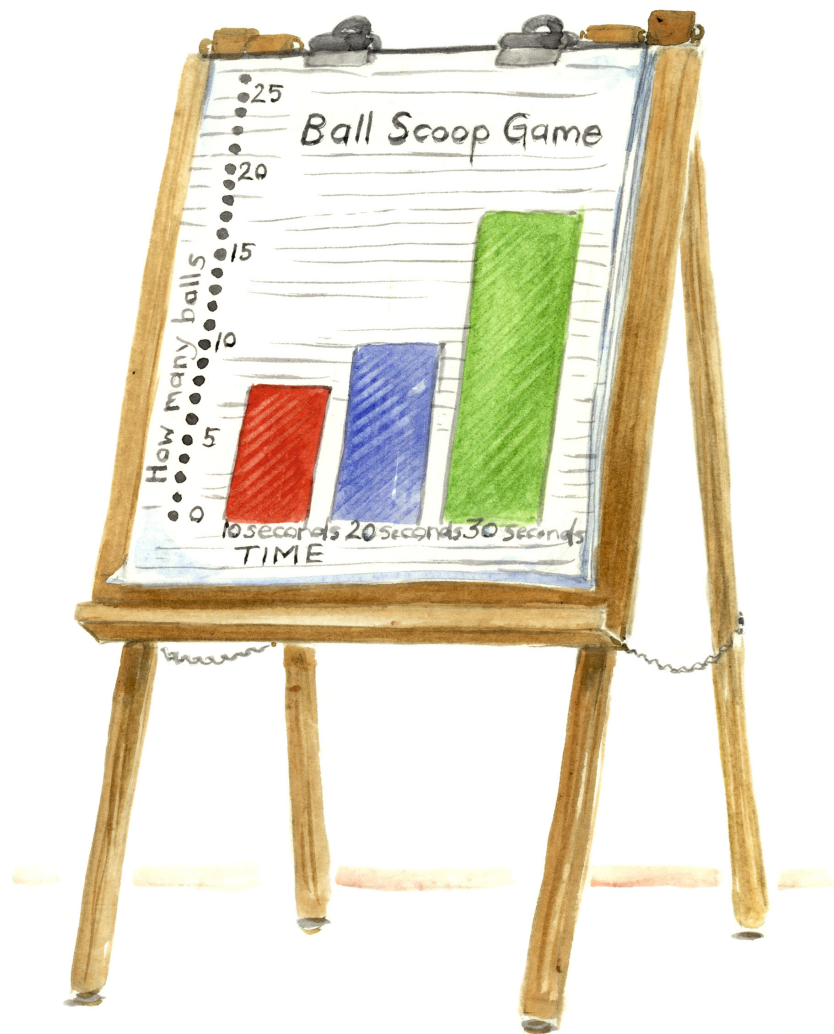
- ❖ Scatter the balls on the floor and place the bucket nearby.
- ❖ Use the scoop to lift balls and place them gently in the basket.
- ❖ Make a trail of paper balls and scoop them up in order.
- ❖ Change hands: try with scoop in the other hand.





Try this way

- ❖ Scoop two balls before placing any in the basket (e.g. try for three and even four).
- ❖ Hide the balls; provide clues (e.g. behind something big, next to something you sit on); take turns hiding and giving clues.
- ❖ Move quickly; time how many seconds it takes to collect all the balls. Help the children write down how long it takes.
- ❖ Introduce a challenge (e.g. how many can the children scoop in 10 seconds, 20 seconds, and 30 seconds?). Help the children draw a graph of the results. If more than one child is playing have them see how many they can scoop up **together** in the given time.





Tag

Physical activity links: Vigorous play, developing body control and spatial awareness; cooperative play

Language/literacy links: Counting; number recognition; vocabulary: naming words (Stork tag, Noodle tag etc.); movement words (chase, run, flee, boundaries)

Equipment: Pool noodles (optional); blue and yellow yarn balls (optional)

Where: Outdoors or a large indoor space

Book link: *Can't Catch Me* by Michael Foreman

Let's play

❖ Basic tag:

- Designate the boundaries of a large space.
- Call for one or two volunteers to be taggers. The other children move into the playing area.
- Taggers move around and tag other children gently with their hand (below the shoulder). Children that are tagged become the taggers. Before the new taggers begin to chase they count "one thousand, two thousand, three thousand, four thousand, five thousand, here I come."
- Play until the children are huffing and puffing; swap taggers regularly.





Try this way

- ❖ There are thousands of versions of tag. Here are a couple of different ways to play:
 - **Stork tag:** As per basic tag, except when a fleeing child stands on one foot the taggers cannot tag them. Swap taggers regularly.
 - **Noodle tag:** Depending on the size of your group, give one, two, or three children a pool noodle; these are the taggers. Taggers chase the other children and gently tag them with the pool noodle below the shoulder. When tagged the children collect a pool noodle from a pile outside the playing area and also become taggers, or the tagger gives the pool noodle to the child tagged.
 - **Sunshine and snowflake tag:** Have one or two taggers (snowflakes) and one or two children who melt the snowflakes (sunshine). Snowflakes move around and tag other children with the snowball (blue ball of yarn). Children tagged by the snowball are frozen and stand still. Children who are sunshine move around and melt the frozen children by tagging them with the sun (yellow ball of yarn). Once unfrozen, the children are free to play again. Snowflakes cannot freeze sunshine. Change the sunshine and snowflakes often.
- ❖ Read *Can't Catch Me* and invent new ways of tagging and releasing, and names for your new games of tag.

Safety tip

- ❖ Have the children start out by walking and use other locomotor patterns as they become more adept at chasing and fleeing, tagging softly, and staying within the boundary.





Trikes and bikes

Physical activity links: Playing activity; vigorous play; balance

Language/literacy links: Drawing, writing, and painting; discussion; interpreting traffic signs and symbols

Equipment: Trikes, bikes, scooters, and helmets; paints or crayons and cardboard; cones

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *Duck on a Bike* by David Shannon

Let's play

- ❖ Mark a straight "bike lane" between two points. Adjust the distance according to the age and skill of the children. Invite the children to ride their trike, bike, or scooter along the track, staying inside the lane boundaries. Increase the challenge by adding: a single curve, an "S" curve, left or right turns, a zig-zag, a U-turn, or a combination of these.
- ❖ Read "Biking" out loud and invite the children to tell you what they like about riding a bike, trike, or scooter.

BIKING

*Fingers grip,
toes curl;
head down,
wheels whirl.*

*Hair streams,
fields race;
ears sting,
winds chase.*

*Breathe deep,
troubles gone;
just feel
windsong.*

- Judith Nicholls





Try this way

- ❖ Read *Duck on a Bike* and see if the children can identify Duck's growing confidence and competence on the bike. This could lead into a discussion about what it takes to develop any new skill: lots of practice, not giving up, a positive attitude, and a willingness to keep trying.
- ❖ Build a rider education track with the children.
 - First discuss what good drivers need to be able to do and know to drive safely (e.g. stop, signal, look both ways, yield, read traffic signs and lights, wear helmets, pull over to talk on a cell phone).
 - Together, on a large sheet of chart paper design a course that would work in your outside play area.
 - Have the children help draw or paint the traffic signs they want for the course. With the children, use the design plan to lay out the course.
 - Invite the children to ride the course attending to the signs.
 - ❖ To heighten interest you might want to take on the role of a pedestrian at a crosswalk or a train approaching a railway crossing. When interest lulls, involve the children in making the course more challenging.
- ❖ Taking the children on a neighborhood walk to identify (and perhaps photograph) traffic signs before designing makes it much more realistic for them.



HELMETS:

Fit is really important. Check that the helmet is level on the child's head and the chin strap is snug (room for no more than one finger between the strap and the child's chin).





Up and over

Physical activity links: Participating with the children, developing movement skills (bouncing, eye-hand coordination), developing social skills (taking turns)

Language/literacy links: Playing with the sounds of the language (e.g. rhythm, rhyme); counting

Equipment: Balls that will bounce, 2 chairs, 1 rope, towel, balloon

Where: Outdoors or large indoor space

Let's make: Balloon cover (see page 145)

Let's play

- ❖ Tie the ends of the rope to chairs.
- ❖ Begin with the rope close to the ground.
- ❖ Bounce the ball on the near side of the rope so that it goes over the rope. Let it bounce on the other side before collecting or catching it.
- ❖ Play with a partner — rally the ball back and forth and use a chant to keep count.

*One, two, three, O'Leary
Four, five, six, O'Leary
Seven, eight, nine, O'Leary
Make it ten,
Start over again.*

- Anonymous

*One - two -
Over to you.
Three - four
Try for more!*





Try this way

- ❖ Move further away from the rope.
- ❖ Before bouncing the ball over the rope, have the children bounce and catch the ball to themselves once (1x). Next turn, they bounce and catch 2x before sending it over the rope. Then 3x, 4x - increasing one with each turn.
- ❖ Place a towel on the opposite side of the rope. Bounce the ball over the rope and try to make it land on the tea towel.
- ❖ Instead of bouncing a ball, keep a balloon in the air, as you rally it back and forth across the rope (use a balloon cover for safety, see page 145).

Safety tip

- ❖ Dispose of balloons and balloon debris after use as they are a choking hazard. A homemade balloon cover can be used to help with safety (see Let's Make page 145).





Walk and talk

Physical activity links: Building physical activity into every day
Language/literacy links: Supporting activity with talk and sign (e.g. observing and discussing, speculating); counting

Equipment: None

Where: Outdoors

Book link: *1001 Things to Spot in the Town* by Anna Milbourne; *I Took a Walk* by Henry Cole

Let's play

- ❖ Take a walk to carry out an everyday task and use this time for talking. Point out to the children what you notice on your walk. For example, "Oh, look over there, a cement mixer with the pouring chutes operating... what do you think they're building?" Encourage the children to tell you about what they see.

Try this way

- ❖ Choose some pages from *1001 Things to Spot in the Town* and together find and count the objects in the different scenes. Follow this with a walk in your own neighbourhood. Before starting out, and along the way, decide on some of the things that you might see and make a game out of finding them.
- ❖ Read *I Took a Walk*, then go on a walk to a park, garden, or field. Make a list (oral or written) of plants, insects, and small creatures noticed by looking closely and carefully. Afterwards, give each child a folded sheet of paper. On the outside they're to draw the park, garden, or field just visited. On the inside have the children draw some of the things they might have missed if they hadn't been such keen observers.







What time is it Tricky Wolf?

Physical activity links: Playing cooperatively; vigorous physical activity

Language/literacy links: Counting; vocabulary (e.g. colour, pattern words); playing with the sounds of the language (e.g. rhyme and rhythm)

Equipment: None

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book links: *Time to Get Up, Time to Go* by David Milgrim; *Dinnertime!* by Sue Williams; *Let's Play in the Forest* by Claudia Rueda

Let's play

- ❖ Play "What time is it, Tricky Wolf?"
 - An adult starts by taking on the role of Tricky Wolf. Tricky Wolf stands at one end of the playing area, facing away from the children who are at the other end of the space.
 - The aim is for the children to move to the wolf without getting caught.
 - The children chant in unison "What time is it, Tricky Wolf?", and Tricky Wolf will answer in one of two ways:
 - ❖ Tricky Wolf may call a clock time, e.g. "Six o'clock!"
 - ❖ The children will then take that many steps towards Tricky Wolf, counting the steps out loud as they go ("One, Two, Three!"). They then ask the question again.
- OR**
 - ❖ Tricky Wolf may call "Dinner Time!"
 - ❖ At this point, Tricky Wolf will turn and chase the children back to their starting point. If Tricky Wolf successfully tags someone, they become the new Tricky Wolf for the next round.
 - If a child does get all the way to Tricky Wolf without getting caught, everyone goes back to the start and the game begins again.



Try this way

- ❖ After playing Tricky Wolf read *Dinnertime!* about the adventures of a fox trying unsuccessfully to catch his dinner. Invite the children to boisterously bellow the "Dinnertime!" refrain.
- ❖ Follow up on the concept of time by reading *Time to Get Up, and Time to Go*. Have children talk about their favourite times of the day and what makes them special, or when time "plods really slow."





Wriggly ribbons

Physical activity links: Developing movement skills (body and spatial awareness, rhythm, timing); creativity; social skills (leading)

Language/literacy links: Support play with talk and sign (e.g. describing movement in words, interpreting words with movement); pretend play

Equipment: 1 ribbon stick or canning ring for each child

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: Ribbons (see page 142)

Book link: *Baby Beluga* by Raffi

Let's play

- ❖ With the children, hold the end of the ribbon stick or the canning ring and practice making patterns (e.g. figure 8, waves, rainbow, spiral, circle, wiggle).
 - Show the children how to use the whole arm, the lower arm (from the elbow) or just the wrist, to make the ribbon move. Change hands.
- ❖ Invite the children to act out ideas using their ribbons (e.g. pretend it's a windshield wiper, a tornado, a bicycle wheel, a wiggly snake, etc.).



FIGURE 8



WIGGLE



CIRCLE



Try this way

- ❖ Read "Washing Machine" out loud and together create the movements described in the poem.
- ❖ Make up actions to a favourite book or song. For example, a wave action could be used to show "Swim so wild and swim so free" and a spiral above the head could be "the water squirtin' out of your spout" in the Baby Beluga story.
- ❖ Play "Copy Cat." Make a pattern with your ribbon and invite the children to copy it. The children can take turns being the leader.
- ❖ Pretend the ribbon has magic powers... but only if it never touches the ground ... or never stops moving... or if the person holding it always stays on tiptoe... or always holds one hand behind her back, etc. Take turns deciding on "the rule."

THE WASHING MACHINE

*Washing in the washing machine, going round and round.
Washing in the washing machine, moving up and down.
Round and round and up and down, it makes a noisy sound.
Faster, faster, faster, round and round and round.*

- Anonymous



SPIRAL



RAINBOW



WAVE



Chef for a day

Language/literacy links: Writing (making a list), vocabulary (ingredients and utensils); measuring; supporting activity with talk and sign

Healthy eating links: Involving children in cooking; familiarizing children with foods that might be new to them; reading books about food

Equipment: Cooking utensils

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book links: *Salad People and More Real Recipes* by Mollie Katzen; *Fast Food* by Saxton Freymann

Let's play

- ❖ Read the "Let's Make a Salad" poem and talk about different things you like to cook and eat. Then invite the children to do the same.
- ❖ Working in small groups, invite the children to be "Chefs for a Day":
 - First the children choose something to make for lunch or a snack. You might want to look through cookbooks together to find an easy recipe.
 - Together make a grocery list to read and follow. Invite the children to draw small pictures beside the words to identify the items.
 - At the store, have the children locate items on the list and cross each one off once it's in the basket. Before you get to the checkout, help them count the number of items to be scanned and see if it matches the number of items on the list.
 - Help them gather the utensils needed, and wash, scrub, and prepare the food. If any part of the process is unsafe or too hard, have the children - as Head Chefs! - direct you through those steps.
 - Check the recipe as each ingredient is added. Take turns measuring, mixing, or stirring.
- ❖ Enjoy the snack or lunch together.



