

Ball Skills



The ability to play with a ball requires a range of skills including the ability to visually track a ball, bi-manual skills to bring the hands together and catch a ball, body awareness to know when and where to move the body. It is important to grade the activity in order for your child to learn – adjust the challenge so that it is achievable and gradually make this more difficult.



Catching

Is the child watching you or the ball when you are throwing the ball to them? Many children will look to the person throwing to them rather than at the ball which makes it harder for them to respond and catch the ball in time. Verbally prompt them to look at the object to be thrown, not you.

Practice throwing with a slow moving object (balloon or rolled up chiffon scarf) to allow the child more time to track it and also give them time to move their body to the right position, giving them more of a chance of catching it.

Make sure the child has their hands ready to catch the object. Encourage them to 'clap the ball' (catching it between their hands) rather than bringing it to their body.

Once the child can catch the slow moving object effectively, move on to practicing with a large, light ball and throw this over a 1 metre distance. Once this is achieved move further away to 2 metres.

Gradually decrease the size of the ball – this will increase the difficulty.

When the child can catch a small ball over a 2 metre distance, start to throw the ball to either side of the child so that they have to move to catch it.

Throwing

Start by aiming at a large target i.e. a large hula hoop and do this from a short distance, starting at 1 meter. Gradually increase the distance the child is throwing from until they can throw from 2 or 3 metres. Once this is achieved, move the child back to the one meter mark and decrease the size of the target. Repeat this process – decreasing the size of the target and increasing the distance.

Alter the target – start with something flat and easy to land in i.e. a hula hoop and then encourage the child to throw into a bucket.

Play different target games for example skittles or beanbag shot putt.

Kicking

As with throwing, grade the size of the target and the distance the child is kicking from. Start with a large target and the child standing close and gradually change this to a smaller target with the child kicking from further away.

Encourage the child to stop the ball to control it before kicking the ball away again.

