Large Muscle Skills (Gross Motor)

Play doesn't have to cost money.
Use what you already have in your home or outdoors.

Balancing Fun

How it helps

Balance, by standing on one foot, walking on tip toes, jumping, kicking

What you need

Tape and/or sidewalk chalk

Balancing Fun

What to do

- Use the tape or sidewalk chalk to create a pretend balance beam on the floor or on the ground outside. (You're making two parallel lines about eight inches (20 centimetres) apart to make a path to walk along. Pretend your path is up in the air.)
- Take turns moving along the line by walking forward and backward; walking on tip toes; hopping; or moving sideways.
- Stand on one foot then on the other. Kick with one foot, then the other.

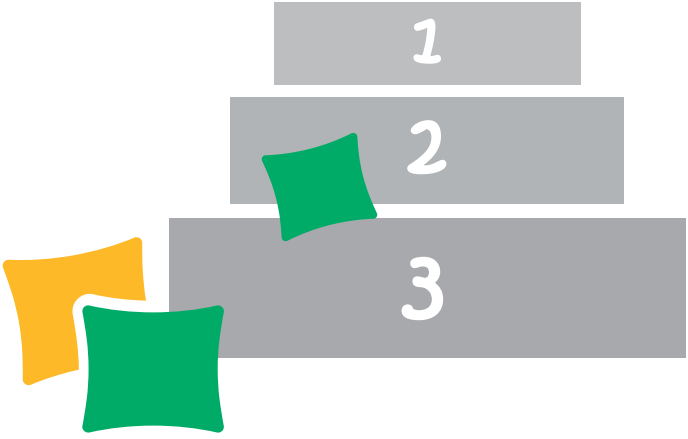
Bean Bag Toss

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; balance; throwing; catching

What you need

Bean bags; paper; pencil or coloured markers; pots or buckets



Bean Bag Toss

What to do

- Label your stairs with numbers or colours and ask your child to throw the bean bags to land on each step. Try to land on the stairs in order going up or down, or in groups of colours.

Make it harder

- Throw the bean bags in a pot or bucket. Have different coloured containers to match different coloured bean bags.
- Throw them to each other or throw them up in the air and catch them yourself.
- Balance a bean bag on your elbow, knee, and head.

Tip

- Clear the area of anything you don't want knocked over.

Bubble Catch

How it helps

Controlling breathing; controlling hand muscles; tracking movement with eyes; understanding the environment

What you need

An open area free of dangerous obstacles to walk or run after bubbles; a soap bubble-blowing toy; bubbles liquid

Bubble Catch

What to do

- Blow bubbles for your child and encourage her to try to catch the bubbles. Try catching the bubbles on a wooden spoon.
- Let your child have a turn blowing the bubbles while you try to catch them.

Tip

- Your child might be disappointed when the bubbles burst or they don't catch them. Praise her as she catches them and encourage her to keep trying.

Bunny Hop

How it helps

Balance; ease of movement; coordination; communication skills such as following instructions; playing nicely with others

What you need

An open outdoor space on grass or dry pavement; rope, string, or ribbon to mark a starting line in the grass or chalk to mark a starting line on pavement

Bunny Hop

What to do

- Talk with your child about rabbits. How do they move? Show your child how to hop like a rabbit. Feet should be shoulder-width apart. Keep your hands held up in front of your stomach or chest. Take off with both feet and land with both feet. Play “Follow the Leader” while hopping, and take turns being the leader.

Make it harder

- Create a starting line, then see who can hop the farthest with just one big hop.
- Have a relay race with teams. Create a starting line and place markers a few metres away. Each player has to hop around the marker and return to the start before the next one can go.

Tip

- Change the animal. Try crawling like a lion or a crab, or using your arms to flap like a bird.