Try this way

- ❖ Make "Salad People" as described in *Salad People and More Real Recipes*. Let imagination guide the creations. Read *Fast Food* for lots of ideas.
- ❖ Have the children rename the recipe so it becomes their own creation.
- ❖ Together, start a book of the children's favourite recipes; encourage them to write and illustrate what they can.



LET'S MAKE A SALAD

First you wash the lettuce
 Then you spin it dry
 Chop a lot of onions
 till they make you cry
 If you want a salad
 that's the best you've had
 all you have to do is

ADD

pepper and lime
 parsley and thyme
 a dash of salt too
 makes dressing for you

THEN

Slice in a tomato
 Add a bit of cheese
 Salad in a bowl
 Serve it
 if you please!

- Sonja Dunn



Cooking together

Language/literacy links: Playing with the letters and sounds of the language (rhyming words; letter sounds); vocabulary (cooking words); sequencing and measuring

Healthy eating links: Involving children in cooking; reading books about food

Equipment: Kitchen/baking utensils

Where: Indoors

Let's make: Gingerbread Cookie People (see page 143)

Book links: *My Pop Pop and Me* by Irene Smalls; *Salad People and More Real Recipes* by Mollie Katzen

Let's play

- ❖ Have the children help collect the ingredients and utensils to make the Gingerbread People. Use this as an opportunity to identify the letters and numbers on the labels and in the recipe.
- ❖ Follow the recipe together and involve the children in measuring. Talk about all the actions as you do them.
- ❖ Chant the poems as you mix, stir, roll, and decorate the gingerbread people.



GINGERBREAD MAN

Mix and stir and pat in the pan,
I'm going to make a gingerbread man
With a nose so neat
And a smile so sweet
And gingerbread shoes on his gingerbread feet.

- From "Mother Goose, A Canadian Sampler"



Try this way

- ❖ Read and enjoy *My Pop Pop and Me* or a similar book that involves cooking; or flip through cookbooks together.
- ❖ Use other children's recipe books, such as *Salad People* and *More Real Recipes*, and do some cooking together.



*Run, run,
As fast as you can...
You can't catch me...
I'm the gingerbread man!*

- Anonymous



CHILDREN CAN:

Wash and scrub fruit and vegetables

Tear lettuce

Break ends off green beans

Mix salad ingredients using a large spoon or freshly washed hands

Slice soft foods such as banana with a dull knife

Stir and mix batter

Mash soft foods such as boiled potatoes or pumpkin

Spread nut butter or cream cheese on celery sticks, toast or crackers

Knead bread or pizza dough

Measure portions and ingredients

Roll out cookie dough



Mystery munch

Language/literacy links: Questioning, classifying, and predicting; vocabulary (food words)

Healthy eating links: Increase children's awareness of different foods

Equipment: Different foods and a box or bag (mystery box)

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's play

- ❖ Without the children seeing, place a food item into the mystery box.
- ❖ Invite the children to ask questions about what might be in the box. It is very important to model the kind of questions that will help them solve the mystery. For example, you might suggest some of the following as possibilities or inject these as hints if the children seem to be stuck.
 - Can you peel it?
 - Does it have a pit?
 - What colour is it?
 - Is it bigger than my thumb?
 - Do you cook it?
 - Where would I find it in a store?
 - Is it in a box?
 - Would I eat more than six at one time?
 - Does it grow in the ground?
 - Do you keep it in the freezer?
 - Do babies eat this?
 - How big is it?
 - Does it come in a bunch?
- ❖ If appropriate, the food item can be tasted by the children after they've identified it.



Try this way

- ❖ Call for a volunteer to take over the answering role. In preparation:
 - You will need 2 or 3 foods for the child to choose from that are out-of-sight of the group.
 - Help the child prepare by making sure he or she is familiar with the characteristics of the food they've selected.
- ❖ Have the child answer the questions posed by the other children (provide hints and support as needed).





Taste adventures

Language/literacy links: Vocabulary (sensory words: touch, smell, taste), support play with talk and sign; recording

Healthy eating links: Making time to eat together; helping children develop eating skills; familiarizing children with foods that might be new to them; reading books about food

Equipment: Cutting board; kitchen utensils

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book links: *My Mom Loves Me More Than Sushi* by Filomena Gomes; *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato* by Lauren Child

Let's play

- ❖ Invite the children to choose a new fruit or vegetable at snack time. Encourage them to try "at least one bite."
- ❖ Have the children describe the colour, shape, feel, smell, sound and taste of the new food. Ask - How does this food:
 - **Look?** Tiny, round, skinny, shiny, curly, green, orange, purple, yellow, white, red, pink, brown.
 - **Feel to touch?** Soft, hard, fuzzy, smooth, bumpy, prickly, hot, icy, velvety, wrinkled, firm, fleshy, slick.
 - **Smell?** Sweet, fragrant, flowery, fruity.
 - **Feel in your mouth?** Sticky, warm, juicy, dry, fleshy, mushy, gooey, chunky, crumbly.
 - **Sound in your mouth?** Crunch, slurp, crackle, pop.
 - **Taste?** Sweet, salty, bitter, spicy, sour, peppery, bland, savoury, tangy, meaty.



Try this way

- ❖ Set the stage for exploring new foods by reading *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato*.
- ❖ Read *My Mom Loves Me More Than Sushi* and try to identify foods that come from different parts of the world.
- ❖ Help the children print the name and draw a picture of each new food on an "I tried it" chart.
 - Organize the chart using different categories. For example:
 - ❖ Crunchy, slippery, sweet, etc.
 - ❖ Fruits, vegetables, grains, etc.





Alphabet bodies

Physical activity links: Developing balance; spatial and body awareness

Language/literacy links: Alphabet letter and number identification; cooperation and planning

Healthy eating links: Familiarity with variety of fruits and vegetables

Equipment: None

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *The Butterfly Alphabet* by Kjell B. Sandved; *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables from A to Z* by Lois Ehlert; *The Bouncing, Dancing, Galloping A B C* by Charlotte Doyle

Let's play

- ❖ Read the poem "Two in Bed" and invite the children to talk about times they've had to squish their bodies into different shapes or tricky positions. Have them try to make themselves "exactly like a v," just like Tommy in the poem.
- ❖ Highlight for the children, by holding up a card or drawing it, a letter or number that is easy to represent by one child's body, e.g. i, l, c, j, 1, or 7. Invite the children to move into a space and use their body to form the letter or number.
- ❖ Each child has a partner. Problem solve with the children how they could position their bodies by lying on the floor to create different letters or numbers together. Letters and numbers that work well for pairs of children are: C, D, G, L, O, P, S, T, U, V, W, X and 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Have them try to make the first letter of their names, the number for how old they are, etc.
- ❖ Take a photograph of the letter or number from above to show the children. Ask them to identify from the photo the letter or number they made and the letters or numbers made by the other children.
 - You could build up enough pictures of the children's body letters to spell a word, e.g. a child's name.



Try this way

- ❖ Make available a variety of alphabet books, such as those listed above.
- ❖ Read *The Butterfly Alphabet* and challenge the children to identify letters and numbers in the things they find around them (e.g., a hoop is "o"; a pencil is "l").
- ❖ Read *Eating the Alphabet*. Call out the names of different vegetables and have the children try to name the letter it starts with. Call out an alphabet letter and have the children think of fruits and vegetables that begin with that letter. See if they can think of some that aren't in the book.



TWO IN BED

When my brother Tommy
Sleeps in bed with me,
He doubles up
And makes
himself
exactly
like
a
V

And 'cause the bed is not so wide,
A part of him is on my side.

- A. B. Ross



Dancing bees

Physical activity links: Playing actively; supporting learning

Language/literacy links: Interpreting words with movement; following directions

Healthy eating links: Preparing food with children

Equipment: None

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book link: *Dumpy La Rue* by Betsy Lewin & Elizabeth Winthrop; *Barnyard Dance* by Sandra Boynton; *The Life and Times of the Honeybee* by Charles Micucci

Let's make: Dancing Bee Dip (see page 144)

Let's play

- ❖ Read the poem "There was a bee" and have the children practice making buzzing and humming sounds.
- ❖ Then read the "Bee Dance" poem by Helaine Becker (see table below) and work through the individual or group dance actions together. Repeat several times.

Bee Dance (poem)	Actions: Individual dance	Actions: Group dance
Bees in the ballroom, bees in the hive Bees do the bee dance, jump and jive.	Walking quickly around the whole space making a buzzing sound while wiggling their bottoms; when you say "jump and jive" children perform 3 jumps... one on each word.	Hold hands in a circle. Move out to "bees in the ballroom," in to "bees in the hive," out to "bees do the bee dance," then when you say "jump and jive" children perform 3 jumps... one on each word.
Buzz in a circle, to and fro Promenade and do-si-do.	Children twirl around on the spot, making buzzing sounds.	Hold hands and walk clockwise, making buzzing sounds.
Swing those wings in a figure 8 Grab your partner, don't be late.	Swoop and swing arms freely (moving or stationary).	Keep walking clockwise holding hands and swing arms high back and forth.
Point to the sun to find your way Then buzz, buzz, buzz and fly away.	Point arm up high then twirl around saying "buzz, buzz, buzz" and sit on bottom when you say "fly away."	Drop hands and point arm up high then spin away from circle saying "buzz, buzz, buzz" and sit on bottom when you say "fly away."

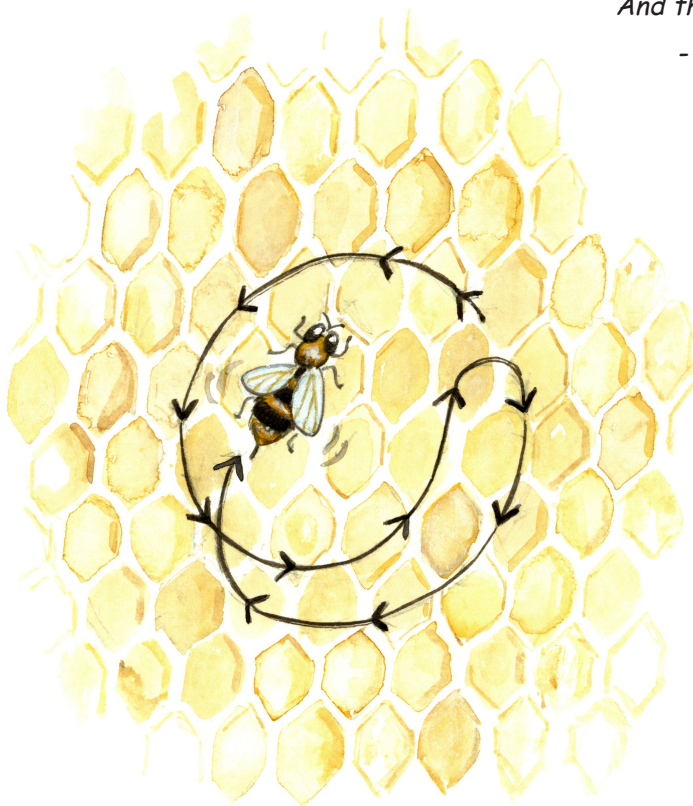


Try this way

- ❖ Share some of the information from *The Life and Times of the Honeybee* and discuss the habits of bees, and why bees really do "dance" (see pages 18-19). This book has wonderful pictures, but you will need to present the information in your own words.
- ❖ Make and share Dancing Bee Dip (page 144). Note: Honey should not be fed to infants under 1 year of age.
- ❖ Read *Dumpy La Rue* and/or *Barnyard Dance*. Put on some music and invite the children to invent their own dances and move to the music in their own ways.

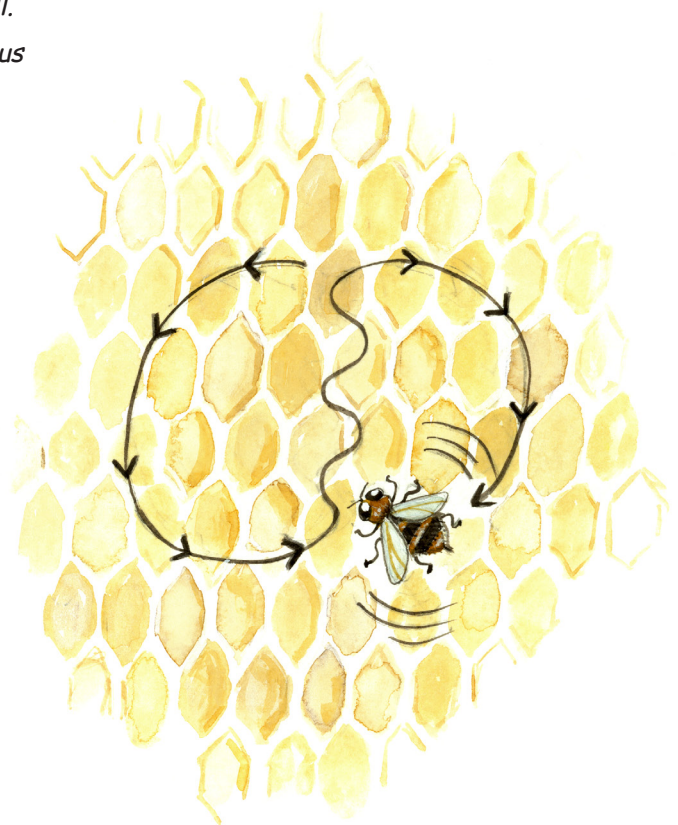
*There was a bee
Sat on a wall;
He said he could hum,
And that was all.*

- Anonymous



ROUND DANCE

The round dance shows the flowers are close to the hive



WAGGLE DANCE

The tail wagging dance shows where the flowers are and that they are far from the hive.



Green thumbs

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (building strong bones, muscles, cardiovascular fitness); building activity into your day

Language/literacy links: Measuring; charting; numbers; writing

Healthy eating links: Involving children in gardening; reading books about gardening

Equipment: Trowels, spoons, flowerpots, cut-down milk containers or recycled plant containers

Where: Outdoors; indoors with plant pots or window box

Book link: *A Seed Grows* by Pamela Hickman

Let's play

- ❖ With the children, look through local nursery or seed catalogues to select several flowers and vegetables to plant. Let the children choose what to plant.
- ❖ Visit a nursery or store together to buy the seeds.
- ❖ Outside: the children can dig a small plot of ground. Inside: the children can fill a container with soil. This would be a good time to read the poem "Maytime Magic."
- ❖ Together carefully count the number of seeds in each pot or row, and write this number on a chart. Encourage the children to predict how many days it will be before the plants peek through the soil. Later, check and record how many seeds sprouted, and how many days it took.
- ❖ Help the children label the pots or rows by drawing pictures or copying the name onto popsicle sticks.
- ❖ Have the children mark on a calendar when the seeds were planted, when watered, when they sprouted, and have them measure and mark the growth of the plant.





