

Vancouver Regional Pediatric Team

BALL SKILLS FOR CHILDREN

Ball skills help to develop visual attention tracking and hand-eye coordination. The following handout provides an easy progression to help encourage the development of a child's ball skills.

Use balls of varying sizes and weights (balloons, yarn ball, beach ball, bean bags, foam balls, tennis balls, small/large balls).

General principles:



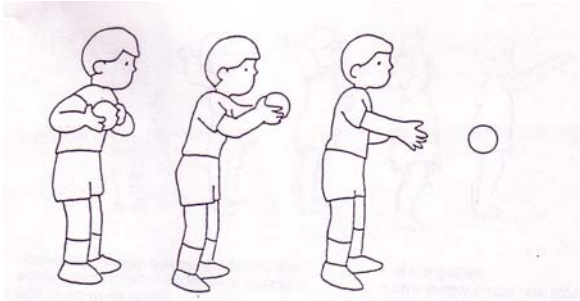
1. Big balls are easier to start with.
2. Start with rolling the ball.
3. Throwing is easier than catching.
4. It is easier to catch a rolled ball.

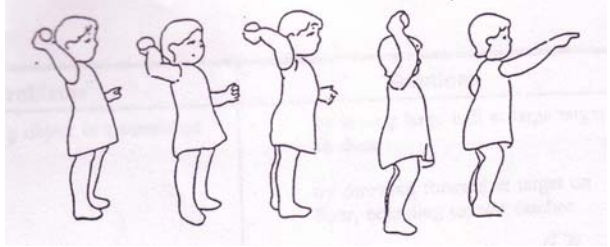
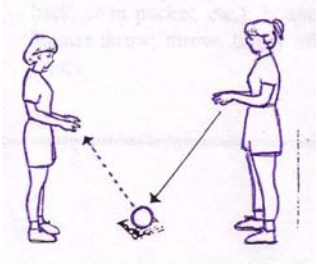
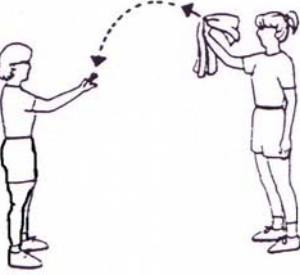
VISUAL TRACKING

- Blow bubbles / wave streamers
- Throw paper airplanes
- Balloons – balloons on a string suspended from ceiling
- Popping bubbles


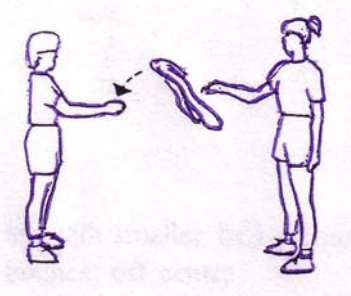
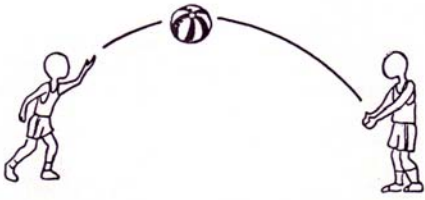


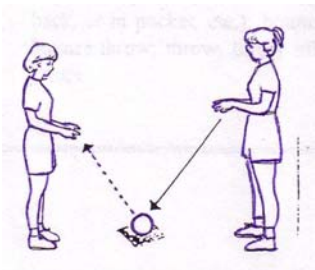
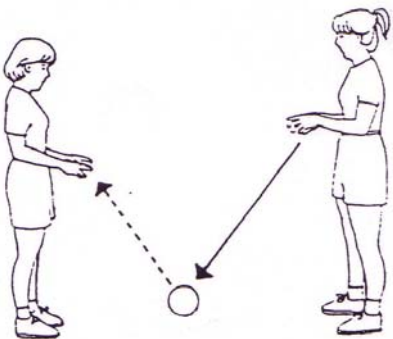
THROWING

<p>Rolling a ball</p> 	<p>Sitting straddled on the floor, teach child to roll ball by pushing it with both hands along the floor. Can use hand over hand technique.</p> <p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll ball through a hoop • Knock down bowling pins
<p>Drop a small ball into a basket or box.</p> 	<p>Place your hand over the student's hand that holds a small ball. Open the student's hand for release of ball into basket.</p> <p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use verbal cues instead of physical assist <p><u>Tip</u></p> <p>*Use a bean bag if it is easier for the child to hold *Drop the ball or bean bag into something that makes a noise (to create more interest) *Fill up the basket with balls or beanbags and then empty it and start again.</p>
<p>Throwing a small ball forward</p> 	<p>Stand behind the student and cover the student's hand that is holding a small ball. Throw the ball together in underhand motion.</p> <p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use verbal cues instead of physical assist • Have a large target for the student to hit or to throw onto ie: box, hoola hoop on floor, hoola hoop on wall • Increase the distance to the target • Decrease the size of the target <p><u>Tip</u></p> <p>*Place the target close to a wall so that the student does not have to run after the ball *Use a bean bag or a towel tied in a knot if the student has difficulty holding onto a ball</p>