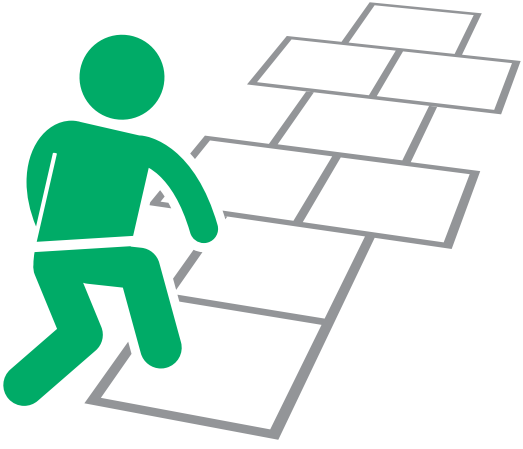
Hopscotch

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; balancing; jumping; throwing; playing nicely with others

What you need

Sidewalk chalk; painter's masking tape; a small stone, sock, or piece of crumpled paper to use to mark your spot



Hopscotch

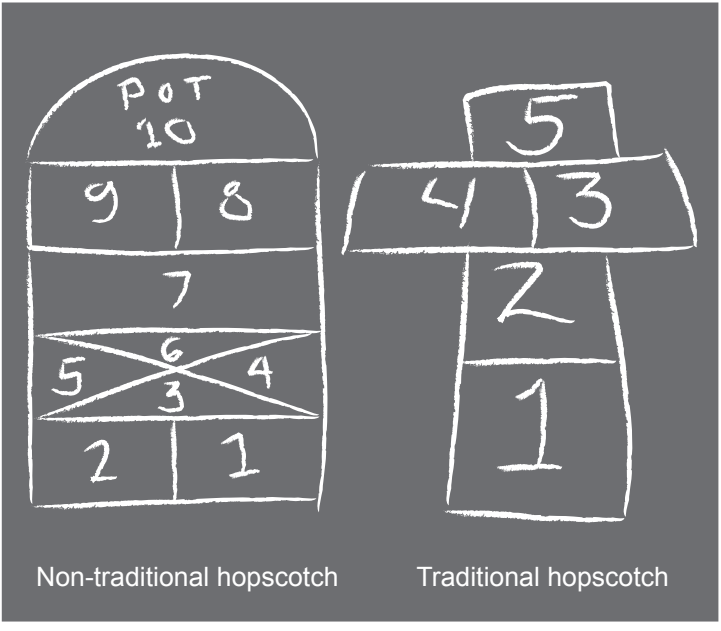
What to do

- Create a hopscotch game outside (with the chalk) or inside (with the tape). Toss your marker ahead onto the hopscotch; hop to the end and back, skipping the square your marker landed on.
- Play traditional hopscotch with numbers or use shapes, colours, or letters.

Make it harder

- Draw an unusual pattern that encourages your child to move diagonally or make extra big jumps.

Hopscotch


POT
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
5
4
3
2
1
Non-traditional hopscotch
Traditional hopscotch

Cuddle and laugh with your child.

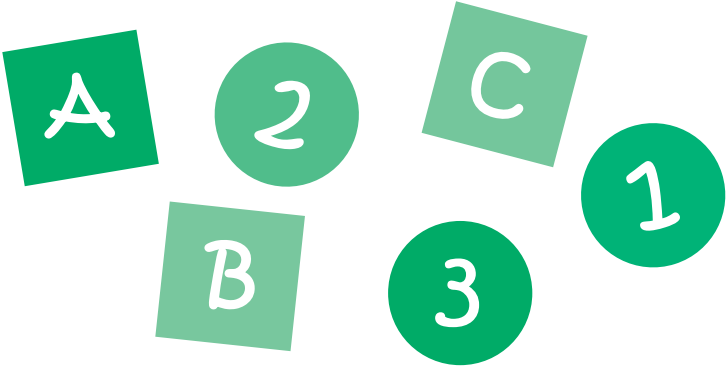
Scavenger Hunt

How it helps

Physical development; early reading and math skills such as recognizing letters and numbers; problem-solving

What you need

Plastic letters and numbers, or letters and numbers written on cards; an answer sheet; pencil or marker



Scavenger Hunt

What to do

- Set out letters or numbers for your child to find throughout the house. When he finds one, have him match it to his answer sheet and mark it off as found.

Make it harder

- Once your child is ready, ask him to find items of a certain colour, shape, or size.

Tip

- Do a few letters or numbers each day. You don't need to do the whole alphabet at once.

Scavenger Hunt

Scavenger Hunt Answer Sheet	
Letters	Numbers
A	1
B	2
C	3
D	4
Something blue	
Something square	
Something big	

Go outside and explore together.