Try this way

- ❖ Plant a "scent garden" - mint, lemon balm, and sage are easy. Later, go on a scent tour together, rubbing leaves and enjoying the fragrance.
- ❖ Read *A Seed Grows* and talk about all the steps of growing a plant.

MAYTIME MAGIC

*A little seed
For me to sow...*

*A little earth
To make it grow...
A little hole,
A little pat...
A little wish,
And that is that.*

*A little sun,
A little shower...
A little while,
And then - a flower!*

- Mabel Watts

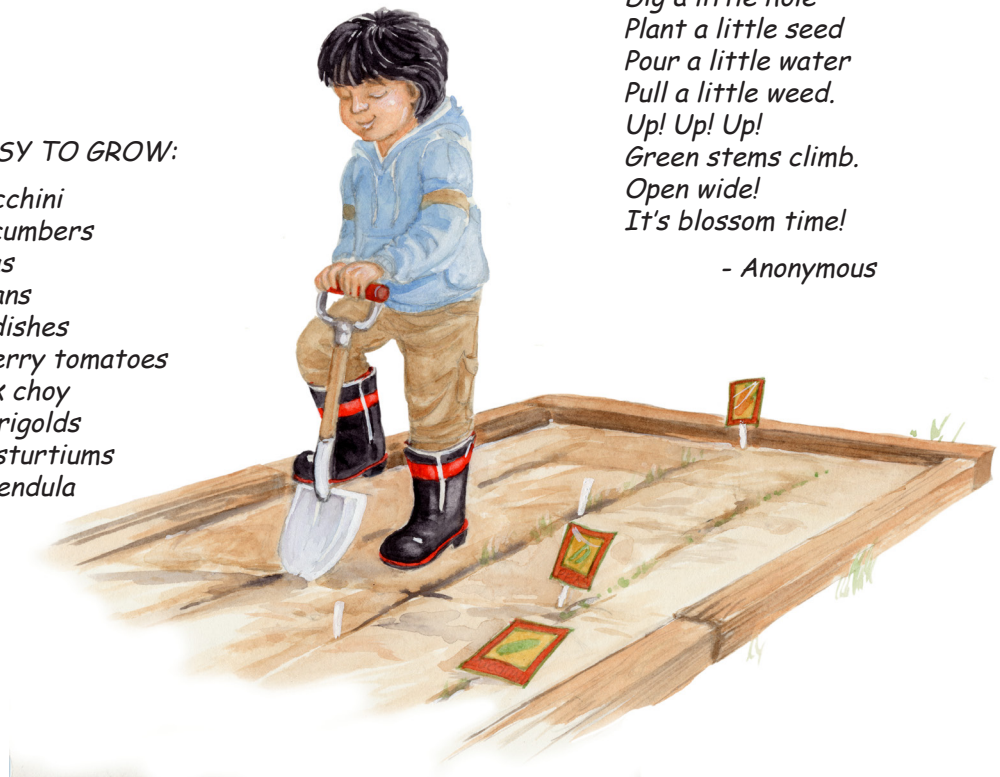


EASY TO GROW:

Zucchini
Cucumbers
Peas
Beans
Radishes
Cherry tomatoes
Bok choy
Marigolds
Nasturtiums
Calendula

*Dig a little hole
Plant a little seed
Pour a little water
Pull a little weed.
Up! Up! Up!
Green stems climb.
Open wide!
It's blossom time!*

- Anonymous





Hot potato

Physical activity links: Participating with the children; developing movement skills (eye-hand coordination)

Language/literacy links: Counting; vocabulary development (opposites: hard/soft, high/low); being a role model

Healthy eating links: Involving the children in cooking

Equipment: 1 balloon per child, a paddle per child

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Let's make: A paddle bat (see page 145); balloon cover (see page 145); oven-roasted potato wedges (see page 146)

Let's play

- ❖ Use hands to keep the balloon in the air by tapping it upward.
- ❖ Use one hand, the other hand, and then both hands.
- ❖ Hit soft, hit hard, hit high, and hit low.

ONE POTATO, TWO POTATO...

*One potato,
Two potato,
Three potato, Four,
Five potatoes,
Six potatoes,
Seven potatoes, More!*

- Anonymous





Try this way

- ❖ Use a paddle bat to tap the balloon up.
- ❖ Work in pairs to tap the balloon back and forth.
- ❖ Count how many taps you can do keeping the balloon off the ground.
- ❖ Keep count with the two "Potato" rhymes.
- ❖ Show the children several varieties of potato and discuss how they are different and how they are the same (e.g. colour on the inside and outside, size); and then involve the children in the preparation of the oven-roasted potato wedges (see page 146).



SAFETY TIP:

Use a homemade balloon cover for safety (see the Let's Make section page 145). Balloon debris can cause choking.



POTATO RHYME

Boiled potato,
mashed potato,
baked potato,
raw.
Scalloped potato,
roast potato,
stuffed potato,
more.

- Anonymous



Match it

Physical activity links: Playing actively; supporting learning; vigorous play

Language/literacy links: Classification

Healthy eating links: Increasing children's awareness of food

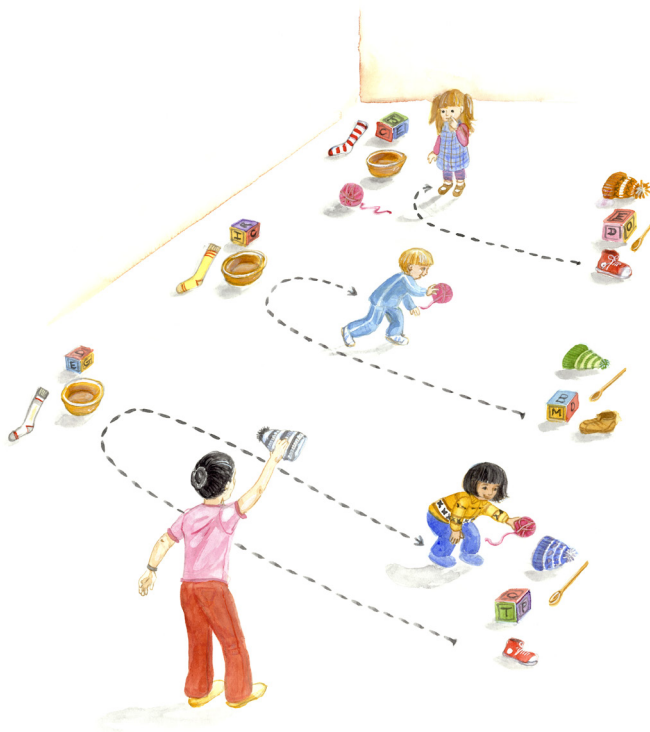
Equipment: Pairs of everyday objects, e.g. pot with lid, pairs of socks, wooden spoon and bowl, hat and scarf, sand bucket and spade, plastic cup and saucer, ball of yarn and a woolen toque

Where: Outdoors or indoors

Book link: *Some Things Go Together* by Charlotte Zolotow; *Gray Rabbit's Odd One Out* by Alan Baker

Let's play

- ❖ Play "Match It." Mark two lines, eight to ten metres apart. Give each child several pairs of objects. The sets should be the same for each child. Identify with the children what makes these objects "pairs." Have the children carry one object of each pair and put it behind the far line and return to the start. Call out the name of one of the objects. The children run to collect its match from their pile and return to the start. Repeat with the next object.
 - As a variation, instead of naming the object, provide a descriptive clue, e.g. "something you put on your foot to keep it warm."
- ❖ Invite the children to suggest other ways to move between the lines (hop, crawl, jump, slither like a snake).





Try this way

- ❖ Read *Some Things Go Together* and have the children suggest all the things they can think of - people and events as well as objects — that go together.
- ❖ Read *Gray Rabbit's Odd One Out* and have the children figure out the things that "don't belong" with the others. Now play "Different," the opposite of "Match It." When you call out an object the children must collect an object that does not belong with it. Have the children explain why they don't match.
- ❖ Have the children sort and classify pictures of food, including many different fruits and vegetables, cut out from magazines. Possible categories include: soft or hard, grown above or below ground, needs or doesn't need cooking, and with or without seeds.



SAFETY TIP:

Ensure the objects the children carry while running are free of hard or sharp edges.



Mulberry bush

Physical activity links: Body and spatial awareness; rhythm and timing; supporting learning and social development

Language/literacy links: Rhyming; playing with the sounds of the language

Healthy eating links: Familiarizing children with new foods; preparing food with the children; reading books about food

Equipment: Music (optional)

Where: Outdoors or indoors

Book link: *Jamberry* by Bruce Degen

Let's make: Berry Smoothie (see page 149); Very-Berry-Stack (see page 149)

Let's play

- ❖ Children perform the actions as they sing. Once familiar with the pattern, invite the children to suggest things to act out.

Singing	Actions
<p>Chorus:</p> <p>Here we go round the Mulberry bush, the Mulberry bush, the Mulberry bush, here we go round the Mulberry bush, so early in the morning.</p>	<p>Hold hands and skip or walk in a circle.</p>
<p>Verse:</p> <p>This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands, this is the way we wash our hands, so early in the morning.</p>	<p>Drop hands and perform hand washing action while standing.</p>
<p>Repeat chorus</p> <p>This is the way we "eat our breakfast," "brush our teeth," "do our exercises," "stretch our body," "ski down hill," "eat our cereal," "crunch our carrots," "swat mosquitoes."</p>	<p>Hold hands and skip or walk in a circle.</p> <p>Actions suitable for verse.</p>





Try this way

- ❖ Read "Eating Blueberries" and have the children draw a picture of a face with teeth turned "berry-blue" that would give everyone the shivers.
- ❖ Read *Jamberry* together, enjoying the rhythm of the language. Then have the children list all the different kinds of berries they can think of. Categorize the berry list by colour, juicy or dry, sweet or tart, size, whether it grows locally or it can only be found in the store, etc. Invite each child to say which is "absolutely their most favourite" berry. Graph the responses.
- ❖ Buy or pick berries. Have the children help wash and sort the berries and follow the recipe to make Berry Smoothie or Very-Berry-Stacks.

EATING BLUEBERRIES

We found them
 Big as marbles
 And we rolled them
 In our mouths
 And bit them
 Till the juice
 Ran down in rivers.

 We gathered
 And we feasted
 Till our teeth
 Turned berry-blue
 And now
 Our smiles
 Give everyone
 The shivers.

- Sandra Olson Liatos



By Simi



Pizza pizzazz

Physical activity links: Vigorous play (cardiovascular fitness); developing movement skills; pretend play

Language/literacy links: Support activity with talk and sign (describe as you go); classification; writing and drawing (e.g. listing, recording)

Healthy eating links: Cooking with the children; reading books about food

Equipment: 1 hoop per child, variety of objects (e.g. bean bags, cards, toys), something to mark a start line

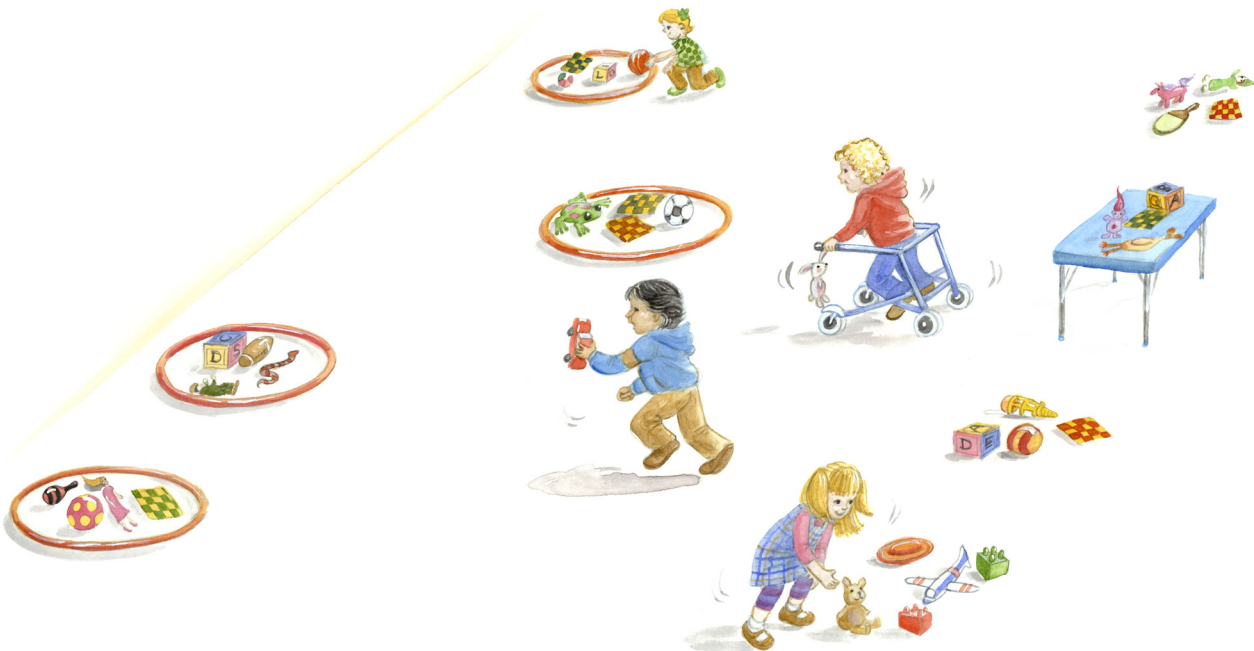
Where: Outdoors or indoors

Let's make: Pizza recipes (see pages 147-148)

Book link: *Pete's a Pizza* by William Steig

Let's play

- ❖ Place one hoop (pizza base) per child several metres from a marked line. Place 10 or more objects (e.g. bean bags, playing cards, small balls or toys) per child behind the line.
- ❖ Have the children move quickly back and forth, carrying one item at a time, decorating their pizza base with toppings (e.g. bean bags, cards, toys).





Try this way

- ❖ Change the type of movement. Try skipping, running, jumping, galloping, or crawling.
- ❖ Read *Pete's a Pizza* — and together act out the pizza making, with the children as the "pizza."
- ❖ Ideas for discussion:
 - Have some fun imagining what would — and would not — be a delicious/healthy topping on a pizza.
 - Make a Preposterous Pizza! with all sorts of nonsensical toppings — give the imagination free reign.
- ❖ Create and write out a recipe for a favourite pizza; invite the children to draw and (with your help) label pictures of the ingredients.
- ❖ Make a pizza... or mini-pizzas.