	<p>*Use targets that make a noise when hit *Use targets that fall over when hit</p>
<p>Throw ball overhand in a forward direction</p> 	<p>Stand behind the student to assist them in hand over hand throwing motion.</p> <p>Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal cues rather than physical assistance • Reduce the amount of cueing • Throw ball at a target • Increase distance to target • Throw to another person
<p>Bounce ball to another person</p> 	<p>Have the student throw the ball onto the floor so that it bounces up.</p> <p>Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bounce ball towards another person so they can catch it • Bounce ball and try to catch it themselves • Try walking and bouncing the ball in a straight line • Bounce ball around an obstacle course • Bounce ball with one hand
<p>Problems</p>	<p>Solutions</p>
<p>Difficulty throwing object in a controlled manner</p> 	<p>Try throwing a towel Try with bean bag Demonstrate underhand throw</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try underhand throw at target • Try underhand throw to catcher <p>Demonstrate throwing over hand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throw at target on wall • Throw into basket • Try throwing Frisbee • Try aiming large ball at large target on floor • Try throwing forward at target on floor, bounding toward catcher <p>Model arm placement, throwing from chest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try throwing into large garbage pail • Try throwing at large target on wall at chest height • Try smaller target • Try from further away

CATCHING



<p>Sit on floor with legs spread and trap a rolled ball with both hands.</p> 	<p>Sit with student between your legs. Assistant rolls a ball towards the student, and as it arrives, grasp the student's arms and place them around the ball.</p> <p><u>Progress</u></p> <p>As above, but instead of placing the student's hands on the ball, prompt the student to place their hands on the ball and to gather it in.</p>
<p>Trap ball in hands or against chest.</p> 	<p>Stand close to the student. Cue the student to have his/her arms up when you are going to throw the ball. If necessary, a second person may need to stand behind the student to assist them in positioning their arms. Start with a medium-sized ball and throw it gently and slowly directly into the student's hands / arms, so they can gather it in against their chest.</p> <p><u>Tips</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *If the student is frightened of the ball or closes their eyes and turns their head away, use a soft Nerf or sponge ball. *If the student still has difficulty keeping their eyes open, try having the student "catch" bubbles or a balloon. The assistant may need to help the student to "trap" the ball in their hands. *A towel tied in a knot gives the student more of an opportunity to get hold of something
<p>Catch ball in both hands</p> 	<p>As above, but encourage the student to catch the ball in their hands.</p> <p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the amount of cueing • Move a little further away • Throw the ball a little faster • Throw the ball so that the student needs to move their hands slightly to catch the ball • Change the size of the ball

	<p>Note</p> <p>Do not attempt to do all the above changes at once. Each one needs to be tried separately to ensure that the student continues to have success.</p> <p>Tip</p> <p>The student can also be positioned against a wall or in a corner, so that if they miss the ball, they do not have to run after it.</p>
<p>Catching a bounced ball</p> 	<p>Bounce a ball to the student ensuring that the bounce will have the ball end up very close to the student's hands.</p> <p>Cue the student if necessary.</p> <p>Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the amount of cueing • Bounce the ball so that it is off-centre • Bounce the ball harder or softer so that the student has to move • Have the student bounce the ball themselves and then catch it
<p>Problems</p>	<p>Solutions</p>
<p>Child appears awkward catching balls</p> 	<p>Begin with large ball – stand, bounce and catch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch large ball thrown lightly with bounce from partner standing close • Have child stand in corner with walls preventing ball from straying too far • Model hand placement anticipating ball <p>Describe and demonstrate keeping eyes on ball</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try using towel or ball tied in a scarf • Gradually increase distance thrown, with bounce • Close together throw large ball without bounce • Gradually increase distance thrown • Once consistent success achieved, try throwing slightly off-centre – to either side; high; low • Try with bean bag – bounce; no bounce; off centre • Try with smaller ball – bounce; no bounce; off centre • Try with dominant hand only (may require keeping other hand behind back, or in

