



Play and Leisure Active / Energetic Play

Ball Skills

General Hints and Tips

Ball skills are a very complex set of skills to learn. Children who find ball skills difficult need lots of practice so vary the activities you try so that they don't get bored. Always finish on a positive note with them having some success to avoid frustration. You might need to make the activity easier to allow them to succeed.



Grading

Children learn best when they participate in activities that are just the right challenge, not too easy or too difficult. You can grade ball skills activities by:

- Starting with activities where either the child or the ball are static (e.g. throwing, catching or kicking a stationary ball on the spot) and then move to activities where both the child and ball are in motion (dribbling a football).
- Use items other than balls for throwing and catching e.g. bubbles, balloons, scarves. These also fall more slowly so are easier to catch.
- Try soft air filled balls with a bit of "give" e.g. a beach ball.
- Start with big balls and heavy bean bags and work towards lighter smaller balls.
- When using targets, start big and work towards smaller targets.
- Start by standing near the target or each other and then increase the distances involved.
- Start with the ball moving slowly then increase the speed that the ball travels at.



Activity Ideas

Throwing to Target

- **Roll Balls into a Goal** - start with a large goal and work towards a box. See how many points your child can score in one minute.
- **Skittles** - try and roll the ball to knock down the skittles. Start with a big ball close to the skittles then increase the distance the child rolls from. Then decrease the size of the ball.



- **Sock Ball** - make some balls from rolled up socks or use bean bags. Throw them into a hoop, increase the distance the child throws from as they get more proficient. Then try throwing them into boxes of varying sizes. You could use a bin, a lunch box, laundry basket, ice cream tub or anything else you can find.
- **Shooting Hoops** - Hold a hoop at your child's shoulder height. Get them to throw a bean bag or soft ball into the hoop. Raise the height of the hoop, get them to throw from further away or decrease the size of the hoop to challenge them.

Catching

- **Throw and Catch** - Ask your child to throw a bean bag up in the air (to eye level) and then catch it with both hands. Repeat this 10 times. If this is really easy they should try throwing higher and then throwing and catching with one hand.
- **Bounce and Catch** - Ask your child to bounce one a large ball off the floor and catch it with two hands. Repeat this 10 times. If they find this easy reduce the size of the ball until your child can catch a tennis ball. Try bouncing and catching with one hand.
- **Kneeling Catch** - Ask your child to high kneel on the floor make sure their bottoms are not on their heels. Kneel down in front of your child and throw them a ball. Encourage them to reach out to catch the ball. Repeat this 10 times.
- **Catch** - Practice with a large soft ball and throw underarm back and forth, add a bounce, try it against a wall. Try clapping and catching. Practice catching with one hand then the other.



Football Skills

- **Kicking** - Practice kicking with one leg then the other. Kick the ball into a wide goal and narrow these as your child progresses.
- **Penalty Kick** - Ask your child to put the football on a spot and then kick it into the goal. Once they have mastered this make the goal smaller.
- **Happy Feet** – Get your child to place a ball between their feet and squeeze it with their toes so that it doesn't move. Keeping the ball between their feet and keeping their knees together, get them to move one foot forward then the other so that they look like a penguin carrying an egg. They might need to stop and readjust the ball every now and then.





- **Dribbling** – Get your child to kick the ball very gently from one foot to the other. They should gently tap the ball with one foot so that the ball moves slowly towards their other foot. Then tap it back to the first foot. Their feet should be about shoulder width apart. Remind them to go slowly so that they can control the ball and so that it doesn't run away from them.
- **Obstacle Dribbling** – They can now try dribbling the ball around obstacles. Get them to dribble the ball as above but this time dribble round things.

Other Ball Activities to try

- Balloon Volleyball - Use a balloon to bat back and forth to each other, try and bat it over/under a washing line. Try using a racket to bat the balloon back and forth to each other.
- Football, rugby and mini golf are all ideal for eye-hand coordination.



- Ball and racket games e.g. hockey, swing-ball, tennis, badminton.



- Dodge ball where the child has to avoid the ball thrown at them – you could use any size of ball.