Teddy bear's picnic

Physical activity links: Physical activity as a part of every day

Language/literacy links: Planning; counting; measuring; writing (list, invitations); pretend play

Healthy eating links: Involving children in shopping; preparing food; serving; making time to eat together; tasting new foods; reading books about foods

Equipment: Picnic "basket"; stuffed animals

Where: Indoors or outdoors

Book links: *Bears in the Park* by Gwenda Turner; *Fast Food* by Saxton Freymann

Let's play

- ❖ Invite the children to plan a special picnic for teddy bears and favourite stuffed toys. Have them create, decorate, and deliver invitations to the teddy bears.
- ❖ Together, decide on the food to take along, and how much will be needed: food for people (real), and food for bears (pretend). Make lists for both... and menus.
- ❖ Help the children prepare and pack some snacks, sandwiches, fruit and drinks into a cooler. Encourage pretend play by having the children fill a special bear's bucket, box, or basket with imaginary snacks guaranteed to delight bears.
- ❖ Have the children select the picnic spot, lay out the tablecloth, count out enough napkins, plates, and spoons for everyone, and arrange the teddy bear guests.





Try this way

- ❖ Using the ideas in *Fast Food* as inspiration, create some edible "picnic creatures" from fruits and vegetables, letting creativity run free. Name the creatures.
- ❖ Read the poem "Five Little Bears" slowly, making the rhythm match the movement.
- ❖ Find out what foods bears really like to eat (e.g. research bears using *Owl* magazine, the Internet, or the library).
- ❖ Take *Bears in the Park* with you and read it on your picnic.

FIVE LITTLE BEARS

Five little bears
Were dancing on the floor,
One fell down
And that left four.
Four little bears
Climbed up a tree,
One found a bee hive
And that left three.
Three little bears
Were wondering what to do,
One chased a

Bunny rabbit
And that left two.
Two little bears
Were looking for some fun,
One took a swim
And that left one.
One little bear
Sitting all alone,
He looked all around
And then ran home!

- Anonymous





Tread lightly, look closely

Physical activity links: Building physical activity into the day; playing actively every day

Language/literacy links: Support activity with talk and sign; being a role model (tread lightly); vocabulary (plants, colors, textures, berries, numbers, letters, sounds)

Healthy eating links: Offering new foods; preparing food with the children

Where: Outdoors

Let's make: Berry Smoothie; Very-Berry-Stack (see page 149)

Book links: *Look Closer* by Brian and Rebecca Wildsmith; *The Butterfly Alphabet* by Kjell B. Sandved; *Green Fun: Plants as Play* by Marianne Haug Gjersvik

Let's play

- ❖ Get ready for a nature walk through a field, park, patch of woods, or back yard by reading *Look Closer* or *The Butterfly Alphabet*. Explain that on the walk you will stop and look closely at interesting things you notice.
- ❖ Talk about the saying "Take only memories, leave only footprints" and explain that on the walk we will be looking with our eyes, but leaving everything just as we find it.
- ❖ On your walk you could:
 - Look closely at plants, insects, colours, shapes, or textures.
 - Listen for sounds made by: birds, animals, machines and people.
 - Take turns pointing things out and describing them to each other.
 - Make a game of finding patterns that make the shapes of alphabet letters and numbers.





Try this way

- ❖ When berries are ripe, go out together to gather enough to make a smoothie or berry parfait. Chant the "Blackberries" poem as you pick (change the berry name if picking a different berry: blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, etc.).
- ❖ Have the children help wash and sort the berries and follow the recipe to make Berry Smoothie or Very-Berry-Stacks. Share and enjoy.



BLACKBERRIES

*Blackberries, blackberries on the hill.
How many pails can you fill?
Briers are thick and briers scratch,
But we'll pick all the berries in the blackberry patch.*

- Anonymous



Let's make

Bubble recipe

You will need (to make 2.5 L [10 cups]):

- ❖ 2.5 L (10 cups) of water
- ❖ 250 ml (1 cup) of soap detergent
- ❖ 30 ml (2 tablespoons) glycerine (purchase at pharmacy)

How to:

1. Put water in pail or bucket and add the detergent and glycerine.
2. Stir slowly to avoid bubbling.
3. For best results let the mixture sit overnight.

Bubble wand

Yogurt lid bubble wand

You will need:

- ❖ A plastic lid (e.g. yogurt, margarine container)
- ❖ Thumb tack
- ❖ Wooden chopstick

How to:

1. Cut the centre out of a plastic lid and thumb tack it to a wooden chopstick.

Fly swat bubble wand

You will need:

- ❖ A plastic fly swatter



How to:

1. Dip the fly swatter into a plate of bubble mix and wave it around for lots and lots of tiny bubbles.

Pipe cleaner bubble wand

You will need:

- ❖ A pipe cleaner

How to:

1. Shape a pipe cleaner into a circle, leaving an end to hold.





Balloon drum

You will need:

- ❖ Juice can, oatmeal box, or empty round food container
- ❖ 2 large balloons
- ❖ 2 heavy rubber bands
- ❖ 2 unsharpened pencils with erasers

How to:

1. Open both ends of the container to make the drum body.
2. Cut the small end off the balloons: this is the drum skin.
3. Stretch the closed end of the balloon over the drum body.
4. Hold the balloon in place with the rubber band and smooth out any wrinkles.
5. Repeat the previous steps to make the opposite end of the drum.
6. Use the pencils as drum sticks.
7. Use the eraser end of the pencil on the drum (Note: Do not sharpen the pencils).





Jingle stick

You will need:

- ❖ A 30 cm (14 inch) stick, a wooden spoon or some straws taped together
- ❖ Ribbon, string cotton or tape
- ❖ Bells, things that jingle and jangle

How to:

1. Attach bells to top of stick with ribbon, string, cotton or tape.
2. Jingle and jangle.

Maracas

You will need:

- ❖ Plastic containers with lid (screw top is best)
- ❖ Rice, beans, sand, lentils*
- ❖ Strong tape
- ❖ Ribbon decorations

How to:

1. Fill plastic container a third full with one of the above fillings.
2. Tape firmly.
3. Decorate and shake.

* Use different fillings for different sounds.



Tambourines

You will need:

- ❖ Two paper plates per tambourine
- ❖ Rice, beans, lentils
- ❖ Stapler and tape
- ❖ Decorations



How to:

1. Staple (or tape) paper plates together leaving a small opening.
2. Fill with rice, beans, or lentils.
3. Tape opening closed.
4. Decorate and shake.

Ankle bells

You will need:

- ❖ Two-sided Velcro tape available from garden or sewing suppliers
- ❖ Small bells available from craft or dollar stores
- ❖ Needle and thread

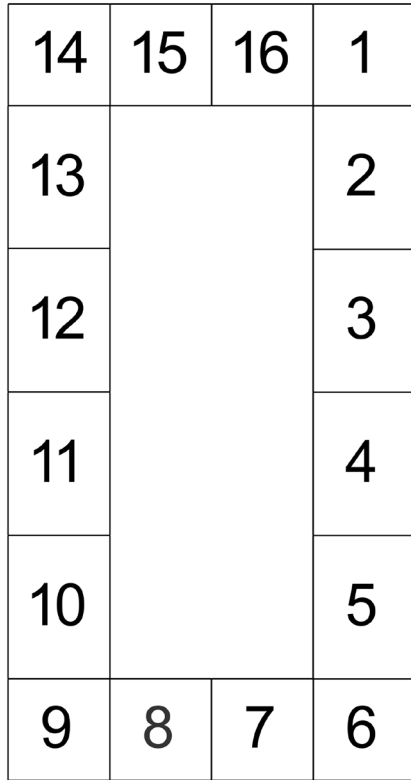
How to:

1. Cut a length of two sided Velcro tape about 15 cm (6 inches) long.
2. Attach 2 or 3 bells to the tape using a needle and thread.
3. Attach around the child's ankle.

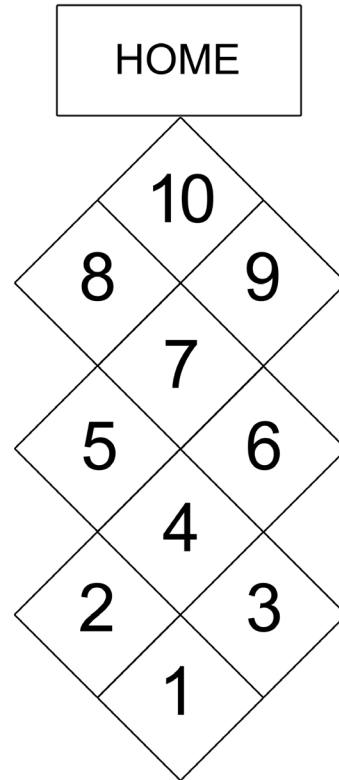
IDEA: If you are unable to find two-sided Velcro tape, sew two 8 cm (3½ inch) pieces of Velcro together, putting the hook and furry sides opposite.



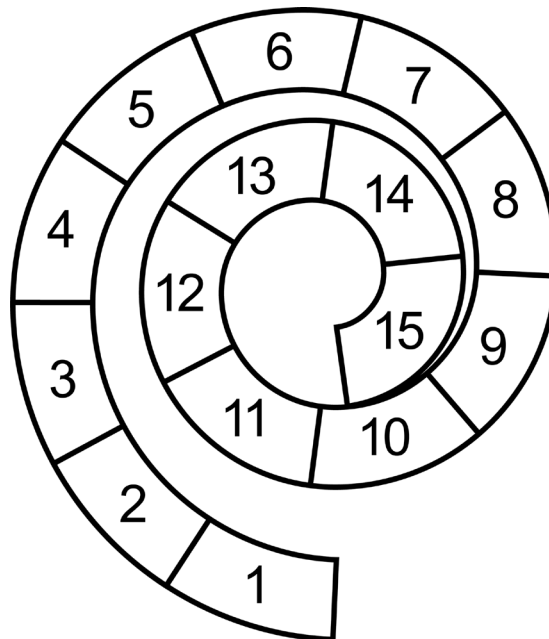
Hopscotch patterns



Rectangle



Diamond



Spiral



Clipboard

You will need:

- ❖ Pressed board or thick cardboard (enough for a 14x21 cm [$5\frac{1}{2}$ x8 inch] rectangle per child)
- ❖ A bull dog clip per child
- ❖ A pencil per child
- ❖ String or wool

How to:

1. Cut the board into a series of 14x21cm ($5\frac{1}{2}$ x8 inch) rectangles. If necessary, tape or sand any rough edges.
2. Attach a bull dog clip to the top of the clipboard and attach a pencil with string tied to the bull dog clip.

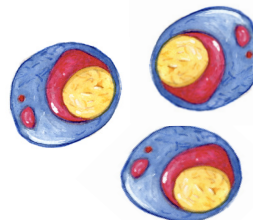




Bean bags

You will need:

- ❖ Birdseed, dried beans, shell grit, or popcorn
- ❖ Funnel or 500-600 ml plastic bottle
- ❖ Balloons
- ❖ Scissors



How to:

1. Use the funnel (see IDEA below) to fill the balloon with birdseed (this can be a slow process).
2. Cut the neck off the balloon and place a second balloon over the hole, completely covering the ball so that no birdseed can come out (add a second balloon base if you want the bean bag to be stronger).
3. Cut the neck off another balloon, open it up and place it over the ball; repeat the process, adding several layers of balloons (try to ensure that the original birdseed hole is always covered by several layers of balloon).
4. Cut holes in successive layers of balloons to create coloured patterns.

IDEA: To make a funnel, cut a 500-600 ml plastic bottle in half. Cover the cut end with tape. The neck end of the bottle acts as a funnel.





Rocket launcher

You will need:

- ❖ 1 metre (3 feet) length of wood plank
- ❖ Halved section of a round wood post the same width as wood plank

How to:

1. Position the halved wood post section a third of the way down the plank with the flat side of the post against the plank.
2. Secure the plank to the round post section with 2.25 cm (1 inch) nails or large screws, making sure the nails and screws run from the plank through to the post section. Check for any sharp ends and round off or hammer back.
3. The rocket launcher is now ready to be used on any firm surface.
4. Place the launcher with plank up, post section down. Place a bean bag or soft toy at one end. Stomp on the other end and watch the bean bag fly up.
5. To help keep items on the launch-pad, attach an ice-cream container lid to the launch end.





Walking stilts

You can use tin cans or blocks of wood to make stilts. Wood block stilts will carry heavier weight (e.g. grown ups).

Tin can stilts

You will need:

- ❖ Two strong tin cans (preferably juice, soup, or milk cans so you don't have to remove the lid — this will keep the can strong)
- ❖ Rope or cord, about 2 metres (6 feet) for each can
- ❖ Toilet paper roll or small sections of garden hose pipe (or something similar)
- ❖ A triangle-head can opener

How to:

1. Pierce the can making a hole on each side near the top (rather than on the top itself).
2. Drain out the liquid and rinse inside with soapy water.
3. Thread rope through the holes and the toilet paper roll then join rope ends together.
4. Children hold onto the ropes using the toilet paper roll to cushion the rope as they walk on the cans.
5. Decorate the cans with strips of coloured electrical tape, stickers, or paint.

Wood block stilts

You will need:

- ❖ Two blocks of wood about 12-15 cm high (5-6 inches) and wide enough for the stilt walker's foot
- ❖ Rope or cord, about 2-3 metres (4-6 feet) for each block (depending on the stilt walker's height)
- ❖ Toilet paper roll or small sections of garden hose pipe (or something similar)
- ❖ Drill



How to:

1. Drill a hole from one side of the block to the other.
2. Thread rope through the holes and the toilet paper roll then join rope ends together.
3. Stilt walker holds onto the ropes using the toilet paper roll to cushion the rope as he walks on the blocks.
4. Decorate the blocks with paint.





Bottle scoop

You will need:

- ❖ An used plastic bottle, well washed (plastic milk bottles with handles are good)

How to:

1. Using a pair of scissors, cut off the bottom of the bottle.
2. Make an opening slanting back toward the handle or top.
3. Cover the cut edges with duct tape so the edges are not sharp.





Ribbons

Simple

You will need:



- ❖ 1-3 metres (3-9 feet) of ribbon or surveyor's tape (i.e. depending on the size of the child).
- ❖ A canning ring, a hair elastic, or a lid from a yogurt container with the middle cut out.

How to:

1. Tie the ribbon to the canning ring, hair elastic, or lid.

Harder to make



You will need:

- ❖ 20-30 cm (9-14 inch) length of 15 mm ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch) wooden dowel rod
- ❖ 1-3 metres (3-9 feet) of ribbon (i.e. depending on the size of the child)
- ❖ 1 eye bolt
- ❖ Fishing line snap swivel (Note: number 12 size works well)
- ❖ Drill

How to:

1. Drill a hole down into the end of the dowel.
2. Screw the eye bolt into the drilled hole.
3. Attach the snap swivel to the eye bolt.
4. Fold the ribbon in half and feed it through the end of the swivel.
5. Tie a knot in the ribbon to secure it to the swivel.



