

Whole Body Games

Movement activities promote good health, dexterity, mental alertness and social skills. Activities can include games, dance, educational movements and sports. In group situations with limited space, time and staff planned activities can address a range of ability and goals and yet be simple, effective and a lot of fun.

AIMS: provide physical activities that give children the opportunity to:

1. Explore their own physical capabilities.
2. Enjoy physical activity.
3. Increase a child's movement and encourage new movements.
4. Give them opportunity to succeed.
5. Encourage body and spatial awareness.
6. Encourage interaction in a group.
7. Develop impulse control and discipline
8. Develop judgment and planning.
9. Improve or to maintain fitness and mobility.
10. Build current and future leisure time activities.

Each session could be of 30-40 minutes duration and should include the following:

Warm Up Phase: Lively, whole body movement, increases circulation and eases movement of stiff muscles.

Focused Learning Phase: 1 to 3 activities according to the age, ability and the goals of the children.

Active Alert Phase: Slowly quieting down, attention building activities that conclude the session and bring body and mind ready for other kinds of learning.

Key elements of successful sessions

Each session must be planned keeping the main goals for each child and for the group in mind. Consider always the space, the staff and the materials available to select activities that are feasible and best fit with the situation.

Select the vocabulary for the games, using movement to help children internalize concepts (up-down, start-stop, fast-slow, big-little), using consistent words, symbols, pictures or signs. Use instruments and props to increase the fun and the challenge levels. Introduce a range of

movements – jump, spin, turn. Bring in rhythm, speed, and timing to help children develop control and judgment.

Finer movements like copying body position or the emotions on faces, making shadows on the wall with hands, playing mirror my movement games and so on can build great body awareness.

Things to watch for in each child and include in activity goals:

Notice the quality of movement light, strong, sustained, sudden, jerky, shaky, or slow.

Is the child able to isolate movements? If not which part of the body is moving together and why? Watch the stability and use of the trunk and any compensatory movements of the hands, feet, head, and legs.

Some simple whole body movement activities

BALLS

Use a range of balls to give variety - textured balls, soft balls, big, small or bouncy balls. Pass the ball from one to the other to left, right, up, or down. Aim and throw into basket at different heights. Hitting at foot and jumping to avoid. Catch and throw. Jump and hit at a ball hung from the ceiling.

RUNNING

Running and catching, or relay games can be fun, but in small spaces, you can create a lot of fun by giving creative reasons to run. One great activity is to run after bubbles and jump and pop them!

BALANCING

Walking on a line, with a small cushion on the head, one hand at the back, walking on a beam. Jumping zig-zag around small pillows on a path.

OBSTACLE COURSE.

Using available furniture, toys and objects in the environment to make an obstacle course

TUNNELS

You can make tunnels from old buckets with the bottoms cut out, or even sheets hung over stools or chairs. Have children crawl through on all fours, squirm on their belly, or crouch and increase challenge by using curved tunnels instead of straight ones or increasing length

CREATE A PATH

Crawl, walk, creep, or hop on a line, curve, spiral, number, letter, or shape. You can even use fingers walking on small shapes drawn on paper or sand.

USING ROPE

Tug of war, see – saw pull, jumping over, under the rope, increasing or decreasing the height for challenge levels. Ropes make great paths too!

ANIMAL GAMES

Imitate way animals walk or move. Slither like a snake, walk like a penguin with knees together, hop like a bunny, jump like kangaroo or frog, gallop like a horse. Be creative – try Butterfly: walk slowly moving their arms up and down. Chicken: tuck the hands under their arm and flap like wings and bob the heads.

PILLOW MOUNTAINS

Climb up the mountain made of pillows, crawl or slide down the other side.

WALKING

Walk on tip toe, walk forward or backward, walk blindfolded feeling a path...

RIBBONS

Ribbons and music go well together - move ribbons in different ways – twisting, spinning, waves – to different rhythms and in a variety of positions in space and around the body.

FINE MOTOR

Making shapes with fingers, links, beads, collage, lacing, tracing, coloring, clay, peeling.

CROSSING THE MIDLINE

You can give a lot of opportunity for crossing the midline through games that involve passing to the left and right, copying movements like marching or crawling and dances or exercises like right elbow to left knee. Even functional activities like wiping a table in circular motion with both hands.