

the school years toolkit

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Ball Skills

You have been directed to this Advice Sheet to help a child develop ball skills.

If you have implemented the strategies and not seen improvement after four months, please contact CYPIT for advice.

Purpose

To improve co-ordination and motor planning for throwing and catching activity.

- Any ball activities should be modified so that they require less accuracy, less complex spatial judgments and/or less reaction speed. Use a balloon and then progress to a large light soft ball, used over a short distance. Beanbags are often good for providing variety and helping with accuracy when a child is able to manage small sized balls.
- Throwing balls and beanbags at targets (into buckets and through hoops): start with a large target close to the child. Gradually decrease the target size and increase the distance to the target as their skills improve. Target games include Velcro Darts, throwing a large hoopla onto sticks, throwing rings/balls into bowls or water and/or baskets. You can use waste paper bins, storage boxes etc.
- Bowling – rolling a ball between people or towards the wall and receiving it back. Using lightweight skittles will provide more time to plan and co-ordinate. Adapt the distance between the child and the object to suit their skill level.
- Children with motor planning difficulties find it hard to anticipate the various positions where a ball may reach them. This is additionally hard when the speed of the ball does not give them time to co-ordinate their movements to catch it successfully. Games which include bounces to the front and to the side, and which require two handed catches initially, will offer them opportunities for practice, as will varying the direction of the throw and catch of the ball.
- Additional activities that do not depend on visual motor co-ordination but which will have benefits for ball skills include: swimming, dancing, running games, climbing and jumping plus many more usual childhood pastimes.