Gingerbread cookie people recipe

You will need:

- ❖ 125 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) margarine (no trans fats if possible)
- ❖ 180 ml ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) lightly packed brown sugar
- ❖ 15 ml (1 tbsp) blackstrap molasses
- ❖ 2 eggs
- ❖ 750 ml (3 cups) all-purpose flour*
- ❖ 15 ml (1 tsp) baking soda
- ❖ 5 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) salt
- ❖ 7.5 ml ($1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) ground ginger
- ❖ 10 ml (2 tsp) cinnamon
- ❖ 5 ml (1 tsp) allspice
- ❖ 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) milk
- ❖ Cooking spray



Makes about 24 cookies

* Use $\frac{1}{2}$ whole wheat flour

How to:

1. In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to cream margarine and sugar together. Blend in molasses until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in eggs, one at a time.
2. In another bowl, combine flour, baking soda, salt, and spices.
3. Gradually add dry ingredients to creamed sugar, alternating with milk (about 250 ml [1 cup] flour mixture and 15 ml [1 tbsp] milk). Mix until well combined and dough forms.
4. Cover and chill for 1 hour.
5. Preheat oven to 180 °C (350 °F). Spray cookie sheets with cooking spray.
6. Roll out dough on lightly floured surface to 1 cm ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) thickness. Use gingerbread people or cookie cutters to cut out cookies.
7. Decorate cookies with dried fruit such as currants or raisins.
8. Bake cookies for 8 to 10 minutes until golden brown.
9. Store in an airtight container or freeze the cookies.



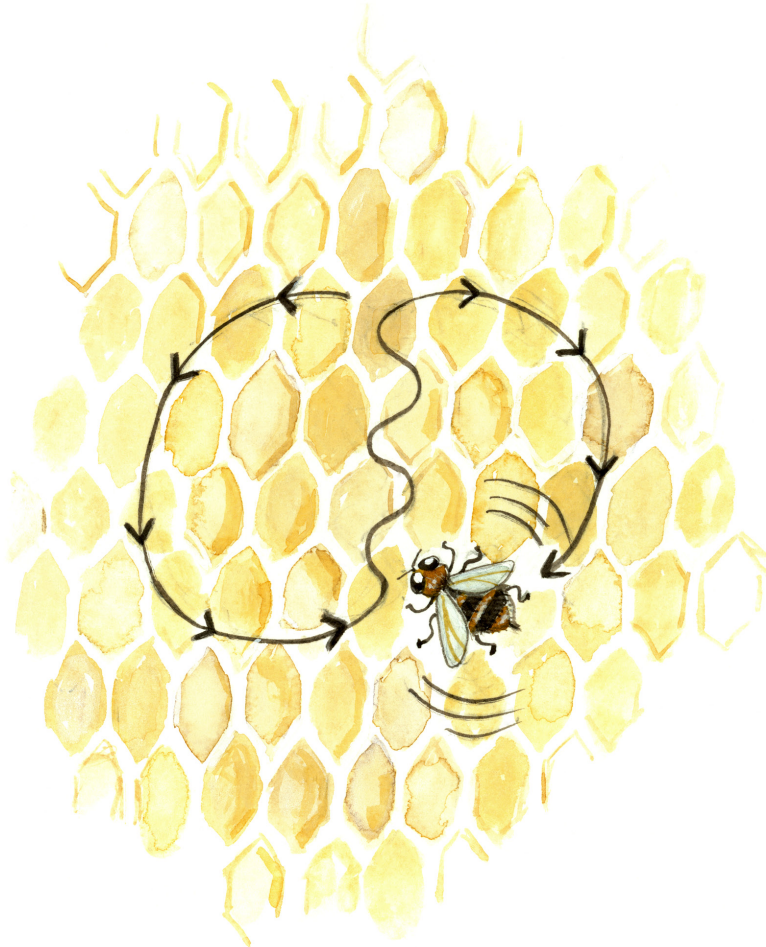
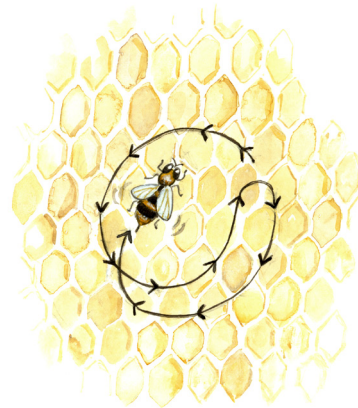
Dancing bee dip

You will need:

- ❖ 125 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) peanut butter or chickpea butter
- ❖ 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) honey
- ❖ Carrot or celery sticks, pear or apple slices

How to:

1. Mix peanut or chickpea butter with honey.
2. Use as a dip.





Paddle bat

You will need:

- ❖ Knee high stocking
- ❖ Masking or duct tape
- ❖ Coat hanger (metal)



How to:

1. Bend a coat hanger into a diamond or circular shape.
2. Squash the hanger hook closed a little.
3. Insert the hanger into the stocking.
4. Pull the stocking tight around the hanger.
5. Tape stocking onto the hanger just above the handle.
6. Rap tape around the bottom to create a handle.

Balloon cover

You will need:

- ❖ A balloon
- ❖ A knee high stocking



How to:

1. Place the balloon inside the stocking, with both openings at the same end.
2. Blow up and tie off the balloon inside the stocking.
3. Tie off the stocking and cut off any excess.



Oven-roasted potato wedges

You will need (serves 6-8 children):

- ❖ 4 large potatoes*
- ❖ 15 ml (1 tbsp) vegetable oil
- ❖ 10 ml (2 tsp) mixed herbs or 30 ml (2 tbsp) fresh herbs finely chopped
- ❖ Sealable plastic container

* Russet, Yukon Gold or sweet potatoes work well.

How to:

1. Preheat oven to 200 °C (400 °F).
2. Cut the potatoes into wedges.
3. Put oil into the plastic container with the herbs.
4. Add the potato wedges.
5. Close tightly and shake.
6. Put potatoes onto baking tray to go into the hot oven.
7. Bake for 15 minutes, turn over and bake another 15 minutes until brown and crisp on the outside.



Pizza

You will need (serves 6-8 children):

- ❖ A pie tin per child
- ❖ A small round of pizza or bread dough per child (approximately 125 ml [$\frac{1}{2}$ cup])
- ❖ One plate per child with 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) mozzarella cheese and toppings (see below) in separate piles
- ❖ A cup or small bowl per child with tomato sauce (60 ml [$\frac{1}{4}$ cup]) and a pastry brush to paint the pizza (or use fingers)

How to:

1. Demonstrate each step below, so your child will make their own pizza:
 - flatten the dough round
 - put it in the pie pan
 - paint the dough with sauce
 - arrange the toppings (see below) on the pizza
 - sprinkle it with cheese
2. Bake pizza in very hot oven (as close to 220 °C [425 °F] as possible); usually 10-15 minutes is sufficient.
3. Eat pizza when cool enough to be safe.

Tomato sauce (makes 500 ml [2 cups])

- ❖ 250 ml (1 cup) tomato paste
- ❖ 250 ml (1 cup) tomato sauce
- ❖ 5 ml (1 tsp) oregano or thyme
- ❖ 5 ml (1 tsp) salt
- ❖ 5 ml (1 tsp) chili powder
- ❖ Dash ground cumin



Different pizza toppings

Pineapple Medley

- ❖ 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) total of mushrooms, bell peppers and onion
- ❖ 1 slice ham
- ❖ Pineapple pieces



Ham and Zucchini

- ❖ 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) chopped ham
- ❖ 8 thin slices zucchini, diced

Chicken and Corn

- ❖ 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) cooked chicken breast, chopped
- ❖ 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) canned corn, drained

Mexican pizza

- ❖ 60 ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) refried beans mixed with 5-10 ml (1-2 tsp) taco seasoning mix
- ❖ $\frac{1}{4}$ avocado, diced
- ❖ 6 cherry tomatoes - cut in halves
- ❖ Use cheddar cheese in place of mozzarella

Pesto pizza

- ❖ Substitute pesto for tomato sauce



Berry smoothies for two

You will need:

- ❖ 1 banana - sliced
- ❖ 250 ml (1 cup) of yogurt
- ❖ 250 ml (1 cup) of berries
- ❖ Dash of cinnamon

How to:

1. Put the ingredients into a bowl and whip by hand, or put them into a blender and puree.
2. Pour into two glasses... sprinkle a few berries on top.

Very-berry-stacks

You will need:

- ❖ 125 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of yogurt
- ❖ 125 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of berries (all the same kind... or different types)

How to:

1. In a tall, narrow glass (plastic for younger children), have the child place a layer of berries as thick as his/her thumb, then a layer of yogurt, then another layer of berries, and one more of yogurt, and one more of berries, until the berries and yogurt are stacked to the top. Make the last layer yogurt and have the child decorate the top with the first letter of the person it's for, written in berries.



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Background information

Introduction

In the following sections you will find background information on the areas of development that are the focus of this resource. This information reflects a distillation of key findings from current research; from position statements of major professional organizations (The Canadian Council on Learning; The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute; The International Reading Association; The American Medical Association, amongst others); and from exemplary professional practice. It offers both rationale and research support for the approaches and emphases advocated throughout this book.

Topics include:

- ❖ the contribution of physical activity in childhood to life-long health and wellness
- ❖ bone development
- ❖ the contribution of talk, pretend play, and shared reading to language, and
- ❖ literacy development.

The intention is to provide busy early years professionals with ready access to the conceptual foundations and relevant research evidence in each of these areas.

Separate sections define, describe, and illustrate each of the fundamental movement skills (roll, kick, catch, throw, strike, bounce, run, jump, gallop, skip, and hop), and offer tips for how we can support children's mastery of these skills. Suggestions for choosing books with high appeal for preschoolers, for effectively engaging with books with young children, and for helping them elaborate, deepen, and sustain their pretend play are outlined. These pages are designed to make explicit the research behind the "why" and the "what," and offer some helpful guidance for the "how."





Physical activity



Regular physical activity is a key aspect of a healthy lifestyle. Although there are no universally accepted physical activity guidelines for preschool-aged children, it is generally agreed that during the preschool years, children should be encouraged to engage in physical activity for health, social, and psychological reasons (American Medical Association, 1999; Corbin, Pangrazi, & Welk, 1994; National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2002; Shilton & Naughton, 2001). There is emerging consensus that preschool-aged children should **accumulate several hours of structured and unstructured physical activity per day** (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2002), and **screen time should be limited to less than two hours per day** (American

Academy of Pediatrics, 2006). In addition, it is well documented that the preschool years are an important time for children to **develop fundamental movement skills** (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006; National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2002) as a foundation for movement later in life.

While physical activity data for very young children are not systematically collected, we know that only 21% of Canadian youth (12 - 19 years) are "accumulating enough daily activity to meet the international guidelines for optimal growth and development" (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2005). Although the relationship between physical activities during childhood and longer-term adult health outcomes remains unclear, there is evidence that childhood inactivity is linked to sedentary living among adults (Corbin & Pangrazi, 1998).



Recent evidence suggests that preschool-aged children are sedentary for large amounts of their day. In Scotland, Reilly and colleagues (2004) measured 150 children (3 and 5 years of age) over a 10-hour day. They found that children were inactive for three quarters of that time; less than 4% of activity was moderate or vigorous activity (that is, activity that is more vigorous than walking). In Canada, Temple and colleagues (2007) also found low levels of physical activity among preschoolers. On average, children in family child care spent less than 14 minutes moderately or vigorously active during a 7-hour day.



Importance of the setting

Temple and colleagues (2007) found children who received positive encouragement were more active. Care providers were clearly making a difference! This finding is supported by a study in the United States that showed very different levels of physical activity across nine preschools (Pate, Pfeiffer, Trost, Ziegler, & Dowda, 2004). Levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity ranged from 4-10 minutes per hour; in some centres children were two times more active than in others. The centre itself was a significant influence on children's opportunities to be active. Pate and colleagues concluded that **"preschool policies and practices have an important influence on the overall physical activity levels of children"** (p.1258). The early learning environment has an important role in providing both the space and time for children to be active.



Importance of Physical Activity for Young Children

Regular participation in physical activity has been well established as an integral part of a healthy lifestyle in adults (Pate, Pratt, & Blair, 1995). It has been recognized that most diseases affected by physical activity (such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, obesity, and osteoporosis) are a result of life-long processes, usually surfacing clinically in the older adult years (Corbin et al., 1994; National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2000). Increasingly, clinical markers of diseases (like cholesterol in the blood vessels) associated with inactivity have been observed in children (Boreham, Twisk, Savage, Cran, & Strain, 1997; National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2000). The result of these findings is a heightened awareness and emphasis on promoting physical activity habits in children as the starting point of a physically active lifestyle that will continue through adulthood (Corbin et al., 1994).



Benefits of physical activity for children

Regular physical activity has beneficial effects on the following aspects of health:

- ❖ Muscular strength
- ❖ Cardio-respiratory (aerobic) fitness
- ❖ Bone mass (through weight-bearing physical activities)
- ❖ Body weight
- ❖ Anxiety and stress, and
- ❖ Self-esteem

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005)

Moderate - vigorous physical activity and the HOP resource for early learning practitioners



Toddlers' and preschoolers' normal tendency is to alternate short bursts of activity with rest and recovery. Consequently, physical activity can occur for several seconds to several minutes at a time. The idea with young children is to help them engage in enough short bursts of physical activity using large muscle groups (legs, trunk, shoulder, and upper arm muscles), so that, in total, they are active for several hours every day (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2002).

Many activities in the HOP Early Learning Practitioners Resource encourage use of large muscle groups during play. For example: Hippiity Hopscotch, Match It, Pizza Pizzazz, Leap Frog, Orienteering, Snow Play, Tag, Place and Space, and Obstacle Course.

For young children, participating in short bursts of these types of activities can enhance overall body strength, bone density, and function of the cardiovascular system (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2002).





Building strong bones

Approximately 25% of Canadian women and 12.5% of Canadian men over 50 years of age have osteoporosis (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005). Osteoporosis, or "porous bones," is a disease that causes weak bones through loss of bone mass and structure (Fishburne, McKay, & Berg, 2005). Severely weak bones tend to fracture easily and fractures related to osteoporosis are a serious problem among older Canadians; these fractures can cause death, disability, and a loss of independence (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005).

Risk factors for osteoporosis include age, a family history of osteoporosis, early menopause (before age 45), cigarette smoking, slender or small bones, low calcium diet, low levels of physical activity, excessive alcohol intake, and vitamin D deficiency (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005). Some of these risk factors can't be changed, like family history; however there are several positive steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of osteoporosis and related fractures. The goal is to maximize bone strength and reduce the risk of falling. Physical activity can increase bone mass and strength (American College of Sports Medicine, 2004, p.1986) and reduce the risk of falling through improvement in our balance and coordination (Osteoporosis Canada, 2007).



Bone is living tissue

Fishburne and colleagues (2005) suggest that we "Think of the skeleton as a bone bank." Deposits to the bone bank are made through having a healthy diet and being physically active. Just as a muscle gets stronger and bigger the more you use it, a bone becomes stronger and denser when you place demands on it.

