

CARE & LEARNING SERVICE
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PHYSIOTHERAPY ADVICE FOR
BALL SKILLS

There are many different skills to be learned in order to have good control of a ball. You need to have hand eye co-ordination and to be able to roll, catch, throw, bounce, hit, dribble and kick a ball. These skills are necessary for teaching any sport during games such as football, bat and ball games.

Coaching Tips:



When teaching your child ball skills it is important to start at a level that the child can achieve and then slowly increase the level of difficulty so that the child is challenged slightly each time, but does not lose self confidence.

Give lots of encouragement and specific praise, eg “Good looking” when the child is making eye contact with the ball; also praise for good effort, eg “Good try”.

These skills can be broken down and graded – to be made easier or more challenging.

Some children may be frightened by a ball being thrown at them and may be more inclined to avoid being hit by a ball and not attempt to catch the ball. Use a variety of slow moving objects, eg a balloon, beach ball, foam ball, then you can move onto using heavier balls as their skills improve.

Position of Hands:

To make the child more aware of their hands, get them to warm up hands by rubbing their hands together or clapping their hands.

Get your child’s attention first so they know the ball is coming towards them. Remind them to look at the ball and have their hands ready.



Split learning into 2 parts:

- Throwing is one task
- Catching is another

Help your child learn from unsuccessful attempts by discussing reasons, eg was the throw too hard?

With each catch or throw of the ball, upgrade and make the task slightly harder, eg taking one step backwards and throwing the ball from a longer distance.

Start with underarm throwing and progress to over-arm throwing.

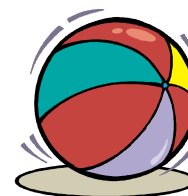
ACTIVITY IDEAS

Rolling a Ball:

Children must learn to roll a ball first. Sitting on the floor, place the ball on the floor and roll the ball towards the child.

Encourage them to stop the ball using their hands then roll the ball towards a partner's hands.

- Roll the ball in various directions, eg forwards, backwards
- Roll the ball around shapes, eg a hoop for a circle; a rope laid out on the floor in a shape
- Roll the ball up and down the arm, leg, around your waist

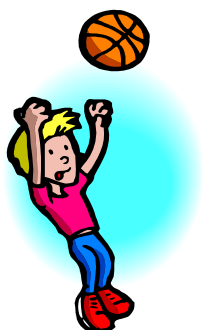


Catching and Throwing:

Start with underarm throwing and progress to over arm throwing.

Start with 2 handed catching. If this is too difficult you could use a container for the child to hold, such as a basket. Also stand closer to the child so that success is achieved. Gradually move further away from the child.

Using a light ball, a beach ball or textured ball, encourage clap catch, 2 hands coming together to catch the ball.



Play batting a balloon to and fro using hands as bats.

Stand still and throw the ball or beanbag into the air and catch it.

Practice the above activities before progressing onto throwing and catching with a partner.

With a partner, start with bounce and catch, before progressing to direct catch.

Bounce a large ball on the floor and catch it; once this is achieved, move onto using a smaller ball.

Bounce the ball on the ground whilst walking.

Throwing the ball, use a large target to aim for; children can then practice to improve their aim.

Move onto using a smaller ball and increase the distance between partners.



Hitting a Ball:



Start by hitting a stationary ball; use a mat to place the ball on. Using a foam ball encourage the child to hit the ball with their hand before introducing a bat.

Then try different bats with a large surface.

Start throwing the ball from a short distance, slowly increasing the distance having a target to aim for when hitting the ball.

Allow the ball to bounce before it is hit to help the child with the timing.

Kicking a Ball:

A ball can be kicked with the front of the foot or the side of the foot:

- Kicking the ball with the front of the foot allows the ball to travel further
- Kicking the ball with the side of the foot allows close control



Start with a large stationary ball:

- Set out goal posts far apart and get the child to stand close to kick the ball into the goal, then increase the distance to aim for and place the targets closer together
- Walking slowly dribbling the ball around a cone and then moving onto weaving the ball in and out of cones
- Practice running and kicking a ball
- Passing skills and stopping the ball with the foot is a more advanced skill to work on

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