	<p>pocket, etc.); bounce; bounce throw; throw; throw off-centre</p> <p>Have student try throwing against wall; allow to bounce and catch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try moving further from the wall • Try throwing against wall, no bounce and catch (gradually using smaller ball) <p>Try throwing in air and catching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try catching with baseball mitt • Try catching erratic throws or balls hit with bats
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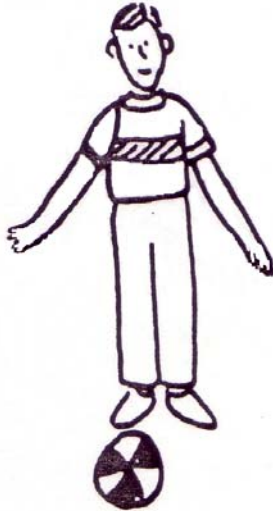
HITTING AN OBJECT IN THE AIR

An object moving in the air is less predictable than a rolling ball and the child must learn to watch it carefully, adjust to its movement, and coordinate his arm movements with what he sees

<p>Bubbles</p> 	<p>Have the children burst bubbles by clapping them while they float through the air</p>
<p>Balloons</p> 	<p>Keeping a balloon up in the air is great fun for children.</p> <p>Remember to suspend it from a structure overhead if the child has difficulty.</p> <p>Variations of this activity may include using their head or legs as well as their arms to keep the balloon up.</p> <p><u>Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paddles, racquets, or bats may be introduced if the child is quite skilled in the activity

KICKING

Kick a stationary ball forward from a stationary position.



Place a large ball directly in front of student's foot. Assist the student, if necessary, to move foot forward so that ball moves.

Progress

- Use verbal cues only, rather than physical assistance
- Try placing the ball in front of the other foot to see if the student can kick with that foot
- Have the student move the leg back and follow through on the kick
- Have the student kick the ball at a large target or goal
- Increase the distance between the student and the target
- Kick ball without holding onto anything

Tip

*If the student is unsure of their balance, hold the student's hand or have the student hold onto some other support.

Change only one thing at a time, so that the student remains successful

Kick a stationary ball from a moving position.



Place a large ball on the floor several feet in front of the student. The student walks forward towards the ball and kicks it with their foot.



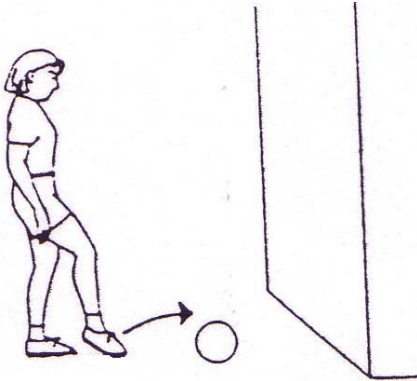
Progress

- Decrease the ball size
- Increase the distance the student walks before kicking the ball
- Student increases the speed at which they move forward towards the ball
- Kick the ball at a large target or goal

Tip

*Use a target that will fall down when hit.

*Line up several balls so that the student does not have to wait for the ball to be returned.

<p>Kick a moving ball from a stationary position</p> 	<p>Stand fairly close to the student. Kick a large ball very slowly towards the student. Cue the student when to kick the ball.</p> <p>Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease the verbal cues • Increase the speed at which the ball approaches the student • Increase the distance from the student • Decrease the size of the ball • Kick the ball to a person or target <p>Tip</p> <p>*If the student is unable to kick the ball, have them just try to stop the ball with their foot</p>
<p>Kick a moving ball from a moving position</p> 	<p>Kick the ball off-center so that the student needs to move in order to kick the ball back.</p> <p>Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick ball back and forth to partner who is walking • Kick ball back and forth between running partners • Kick ball into a goal from walking or running
<p>Problems</p>	<p>Solutions</p>
<p>Difficulty kicking ball accurately</p> 	<p>Demonstrate proper foot placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try kicking large, stationary ball • Try kicking with each foot <p>Concentrate on preferred foot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try kicking ball against wall • Try kicking ball into large goal • Try running up to ball to kick • Try kicking ball to partner • Try smaller goal • Try kicking ball to knock over object (ie. bowling pin) • Try receiving lightly rolling ball by stopping with foot • Try receiving faster, rolling ball <p>Try kicking back and forth with partner – kick; stop; kick; stop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradually speed up process • Try kicking ball to partner who is walking

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try kicking to partner who is running• Try kicking back and forth between running partners• Try raising ball by kicking• Try raising ball to hit target on wall• Practice aiming for goal with goalie
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REFERENCE FROM:

Yoell, Catherine, Physiotherapist. Centre for Ability. "Teaching Ball skills." (2001).