If bones are not called upon to work, they do not receive any messages that they need to be strong (National Osteoporosis Foundation, 2007). "Bone adapts to increased mechanical loading by ... remodeling to increase strength" (Janz et al.,

2004, p.1124). That is why the bones in the racquet arm of a tennis player are stronger than the bones in their other arm, and why astronauts lose bone density in space - because their bones are not called upon to work against gravity.



Evidence of bone building in 3 - 5 year olds

Evidence indicates that physical activity has a positive effect on preschool children's bone health (Janz, Burns, & Levy, et al., 2004; Specker & Binkley, 2003). Kathleen Janz and colleagues investigated the relationship between physical activity and bone strength among 467 five-year-old children. These researchers found that physically active boys and girls had greater bone strength than less active children.

There is also evidence that improvements in bone strength gained in childhood from participation in physical activity are maintained into adulthood (American College of Sports Medicine, 2004).

A study of the effect of calcium and physical activity on preschoolers' bones

The impact of calcium supplementation and physical activity on bone development was examined in 178 three to five-year-old children (Specker & Binkley, 2003). The children were divided into two activity groups:

- ❖ a gross motor activity group, and
- ❖ a fine motor activity group.

The activity groups met at participating day care centres for 30 minutes, five days per week for 12 months. Half the children in each group received a calcium supplement at the beginning and end of their activity session. The gross motor group participated in large muscle activities designed to keep the children moving while "loading" their bones. The fine motor activity group participated in non-bone-loading activities like arts and crafts.

At the end of 12 months, the children participating in the gross motor activity group had greater leg bone strength compared to the fine motor activity group. In addition, children in the gross motor activity group who received calcium supplementation had the greatest gains in bone strength.

At the end of two years (the children were now six years old), the benefits of calcium supplementation were no longer evident. However, the children in the gross motor activity group still had significantly stronger leg and arm bones and greater overall bone mineral content than the fine motor group. Although the activity program had finished, Specker and Binkley attributed these differences to continued higher levels of physical activity among the gross motor activity group.

This study highlights what Fishburne and colleagues note: "Many factors contribute to the development of a healthy skeleton, but physical activity is the key" (2005, p.ix).



Strong bones begin in childhood

Good bone health requires adequate intakes of calcium and vitamin D and participation in weight bearing physical activity (Greer & Krebs, 2006).



Calcium: Children aged four to eight years need 800mg of calcium per day. Sources of calcium include dairy food, e.g. whole milk, 2% milk, yogurt, frozen yogurt, cheese. Sources of calcium also include non-dairy foods such as broccoli, tofu, chickpeas, lentils, split peas, salmon, and sardines (and other fish with bones); and foods fortified with calcium, such as juices and cereals (Greer & Krebs, 2006).

Every cell in the body needs calcium, and bones store calcium for use in the blood and cells. If your body doesn't get enough calcium, it takes it from your bones, and that can make your bones weak (The National Bone Health Campaign, 2006). Research shows that teenage girls with forearm fractures have lower bone density than same age girls without forearm fractures; and these girls with fractures are more likely to have low calcium intake (Goulding et al., 1998).

Vitamin D: Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. The body produces Vitamin D when the sun's ultraviolet rays strike the skin. Fifteen minutes of sunshine gives you plenty of vitamin D. Other sources of Vitamin D are milk, tuna, fortified rice or soy beverage, and eggs (Ministry of Health, 2007).

Physical Activity: Children need to participate in activities that "load" the bones every day. Working against gravity, such as jumping, crab walking, skipping, and dancing, "load" the bones.

Janz and colleagues (2004) reported that bone "adapts to increased loading during daily activity in young prepubertal children and that meaningful increases in bone strength are possible without targeted bone loading activities, elite sport performance, or extraordinary amounts of physical activity" (p.1129). We can take great heart from this. We don't need specialist "bone programs." We just need to ensure the children are physically active every day. Loading bones by running and jumping, skipping and dancing, walking like a bear, or crawling through a tunnel are fun ways to build healthy bones.



Activity ideas to support healthy bone development and awareness

- ❖ All of the physical activities in this resource will help build strong bones and muscles. Some of the activities are more vigorous and will "load the bones" particularly well, these include:



- Jumping, hopping, skipping, (e.g. Let's Fly, Leap Frog, Rainbow Scatter); running (e.g. Pizza Pizzazz, Match It); dance (e.g. Freeze Dance, Dancing Bees).
- Supporting body weight (e.g. Obstacle Course, Follow the Trail, Loop the Hoop, Creative Balances).
- ❖ With the children, create a group collage or mural showing how to build strong bones (e.g. for vitamin D: sunlight, salmon, milk, shrimp; for calcium: yogurt, milk, cheese, broccoli; for bone loading activities: crab/bear walk, jumping, hopping). Display the collage where the children can talk about it with their parents.
- ❖ Make yogurt popsicles. Pour fat-free or low-fat drinkable yogurt (or regular yogurt) into a paper cup. Add a popsicle stick and freeze.
- ❖ Make a pizza (see Pizza Pizzazz) or a berry smoothie (see Tread Lightly. Look Closely).





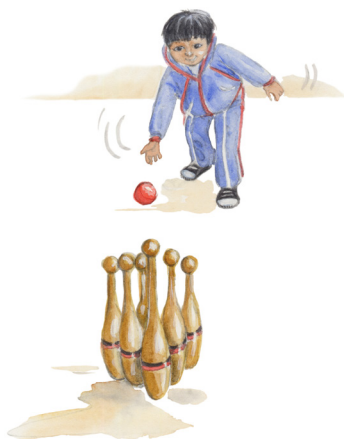
Fundamental movement skills

Fundamental movement skills are gross movement abilities that allow children to move in different ways, balance and stabilize themselves, and use objects in their environment. These skills, such as running, jumping, catching, and throwing are the building blocks of more complex movements used in recreation and everyday life. Fundamental movement skills can be categorized into **stabilizing skills**, **locomotor skills**, or **manipulative skills**.



Stabilizing skills involve maintaining balance against gravity, such as holding a front support position, or balancing on one foot.

Locomotor skills are the skills that allow children to move from one place to another in a variety of ways, such as galloping, walking, crawling, bear walking, or hopping.



Manipulative skills, sometimes called eye-hand and eye-foot coordination skills, involve gross motor manipulation of objects such as tapping a balloon with a bat, kicking a ball, or throwing a bean bag.



As children enter the toddler and preschool years they are actively exploring and experimenting with the movement capabilities of their bodies. It is a time for them to discover and begin to master these manipulative, stabilizing, and locomotor skills. The activities in this resource will help children develop their fundamental movement skills; the type of skill is listed in the activity at the top of each page.

Practice and guidance

Children need many opportunities to practice and some guidance if their skills are to develop to full maturity. A misconception about the development of fundamental movement skills is that these skills will develop optimally as the child matures (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006). This is not quite the case. If movement skills developed optimally based on maturation alone, all teens and adults would have fully developed skills. However, we know that some adults' skills are not fully developed. For example, there are many adults who do not throw well. The formula for mastering fundamental movement skills is time and opportunities to practice with a dash of guidance.



Children's visual perception and movement

Preschool children's visual perception develops rapidly during the preschool years. Their ability to see detail, their ability to distinguish objects from the object's surroundings, their ability to judge distance (depth perception), and their ability to coordinate their body and vision (eye-hand and eye-foot coordination), develop rapidly during the preschool years (Payne & Issacs, 2005).

Children need opportunities to develop their visual perception. There are things we can do to help children succeed as they endeavour to master new manipulative skills. It is helpful to:

- ❖ Use **colours that contrast** with the surroundings.
- ❖ **Slow objects down.** For example, using scarves for catching, balloons for tapping and hitting.
- ❖ Make the **path** of an object more **predictable**. For example, rolling a ball to the child, hitting off a cone (or tee), using a stationary ball to kick.
- ❖ For catching, use **objects that are soft**. For example, a beach ball, scarf, paper ball, yarn ball, or sponge ball.



“Show and tell” helps children learn movement skills

When children are learning a skill they need a general idea of the skill and how it is put together. They will get much of this information from watching others (e.g. you, an older sibling, and parents), and they can also be helped by providing words that go along with the skill. Without these knowledge structures (images and words), children cannot translate information about what to do into a plan of action (Rink, 2002). Words will help them learn the skill as they solve cognitive problems, such as “How do I make myself stiff like a pencil?”; “How can I get down low?”

The tips and rhymes on the next few pages can help give children the general idea of the skill. You could make up your own rhyme about the skill.

Reach for the sky



Specific movement skills

This section illustrates several fundamental movement skills. Each illustration shows a typical pattern for the skill. As well, the key parts of the pattern are listed, and there are some tips to help you introduce these skills.

ROLL



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand front on, arm back • Long step with foot opposite “ball hand” • Bend knees and hips to release the ball close to the ground 	<p>Encourage the children to take a big step, so they get long and low.</p>



KICK



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the ball • Move quickly toward the ball • Non kicking foot is beside or slightly behind ball • Kick with fore-foot or toe 	<p>Encourage the children to watch the ball.</p>

CATCH



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arms in front with elbows slightly bent • Watch the ball • Reach toward ball • Catch in hands 	<p>Encourage the children to have their arms in front and watch the ball.</p> <p>Or use a rhyme:</p> <p>Arms out front, Fingers wide, Watch the ball land Safely inside</p>



THROW



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand side on • Take your arm down and back • Step a big step forward with opposite foot • Look where you're throwing and bring arm forward • Let go of the ball when you see your fingers coming through 	<p>Use a rhyme:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Stand side-on, make a star Point your finger, throw it far</p>

BOUNCE



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the ball (initially) • Push the ball with fingers (not a slap) • Keep the ball in front of (or to the outside of) the body, about hip height <p><i>Note: Start by dropping and catching the ball with two hands.</i></p>	<p>Keep the ball in front.</p>



ONE-HANDED STRIKE



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curl fingers around bat • Hold firmly but not too tight • Watch the ball or balloon 	<p>Encourage the children to hold the bat in one hand and watch the balloon.</p>

TWO-HANDED SIDE-ARM STRIKE



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the bat with two hands, dominant hand above non-dominant hand • Non-dominant side of body faces the tee • Watch the ball • Take a little step and swing the bat level to hit the ball. (The body turns as the weight moves to the front foot.) 	<p>Encourage the children to watch the ball on the tee.</p>



RUN



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look forward • Body leans slightly forward • Arms and legs move in opposition • Arms bent at the elbow • Land on front part of the foot 	<p>Encourage the children to look ahead.</p>

HORIZONTAL JUMP



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arms back, bent knees • Arms swing up and forward • Take off and land on both feet simultaneously • Bend knees to absorb force 	<p>Encourage the children to start with their arms back and their knees bent.</p> <p>Or use a rhyme:</p> <p>Swing your arms as you fly up high, bend your knees to softly return from the sky</p>



GALLOP



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step forward with one leg, then step forward with back leg • Both feet come off the ground • Arms bent and lifted to waist height 	<p>Encourage the children to keep the same foot in front.</p>

SKIP



Parts of the skill	Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rhythmical repetition of the step-hop on alternate feet • Foot of nonsupport leg is carried near surface during hop • Arms alternately moving in opposition to legs at about waist level 	<p>Encourage the children to step-hop, step-hop.</p>



HOP



Parts of the skill

- Foot of non-support leg carried behind
- Non-support leg swings back and forth for momentum
- Arms bent and swing forward on each hop

Tips

Encourage the children to hop on the **same foot** for several hops in a row.



Leaping into Literacy: Foundations



Taking Time for Talk

One of the simplest, most natural, and most effective ways of building children's language competence is to spend time talking with them. However, years of research reveals wide variations in the amount, nature, and quality of talk, and the responsiveness of adults that children experience, both at home and in childcare settings (Gregory, Arju, Jessel, Kenner, & Ruby, 2007; Heath, 1983; Snow & Dickinson, 1990; Tizard & Hughes, 1984). These differences have major consequences for the ease with which children move into literacy. There is compelling evidence that:

- ❖ the "discourse abilities developed in the preschool period" provide important support for school success (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp, & Wolf, 2004, p.144);
- ❖ children who hear more words, know more words (Hart, 2004; Hart & Risley, 1995; Tan, 2005);
- ❖ children who participate in extended talk with adults, and who are encouraged to expand and elaborate, understand and use more complex and fluent language than those who don't receive the same input and support (Levy, 2003; Snow & Dickinson, 1990);
- ❖ children who have access to literacy models and props (writing materials, books, computers, magnetic alphabet letters, coloured markers, menus, lists, etc.) and who incorporate them into their play and activities, gain important insights into the functions of written language (Shipley, 1993); and
- ❖ the ability to informatively describe a picture, or retell an event or story, strongly predicts later success with reading and writing (Griffin, Hempell, Camp, & Wolf, 2004).



The adults in a child's life — parents, family members, care-providers, teachers - play pivotal roles in supporting their language development. The environments and opportunities we create for our children to experience, explore, experiment with, and express themselves through talk, sign, and written language contribute in powerful ways to their competence, confidence and success as learners. It's vital, therefore, as parents and early years professionals, that we understand the many ways we can support children's acquisition of language and literacy.

The point is the play

However, our efforts need to be a natural part of ongoing interactions, and not more formal instructional episodes. As Palkhivala (2007) stresses, "adults should be non-controlling, sensitive, and responsive to the children" (p.2). Similarly, while preschool teachers are acknowledged as "an important, and largely under-utilized, resource in promoting literacy by supporting rich language and emergent literacy skills," we need to be alert to the caution that "Early childhood educators should not try to replicate the formal reading instruction provided in schools" (*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, 2001, p.10).



Throughout this manual we have taken this caution to heart; the books, poems, vocabulary and recording and writing experiences all blend in with, and naturally extend, the activities. The point is the activity, the play, the game — none of these are meant to become "lessons." Nevertheless, when thoughtfully and naturally "wrapped in talk" they can powerfully enhance the language experiences we provide for our children. And those experiences add up to a solid foundation for literacy.

Reading really matters

Reading to children — and talking with them about what's been read — is the single most valuable thing we can do to contribute to their literacy learning.

(Early Childhood Knowledge Centre, 2006)



Why does reading matter?

Reading with children helps build a positive connection with books. Attitude and motivation are crucial factors in reading success.

"The values, attitudes, and expectations held by parents and other caregivers with respect to literacy are likely to have a lasting effect on a child's attitude about learning to read. The socio-emotional context of early literacy experiences relates directly to children's motivation to read later on" (*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, 1998, p.138). As we model and share our own enjoyment of books, we send a powerful message to children that there are many rewards in reading. What we enjoy, we seek out. What we don't, we avoid.



by Simi

Reading together gives rich experience with language rhythms, rhymes, sounds and sound patterns. This builds phonemic awareness (the ability to distinguish, manipulate, and blend the sounds of oral speech).

