

Working on ball skills with children is a fun way to help support the development of their motor skills. Ball activities such as throwing, catching, kicking, and bouncing promote the development of bilateral coordination (using both sides of the body together) and helps to develop core stability and postural control. Ball play will also help to build physical activity into children's day to day routines and encourages social interaction while building confidence when participating in group settings such as school or sports.

When working on these skills with your child, try to keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Keep activities fun and playful while offering lots of encouragement and praise
- Practice in a safe space for short periods of time
- Stand behind your child and place their hands in an open position, slightly apart and fingers slightly bent
- Use a verbal cue such as "Ready 1-2-3 catch"
- Progress from physical assistance (hand over hand) to verbal cueing and/or demonstration
- Stand close to your child to begin with and gradually take steps back increasing the distance between you as their skills improve

Here are some activity suggestions to try to help develop ball skills with your child:

- **Scarf or Beach Ball Toss:** a colorful scarf, beach ball, deflated ball or rolled up plastic bag will float in the air longer allowing your child more time to react. Encourage tossing between partners, catching with 2 hands then progress to one hand.



- **Velcro or Bean Bag Toss:** try using a Velcro mitt and tennis ball to make catching easier. Using bean bags is also a great way to work on targeting; try having your child throw a bean bag into a hula hoop on the floor or use a bean bag toss game. Tossing rolled up socks into a laundry basket is also a fun way to work on targeting.



The following helpful tips may help your child when they are ready to practice with a ball:

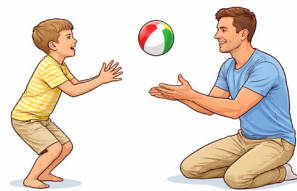
ROLLING

- Start by practicing rolling back and forth while sitting on the floor
- Use a larger ball at first and progress to a smaller ball
- Sing a song or play Hot Potato
- Progress to rolling a ball through an obstacle course



CATCHING

- Start with a larger ball at first and progress to a smaller ball
- Encourage catching with 2 hands and progress to one hand then the other
- Encourage catching using their hands, not by trapping the ball against their body
- Throw directly to your child and work towards having them step in order to catch
- Place a target on the floor and have your child bounce and catch a ball
- Progress towards bouncing a ball against the wall then catching it



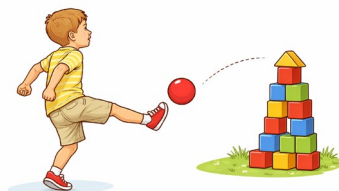
THROWING

- Encourage underhand at first and progress to overhand throwing
- Practice aiming towards a target ie: hula hoop, box/laundry basket on the floor
- Decrease the size of the target as your child's skills improve
- Progress towards stepping forward with the opposite foot to the throwing arm
- Bowling encourages swinging the arm down and back



KICKING

- Encourage kicking a stationary ball at a target (partner, goal, hoop, tower of blocks)
- Progress to kicking a rolling ball
- Play a game of kicking a ball back and forth between you and your child
- Work towards stopping a rolling ball then kicking it with his/her foot



Remember to have fun! If you have any concerns about your child's physical abilities or motor development, consider speaking with a healthcare practitioner.