Move to the Music

How it helps

Physical activity through dancing, jumping, hopping, and marching; communication skills, such as listening to words in songs and following instructions in songs (“the people on the bus go up and down…”)

What you need

Scarves, long ribbons, or flags; shakers; pots and wooden spoons

Move to the Music

What to do

- Put on music and move to the rhythm. Play different types of music – fast, slow, marching bands, classical. Run, walk, hop, march, glide. Clap to the beat.
- Use scarves, ribbons, or flags to move to the music.
- Make your own music by drumming on pots with wooden spoons.

Tip

- Make your own shakers. Try putting different things (pasta, rice, Lego) in plastic containers with lids.

Paper Plate Skate

How it helps

Hand-eye coordination; balancing; understanding the environment

What you need

Paper plates

Paper Plate Skate

What to do

- Grab a couple of paper plates; step on them, and (carefully) skate around the house on hard floors.

Tips

- Involve the whole family.
- You may want to hold your child's hand during her first attempts. Stay away from any furniture with sharp edges.

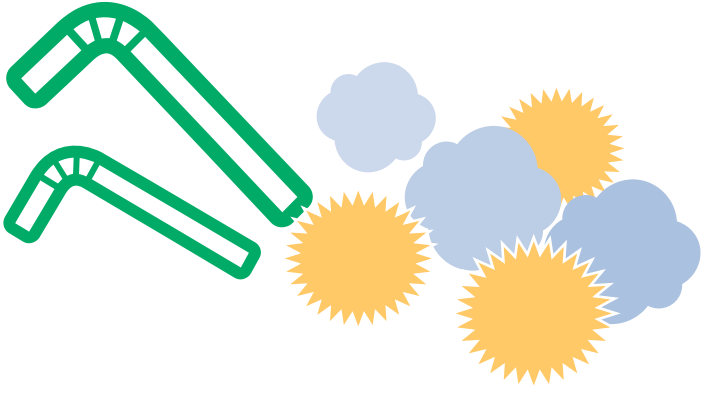
Pompom Race

How it helps

Hand eye coordination; controlling breathing; social skills such as teamwork, taking turns, and managing winning and losing

What you need

Straws; pompoms; cotton balls; some way of marking a finish line (tape or a line on a paper)



Pompom Race

What to do

- Blow through the straw to move the pompom or cotton ball along a track. You can do this across a table or along the floor or ground outside. First one to the finish line wins!

Tips

- Work as a team to get it across the line in the least amount of time.
- Make a maze to move through.
- Talk about how to win and lose with grace. Help your child understand sometimes we win and sometimes we lose.

Tiger Tail

How it helps

Physical activity and developing agility; balancing; running quickly

What you need

An open outdoor space on grass or dry pavement, free of sharp obstacles or falling hazards; scraps of colourful fabric (50 to 100 cm/a few feet long); pictures of various big cats (lions, tigers)

Tiger Tail

What to do

- Show your child pictures of big cats such as tigers, lions, leopards, and cheetahs. Explain that the two of you will pretend to be big cats.
- Tuck one end of the fabric into the back of your child's pants and explain that this is his "tail." Say "I'm going to get your tail!" and encourage him to run away. Chase your child and snatch his tail.
- Change roles and tuck the fabric into your own pants, and then encourage your child to chase you. Make "big cat" noises as you play.

Tip

- Create "safe zone" places where you are not allowed to grab tails. Tell your child to run from one safe place to another without having his tail snatched. You can "prowl" around at a distance and give him the opportunity to decide whether or not to run.

Toddler Climb

How it helps

Physical activity and developing agility; balancing; coordination; building strength

What you need

Indoors: staircase, sofas, large chairs, beds, cushions, pillows. Outdoors: simple climbing obstacles such as benches and garden walls, or structures at the playground.

Toddler Climb

What to do

- Encourage your toddler to climb obstacles that are free of sharp edges. Be ready to catch her if she loses her balance, her footing, or her hand grip. Don't allow her to climb too high or out of reach. Use encouraging words, not words that will make her fearful. Lift her down from any place where you feel she is at risk.
- Indoors, have your child climb the stairs or climb onto beds and sofas. You can also create a climbing/crawling obstacle course using sofa cushions and pillows.
- Outdoors, your child can climb park benches, garden retaining walls, logs, and low playground equipment designed for toddlers.

Tip

- If your toddler needs encouragement to climb, place one of her favourite toys on top of an obstacle in full view, or move to climb the obstacle yourself and encourage her to climb with you.