Phonemic awareness is "the best single predictor of successful reading acquisition" (IRA, 1998). High levels of phonemic awareness among very young children are directly related to "experiences that are filled with interactions with print (such as being read to at home, playing letter games and language play, and having early writing experiences)" (IRA, 1998). Research has clearly demonstrated the value of rhymes, riddles, songs, poems, guessing games, and read-aloud books that manipulate sounds, for playfully developing young children's sensitivity to the sound structures and patterns of the language. This awareness is crucial for learning to read (Yopp & Yopp, 2000).

Many of the poems and books featured in this resource have been selected specifically to draw children's attention to language sounds and to the ways those sounds are recorded in print. As you share them with the children, capitalize on opportunities to emphasize and point out the rhymes, rhythms, and repetitions: vocally stress beginning and ending sounds and, where appropriate, point out the letters that represent them. Always invite the children to chime in and chant along.



Reading with children expands their vocabularies

Books expose them to new words used in meaningful situations that support interpretation (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000). Books introduce words and expressions that might not otherwise come up in everyday conversation (“nevertheless”; “Ladybugs strut and toads sashay”), and provide opportunities to hear those words used with expression, in context.

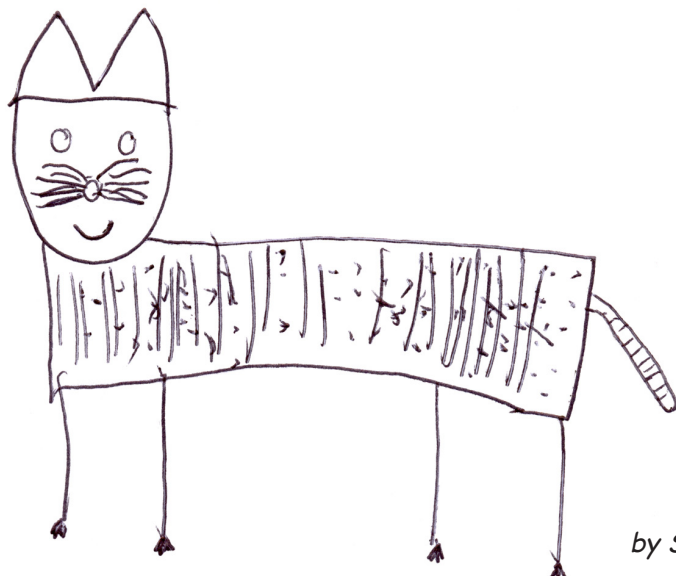
In this resource, the activities, and poems and books selected to support the activities, offer children many opportunities to hear and act out their understanding of words that describe movement, direction, location, quantity, colour, shape, size, and speed. The meanings of these words are made evident through the activities and are learned naturally in the context of the play.



Sharing books with children builds familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading, the “language of books” (e.g. “said he, gloweringly”) and the organizational structures of texts (the differences between a poem, a story, a recipe, a map, a dictionary, etc.).

By thoughtfully engaging children with a wide range of different types of books, we expose them to the many different ways that books can be used to meet particular needs, fuel their interests, and fire their imaginations.

To help familiarize children with the varied functions of books, point out the type of book being presented. For example, this resource features, amongst others, informational books (*Pop! A Book About Bubbles; Red-Eyed Tree Frog*), recipe books (*Salad People and More Real Recipes*), alphabet and counting books (*The Butterfly Alphabet; One is a Snail, Ten is a Crab*), cumulative pattern books (*One Bright Monday Morning*), books that celebrate rhythm (*Nicholas Cricket*), and books that tell wonderful stories about interesting characters (*Dumpy La Rue*).



by Simi



Sharing books in ways that invite and engage

"... the way books are shared with children matters."

(McGee & Schickedanz, 2007, p.742)

We all know that the way something is done can matter every bit as much as what is done. When reading with young children, the "how" makes all the difference. These experiences need to be positive encounters, with children actively participating, responding, and joining in.



When reading books with children it makes a huge difference to the quality of the experience if:

- ❖ We take some time to **look at the pictures together** before we read
- ❖ We **talk about things in the illustrations**: "Oh, oh!... can you see where the fox is hiding?" "What's she got in her wagon?" "Look at all these bright colours... it makes the page look happy."
- ❖ We sometimes **follow along with our finger** as we read, **tracking from left to right**, and pointing to particular words and letters ("Look, this word starts with the same letter as your name!").
- ❖ We invite children to **chime in and chant along** — with repeated phrases and known words ("bumpety, bumpety, bump!").



- ❖ We invite and **respond to children's comments** and questions throughout the reading. Open-ended questions about the events and motivations in the story ("Why did she hide?"; "Do you think he was scared?") help children to think more deeply and to begin to understand causes and consequences.
- ❖ We share our own reactions and invite children to do the same ("I love the expression on the Grandpa's face... that was my very favourite part... what part did you like the best?").
- ❖ We invite children to **join in retelling the story**, using the illustrations as scaffolds and prompts.
- ❖ We encourage children to **dramatize parts of the story** — to take on the roles and actions of the characters. Making story-related props available (for example, three bowls - one big, one middle-sized, and one tiny one — with three spoons to match) can generate pretend play and story re-enactments.
- ❖ We invite children to **choose the books** and don't hesitate to read favourites again, and again, and again... these re-readings provide invaluable opportunities for children to "check out" and consolidate what they're beginning to understand about how print works.



"Research has demonstrated that the most effective read-alouds are those in which children are actively involved asking and answering questions and making predictions rather than passively listening" (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007, p.742).

Decades of research have made it clear that it is the nature and quality of the interactions around books that make the difference, not simply access to the books themselves. Talking with children before, during and after reading provides them with the insights, attitudes, and understandings about print that are so important for their acquisition of literacy.

"Adults who live and interact regularly with children can profoundly influence the quality and quantity of their literacy experiences" (*Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, 1998, p.138).



But don't just read books — read everything!

Road signs; store names; notices; posters; food labels; boxes; envelopes; shopping lists; recipe books; ads; birthday cards; t-shirts; fridge magnets; ferry schedules; bills; etc., etc., etc.... all of this "environmental print" meaningfully exposes children to the functions and purposes of written language.



Consciously model the many ways you use writing

By watching adults engage in and model writing, children come to understand the many ways writing can be useful (reminder notes, shopping lists), and can bring enjoyment (birthday cards, letters from friends). By including children in activities that involve writing ("I need to make a big sign for our garage sale - can you help me find the red marker?"), by encouraging them to write their own words down, and by helping them write, we can meaningfully show children how written language works. "Adult-child joint writing activities at home... and in preschool... are good predictors of early literacy skill and literacy achievements in school" (Aram, 2005, p.283).





Choosing books that appeal and engage

There are literally thousands of books created especially for young children and many of these are treasures to be savoured many times over. Finding books that strike chords and connect with children isn't difficult — but the right books can make first steps to literacy so much easier. Local libraries are an unbeatable resource. Lots of books, readily available, is an invitation rarely resisted. Choose books that:

- ❖ The children like.
- ❖ You like.
- ❖ Are relatively short and can be enjoyed in a few minutes.
- ❖ Present recognizable situations and characters the child can identify with and relate to.
- ❖ Have clear predictable plots.
- ❖ Have attractive illustrations that support and “explain” the text; and have pictures of objects the child can identify.
- ❖ Use language that builds or accumulates or works according to a pattern the child can pick up and predict.
- ❖ Use rhythm, rhyme, and repeated phrases that invite chiming along.

An excerpt from JAMBERRY

One berry

Two berry

Pick me a blueberry...

Three berry

Four berry

Hayberry

Strawberry

- Bruce Degan



- ❖ Use language that has been carefully crafted to engage the ear and the imagination, e.g. “...and the little red hen keeps following us, following us around” (from *Bumpety Bump!* by Pat Hutchins).
- ❖ Have just a few words or sentences on each page.
- ❖ Present ideas with humour and consideration for the child's perspective.
- ❖ Offer reassurance that things will work out right in the end, and that don't undermine children's sense of security.
- ❖ Don't patronize, preach, or moralize in overt or didactic ways.



The value of pretend play

Play is the natural activity of childhood, and has immense value in its own right. Unfortunately, all too often play is under-appreciated, and its role in learning unrecognized and under-valued. This is cause for real concern. One consequence is that time and occasion for play appears to be getting squeezed out of many children's lives. **Decades of research has made it clear that play is one of the most efficient and powerful means for nourishing every aspect of children's development. Rich play experience forms the foundation for the intellectual, social, physical, and emotional skills necessary for success in school and in life.** Time and opportunity for play need to be fiercely protected. Making it possible for children to engage in long stretches of uninterrupted play — with the adults who care for them; with toys; with other children — is one of the very best ways we can support their growth and learning.

Developmental psychologist Dorothy Singer, who has spent a lifetime researching the contribution of *pretend* play to learning, says children need time *every single day* to engage in open-ended, imaginative play. Drawing a parallel with the recommended daily nutritional requirements, she suggests we think of play in a similar way: as a daily *requirement* for healthy development.



Pretend play (where children assume roles and act "as if" objects are other than they really are) and socio-dramatic play (where children join together to create and act out imagined roles and plots) provide powerfully engaging stimulation and support for development. Such play stretches children's capacities. As Vygotsky (1976) put it,

"In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (p.552).



A bounty of benefits

The benefits of pretend play are many, and have been thoroughly documented by research. Children who engage in pretend play show enhanced:

- ❖ **Creativity, mental flexibility, divergent and abstract thinking** (Russ, 2003; Sylva, Bruner & Genova, 1976). In a longitudinal study, Russ (2003) found that the "quality of fantasy and imagination in early play predicted divergent thinking over time" (p.295).
- ❖ **Social skills and capacity for conflict resolution** (Colwell & Lindsey, 2005). In a carefully designed study of preschoolers' pretend and physical play, Colwell and Lindsey found "convincing evidence that pretend play has an important connection to children's social competence with peers" (p.506), and that "...preschool children who engage in more sophisticated pretend play experience social advantages, particularly in terms of being better liked by peers..." (p.499).
 - Pretend play provides many opportunities for children to practice turn-taking, persuasion, negotiation, compromising and collaborating.
- ❖ **Language development** (Roskos & Christie, 2000; Rubin & Howe, 1986; Sawyer, 1997). The communication demands are complex, challenging, and inherently rewarding. And precisely because it is play (it's not "real," after all), pretend play offers children a low-risk arena to try on roles and ways of speaking they would not otherwise experience. For example:
 - When pretending, children need to convey to others that what they're engaged in *is* play, or risk being misunderstood.
 - Socio-dramatic play requires that children communicate who they're pretending to be and the situation they've imagined ("Pretend I'm the good sister and you're the babysitter"); what the different "props" represent, and how they want others to respond ("That's the X-Ray and you have to lie on that, okay?").
 - As the play proceeds, they need to converse on many levels at once, shifting between being "actors," "directors," "narrators," and "audience" (Garvey, 1990). This "meta-play" has been found to be "as developmentally significant as the actual role-playing" but is "not fully understood and therefore ignored" (Moore, 2002, p.328).
- ❖ **Understanding of the functional uses of written language** by "creating bold and subtle opportunities for children to use language in literate ways and to use literacy as they see it practiced" (Roskos & Christie, 2001, p.60).





Symbolic Play

There are consistent findings in research about the close relationship between symbolic play and literacy development and good evidence that increasing opportunities for rich symbolic play can have a positive influence on literacy development.

Pretend play with peers engages children in the same kind of representational thinking needed in early literacy activities. Children develop complex narratives in their pretend play. They begin to link objects, actions, and language together in combinations and narrative sequences. They generate language suited to different perspectives and roles.

(Early Childhood Knowledge Centre, 2006)

Pretend Play and Literacy

Adults play a vital role in supporting children's creative and pretend play — first by providing and protecting the time for such play, and secondly as models who demonstrate how pretending is done ("Let's pretend we're salmon swimming way out into the ocean... watch out for seals!").

Adult provision of props (kitchen utensils, wands, wings), or the timely interjection of a character ("You be the passenger and I'll be the bus driver"), or a plot twist ("Pretend the dragon was asleep..."), can help children extend and sustain pretend play. Invitations to dramatize parts of shared stories deepen their understanding of character and motivation (McGee & Schickedanz, (2007, p.742). All of these activities draw on children's language and imaginative resources and help to build both.

There is solid research evidence that props can enrich pretend play. Play settings that contain "print" materials (lists, invitations, signs, books, menus, calendars, pencils, markers, telephone books, note pads bank checks, etc.), encourage playful explorations of their roles and functions - and much is learned about writing and reading in the process (Vukelich, 1994). Further, "the length and complexity of play episodes increased as a result of adding print to play settings" (Neuman & Roskos, 1992, p.82). "There is, in sum, a general consensus that the play environment can be engineered to enhance the literacy experiences of young children" (Roskos & Christie, 2001, p.76).

Similarly, the attitude, interest, participation, and intervention of adults can all make a significant contribution to the quality of children's pretend play experiences. Support, however, needs to be judiciously provided so that our help invites and encourages, and assists in sorting out problems



when necessary, but doesn't take over from the child. Children need to be able to play in their own ways, as they want to. As Singer (2007) cautions, "if you begin to take over, it begins to be your game and not the child's game." And when that happens, the power and potential of play to support learning is compromised.

As care-professionals and parents, the challenge is to find ways to:

- ❖ Provide sufficient time and opportunities for children to engage in, and sustain, pretend play.
- ❖ Support the content of pretend play with stories, experiences, talk.
- ❖ Stimulate the taking on of roles with props and costumes (hats, scarves, feather boas, flippers, etc.).
- ❖ Encourage children to engage with each other to enact imagined scenarios, roles, events, story themes, and plots.
- ❖ Assume roles ourselves to join in the play, to provide models of "how pretending is done", and to help refocus or rejuvenate the "action."
- ❖ Assist children, when necessary, to navigate the interpersonal conflicts that can arise in group play — but grant them as much room as possible to first solve the problems themselves.
- ❖ Help children deepen their engagement with imaginative play and develop their capacity to play in evolving and satisfying ways.
- ❖ Help others better understand and value the contribution pretend play makes to children's intellectual, social, physical and emotional development.





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Connecting with families

The pages in the following section have been designed as reproducible hand-outs for parents and families. Five topics are addressed, each on two pages, so they can be copied easily onto a single sheet (back-to-back) to be shared with parents.

The topics are:

1. The Benefits of Physical Activity
2. Building Strong Bones
3. Fundamental Movement Skills
4. Sharing Books in Ways that Invite and Engage, and
5. The Value of Pretend Play

Each handout provides a succinct summary of key research evidence in accessible language, along with specific suggestions for ways that parents could support their children's development in each of these areas.

These pages could be used as resources and discussion prompts in group meetings with parents and families; as featured take-home "flyers" on a parent resource bulletin board; or simply sent home with the children. The goal is to help families better understand the reasons for the activities in HOP, and to offer them concrete suggestions for supporting their children's activity, growth and development at home.



Physical Activity



Preschool aged children should **accumulate several hours of physical activity per day¹** and **screen time should be limited to less than two hours per day.²**

Recent information^{3,4,5} suggests that many preschool aged children are inactive.

Regular physical activity helps the following aspects of health:⁶

- ❖ Muscular strength
- ❖ Cardio-respiratory (aerobic) fitness
- ❖ Body weight
- ❖ Bone mass (through weight-bearing physical activities)
- ❖ Anxiety and stress, and
- ❖ Self-esteem.



Lots of short bursts of physical activity

Toddlers and preschoolers normally switch between short bursts of activity and rest. Physical activity can occur for several seconds to several minutes at a time. The idea with young children is to help them participate in lots of short bursts of physical activity throughout the day.

Some activities your child might enjoy

Make animal tracks or snow angels in the snow.



¹ National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (2002). *ACTIVE START: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years*. Reston, VA: Author.

² American Academy of Pediatrics. (2006). Policy statement: Active healthy living: Prevention of childhood obesity through increased physical activity. *Pediatrics*, 117, 1834-1842.

³ Pate, R. R., Pfeiffer, K. A., Trost, S. G., Ziegler, P., & Dowda, M. (2004). Physical activity among children attending preschools. *Pediatrics*, 114, 1258-1263.

More ideas



Invite your child to pretend to be a mail carrier or a delivery person. Have your child deliver packages to pretend stores along a route.

Play "freeze dance." Put on a CD, sing, or play a musical instrument and have your child march or move to the music. Stop the music occasionally and call "Freeze." Your child should try to stay perfectly still until you start the music again.



Dig in the garden or sand pit.

Blow bubbles and have your child chase and pop the bubbles before they hit the ground. Try bursting the bubbles with different body parts, e.g. elbow, knee, foot.



⁴ Reilly, J. J., Jackson, D. M., Montgomery, C., Kelly, L., A, Slater, C., Grant, S., et al. (2004). Total energy expenditure between physical activity levels and movement skills of children in the family child care environment. Paper presented at the 2007 CAHPERD CUPR Research Forum, Moncton, NB.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2005). Physical Activity for Everyone: Recommendations, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/recommendations/>

Building Strong Bones



Strong bones begin in childhood. To build healthy bones children need...

Calcium

+

Vitamin D

+

Physical Activity

Calcium: Children aged 4-8 years need 800mg of calcium per day. Sources of calcium include dairy food, e.g. whole milk, 2% milk, yogurt, frozen yogurt, cheese. Non-dairy foods such as broccoli, tofu, chickpeas, lentils, split peas, salmon and sardines (and other fish with bones); and foods fortified with calcium such as juices and cereals.¹

Vitamin D: Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. The body produces Vitamin D when the sun's ultraviolet rays strike the skin. Fifteen minutes of sunshine gives you plenty of vitamin D. Other sources of Vitamin D are milk, tuna, fortified rice or soy beverage, and eggs.²

Physical Activity: Children need to participate in activities that "load" the bones every day. They can do this by working against gravity as they jump, crab walk, skip, and dance.



"Many factors contribute to the development of a healthy skeleton, but physical activity is the key."³ p.ix

Activity ideas to support healthy bone development

Be physically active. Children's muscles and bones need to bear their weight. Vigorous physical activity like running, jumping, and skipping is especially good for bone development.



Add some calcium to your child's diet by making a yogurt popsicle. Pour fat-free or low-fat drinkable yogurt (or regular yogurt) into a paper cup. Add a popsicle stick and freeze.⁴

¹ Greer, F. R., & Krebs, N. F. (2006). Optimizing bone health and calcium intakes of infants, children, and adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 117, 578-585.

² Ministry of Health. (2007). Food Sources of Calcium and Vitamin D. BCHealthFiles #68e. <http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile68e.stm#hf003>.

³ Fishburne, G., McKay, H., & Berg, S. (2005). *Building Strong Bones and Muscles*. Human Kinetics: Champaign: IL.

⁴ The National Bone Health Campaign. (2006). Powerful Bones Toolbox. Recipes. Retrieved 30 August 2007, from <http://0-www.cdc.gov.mill1.sjlibrary.org/powerfulbones/parents/toolbox/recipes.html>

Activity ideas to support healthy bone development



With your child, set up an obstacle course to move through (e.g. crawl under a chair, jump over a cushion, log roll along a towel, walk backwards along a rope, walk like a bear around a toy box, crab walk across a rug, etc.).

Play some jumping games

- ❖ Sway a rope back and forth and invite your child to jump over it.
- ❖ Make a pretend river and have your child jump over it.
 - You can also pretend the river has hungry alligators in it. Set the mood by reciting or acting out "Three Little Monkeys."



THREE LITTLE MONKEYS

*Three little monkeys swinging from a tree,
Teasing Mr. Alligator, "Can't catch me!"
Along came Mr. Alligator slowly as can be
Then ... SNAP!*

*Two little monkeys swinging from a tree,
Teasing Mr. Alligator, "Can't catch me!"
Along came Mr. Alligator slowly as can be
Then ... SNAP!*

*One little monkey swinging from a tree,
Teasing Mr. Alligator, "Can't catch me!"
Along came Mr. Alligator slowly as can be
Then ... SNAP!*

- Anonymous

Increase your child's awareness of what helps to build strong bones by drawing or painting a picture (e.g. sunlight, salmon, shrimp, yogurt, milk, cheese, broccoli, crab/bear walk, jumping); or cut out pictures from magazines to make a collage.



Fundamental Movement Skills

Fundamental movement skills are gross movement abilities that allow children to move in different ways, balance and stabilize themselves, and use objects in their environment. These skills, such as running, jumping, catching, and throwing, are the building blocks of more complex movements used in recreation and everyday life.



Children's vision

Preschool children's ability to see detail, to distinguish objects from the surroundings, to judge distance (depth perception), and to coordinate their body and vision (eye-hand and eye-foot coordination) develops rapidly during the preschool years.¹

There are things parents can do to help children succeed as they try to master eye-hand and eye-foot coordination skills. It is helpful to:

- ❖ Use **colours that contrast** with the surroundings.
- ❖ **Slow objects down.** For example, using scarves for catching, balloons for tapping and hitting, bubbles to chase and catch.
- ❖ Make the **path** of an object more **predictable**. For example, rolling a ball to the child, hitting off a cone (or tee), stationary ball to kick.
- ❖ For catching, use **objects that are soft**. For example, a beach ball, yarn ball, teddy bear, scarf, paper ball, spider ball, or sponge ball.



¹ Payne, G., & Issacs, L. (2005). *Human motor development: A lifespan approach* (6 ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Practice and guidance

Children need many opportunities to practice, encouragement, and some guidance if their skills are to develop fully.



Try some eye-hand coordination activities at home

Catch a scarf, handkerchief, or piece of paper towel with different body parts: hand, foot, head, knee, back. Invite your child to suggest other possibilities... elbow? bottom? chin?

Throw, hit, or kick soft balls to knock down some targets (plastic bottles)



Play "Hot Potato" with a balloon

With your child, use your hands or a paddle bat to keep the balloon* in the air.



*Dispose of balloons and balloon debris after use as it is a choking hazard for young children.

Sharing books in ways that invite and engage

Reading to children - and talking with them about what's been read - is the single most valuable thing we can do to contribute to their literacy learning.



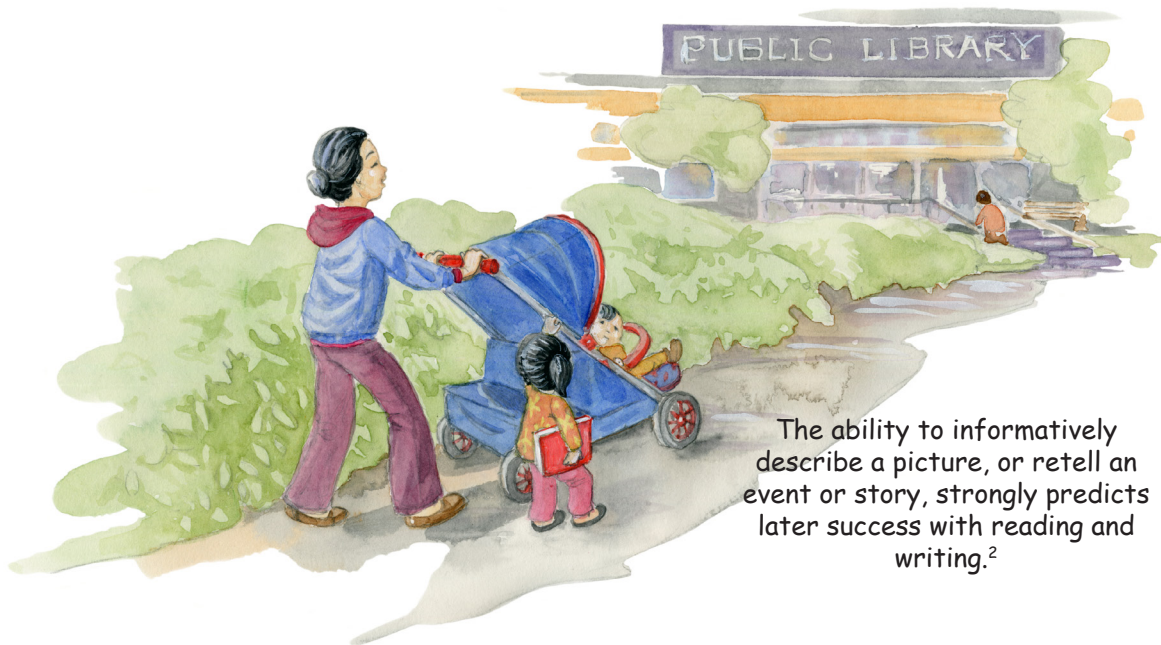
"...the way books are shared with children matters." ^{1, p.742}

When reading books with children it makes a huge difference if:

- ❖ We take some time to look at the pictures together before we read
- ❖ We talk about things in the pictures: "Oh, oh!... can you see where the fox is hiding?"; "Look at all these bright colours... it makes the page look happy."
- ❖ We sometimes follow along with our finger as we read, tracking from left to right, and pointing to particular words and letters: "Look, this word starts with the same letter as your name!"
- ❖ We invite children to chime in and chant along - with repeated phrases and known words: "bumpety, bumpety, bump!"



- ❖ We invite and respond to children's comments and questions throughout the reading.
- ❖ We ask about the events in the story to help children think more deeply and to begin to understand causes and consequences: "Why did she hide?"; "Do you think he was scared?"
- ❖ We share our own reactions and invite children to do the same: "I love the expression on the Grandpa's face... that was my very favourite part... what part did you like the best?"
- ❖ We invite children to join in retelling the story, using the pictures as reminders.
- ❖ We encourage children to act out parts of the story — to pretend to be the characters. Providing props related to the story (for example, for Goldilocks and the Three Bears, three bowls and spoons to match) can spark pretend play and story telling.
- ❖ We invite children to choose the books and don't hesitate to read their favourites again, and again, and again.... Hearing them over and over helps children figure out how reading works.



The ability to informatively describe a picture, or retell an event or story, strongly predicts later success with reading and writing.²

¹ McGee, L. M. & Schickedanz, J. A. (2007). Repeated interactive read-alouds in preschool and kindergarten. *The Reading Teacher*, 60 (8), 742- 751.

² Griffin, T. M., Hempill, L., Camp, L., & Palmer Wolf, D. (2004). Oral discourse in the preschool years and later literacy skills. *First Language*, 24, 123-147.

Value of pretend play

Play is the natural activity of childhood and one of the most efficient and powerful means for nourishing every aspect of children's development. Unfortunately, the contribution play makes to learning is unrecognized by many adults, and therefore under-valued. As a result play is getting squeezed out of many children's lives.

Time and opportunity for play need to be fiercely protected. There is overwhelming research evidence that making sure our children have rich play experiences is one of the very best ways we can support their growth and learning.

A bounty of benefits

Pretend play flourishes in the preschool years and research has confirmed the many different things learned through this type of play. Children who engage in pretend play show enhanced:

- ❖ Creativity, mental flexibility, divergent and abstract thinking, and problem solving abilities.^{1,2}
- ❖ Social skills and capacity for conflict resolution.³
- ❖ Language development.^{4,5,6}
- ❖ Understanding of reading and writing.⁴

As well, "studies show that children who play make-believe... are more empathetic, less physically aggressive and more cooperative with other children and adults — essential behaviors that help children succeed in school and throughout life."⁷

Our support can have a dramatic impact on play quality

The adults in our children's lives play a key role in supporting their creative and pretend play. There are many things we can do, and those things make all the difference.

We can:

- ❖ Provide and protect time for pretend play — uninterrupted stretches so that children can immerse themselves in the play and develop their themes and plots.
- ❖ Provide ideas for play through stories, experiences, talk, suggestions ("Let's pretend we're salmon swimming way out into the ocean... watch out for seals!").

CAN YOU

Can you...
 Snap like a crocodile
 Curl up like a snail
 Stretch out like a starfish
 To the tips of your nails?

- Margaret Mayo



- ❖ Model how pretending is done by changing our voices and facial expressions, and by using an object “as if” it were something else (pretending a tube is a telescope, a stick, a fishing rod, etc.).
- ❖ Invite children to pretend they’re characters (“You be the bus driver and I’ll be the passenger”) and play out the situation with them, letting them take the lead as and when they can.
- ❖ Stimulate the taking on of roles with props and costumes (hats, scarves, feather boas, flippers, etc.).
- ❖ Invite other children over and encourage them to act out imagined scenarios, roles, events, story themes and plots together.
- ❖ Make reading and writing materials and props available so they can incorporate them into their play.
- ❖ When necessary, help children deal with any conflicts or problems that come up — but grant them as much room as possible to first solve the matters themselves.
- ❖ Allow our children to play in their own ways, for their own reasons, at their own pace.



¹ Russ, S. W. (2003). Play and creativity: developmental issues Scandinavian. *Journal of Educational Research*, 47, 291 - 303.

² Sylva, K., Bruner, J.S., & Genova, P. (1976). The role of play in the problem-solving of children 3 - 5 years old. In J.S. Bruner, A. Jolly, & Sylva, K. (Eds.), *Play: Its role in development and evolution* (pp.244-261). New York: Basic Books.

³ Colwell, M. & Linddsey, E. W. (2005). Preschool children's pretend and physical play and sex of play partner: Connections to peer competence. *Sex Roles*, 52, 497-509.

⁴ Roskos, K., & Christie, J. (2001). Examining the play-literacy interface: A critical review and future directions. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 1, 59-89.

⁵ Rubin, K.H., & Howe, N. (1986). Social play and perspective-taking. In G. Fein & M. Rivkin (Eds.), *The young child at play: Reviews of research*, Volume 4, 113-126.

⁶ Sawyer, R.K. (1997). Pretend play as improvisation: Conversation in the preschool classroom. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

⁷ Playing for Keeps. (2007). Why Play Matters Retrieved from: http://www.playingforkeeps.org/site/why_play_06.html.