

Teaching an Effective P.E. Program

A few plain truths!



Most primary teachers haven't been trained to teach an effective P.E. program. You may find yourself with gym time several days each week and little idea of what to do with it. There are books and P.E. programs available, but often the programs are too complicated, take training, are time consuming to set up or don't seem suitable for you, your class or your equipment.

Teaching an effective P.E. program can be difficult. There are a number of possible goals and for each goal there are different methods. Often these techniques are not compatible; there are a number of P.E. programs in place that try to do too much and accomplish little. Teachers may try to teach game skills, gross motor skills, sportsmanship, team play, or gymnastics, but not accomplish any of these goals, and some teachers simply fill the P.E. time with 'something active' without any real outcome in mind.

What is often forgotten at the gym door is that all skills are learned by starting simply and increasing the difficulty. We must remember that children (and adults) learn by practice, practice, practice! There are prerequisites and requirements for playing games that will need to be learned. We can forget that many children in the early primary grades are not physically mature and they need a simple and structured sequential program. Just as is found when teaching reading or math, some children are far more advanced and learn far more quickly than others.

Children today get less exercise than at any time in history. TV has left many not knowing how to climb, jump, skip and run. While the main focus of our teaching is academic, part of our responsibility as teachers is to improve the health and physical well-being of our students.

How should we choose physical activities?

The following checklist is a useful guide when planning physical activities for your class.

- Does the activity provide for differences in the skill levels of your students? Is the exercise developmentally and/or instructionally appropriate?
- Can all students be successful, and at the same time, challenged? This may be one of the most important goals. How many adults do you know who hated P.E. when they were in school because they couldn't be successful? If even one child hates the activity because it is too difficult, that child will be even more unlikely to exercise on his/her own or in another P.E. class. If a child feels singled out because he is unable to adequately perform an activity or because he is not as skilled as his peers, the activity needs to be adjusted.
- Does the activity provide for maximum participation? Everyone should be exercising for as much of the P.E. period as possible. If a game has some children sitting out through most of it, it is an unsuitable activity.
- Would you be able to describe in writing your goals for this activity? If you have to stretch for an answer, the goal is weak.
- Does the activity provide for maximum practice? A well planned lesson should have a short time for directions and a maximum exercise time. If a relay takes five minutes to set up and 30 seconds to run, it is an unsatisfactory exercise.
- Do the skills in this activity build upon the skills learned or practiced in the previous session?

What should our goals be?

Improving the fitness level of students

- Exercise maintains and improves health.

Improving gross motor ability

• Exercises should be included each day that improve gross motor skills. There are always a few children in each class who need this training desperately; and all students will benefit from structured exercises that build gross motor skills.

Teaching skills needed for specific games

- Children need to know ball handling, skipping, running, and other game skills.

Teaching sportsmanship

• Children should be taught to applaud everyone who tries his/her best. Winning isn't everything!

Teaching team playing

- Co-operation is needed for a team to do well in any endeavour.

Fun

- Your P.E. lessons should be fun for everyone, including yourself!



How much time each week should be spent on P.E.?

Unfortunately teachers often don't have much control over the number of minutes each week that they can occupy the gym, and often the weather is not suitable for outdoor activities. They also do a balancing act between the number of minutes spent on Language Arts, Math, Science, etc., and P.E. can be the loser. For the greatest benefit in a gross motor program, a period each day is desirable. Twenty minutes to one half hour each day would be ideal, but realistically this is difficult for most teachers to schedule. For the younger students, shorter periods more often each week give the best results. Children need to play games, too, and this takes a longer session. If you have choice, take more shorter periods for gross motor skills, and perhaps one longer time each week for games.

How can this program help you?

'Teaching an Effective P.E. Program' provides the means for simplicity and success! There are no complicated set-ups, no stations where you need assistants for safety and behaviour management, no elaborate equipment, and it is easy to teach. And it gets results! You will see promising changes in your students' abilities; that is what a P.E. program is all about. If you have a trained P.E. teacher on your staff your children may get fancier lessons, but for many of us, the majority of our time and attention is spent teaching reading and math (as it should be) and a P.E. program should be as uncomplicated as possible.

What are the benefits of a successful P.E. program?

Whether increased physical activity and body awareness improve academic ability is still being debated. It is likely that the ability to learn a physical skill helps the brain to more easily learn another skill, whether that skill is physical or academic. Special Education teachers may observe that many children who have difficulty learning to read also have problems with the awareness of their bodies in space. Some schools provide special gross motor programs for these students.

Certainly improved physical abilities and good health help children feel better, and open the door to improved academic learning. Often poor physical ability lowers a child's self-esteem, and poor self-esteem will be felt across the curriculum. Be very careful that all children are successful and happy in the P.E. program, and that no one feels that the program is too difficult or puts them in a poor light with their peers.



Things to avoid

Choosing teams with the team leaders taking turns picking the team members -

It is a terrible feeling to be one of the last picked. Children who are athletic and popular are always picked first, and the children at the end are singled out as unpopular and those who the others don't want on their team.

One child performing an activity while all his peers are watching -

Any activity where the children take turns and are watched by the rest of the group while they try the skill makes most children nervous and apprehensive. They are afraid of failing or being laughed at because of clumsiness. If everyone is taking part in the activity at once all children will cheerfully practice the skill.

Activities in which the team's success depends on an individual student -

Children who are not athletic hate being singled out and will soon hate P.E. if they are worried about this type of activity.

Testing Gross Motor Levels

It is important that you have some idea of the students' capabilities before the program begins. Some early primary children have no concept of their bodies in space. They have poor control of their limbs, hands and feet. Other children are physically very adept. Spend several periods, if necessary, to score the children on the following skills. Use the score sheet provided. If a child demonstrates command of a skill, simply leave the score sheet blank or put in a check. If the child is awkward and has difficulty with the skill, fill in the appropriate box with an 'X' or 'N' for No.

Score the following skills:

1. Body parts - *basic co-ordination and knowledge of body parts.*

Have the group close their eyes (so they don't copy each other) and touch the following:

- knees, shoulders, hips, head, feet, eyes, elbows, mouth, chest, neck.
For older children, add waist, wrists, ankles.

'X' more than one error, or if the child is slow or has to feel around.

2. Under, over, between - *spatial orientation and body awareness.*

Ask the students to step over a primary chair, duck under a metre stick held just below shoulder height, squeeze between two chairs without touching them by turning sideways.

'X' if the child touches the objects or overestimates by more than a few inches.



3. Balance. Walk a line on the gym floor or a bench or walking board. Walk slowly.
'X' if the child steps off, slides feet, pauses frequently.

4. Balance on one foot. Do both right and left.

K - 3 seconds

Grade 1 - 5 seconds

Grade 2 - 10 seconds

Grade 3 - 15 seconds

'X' if foot touches the floor.

5. Hopping. Hop forward three times in succession with the same foot. Do both left and right.

'X' if foot touches the floor, the body movements are jerky, or the child pauses between jumps.

6. Skipping. Hippety-hop for a short distance.

'X' if the child cannot do it at all.

7. Ball Bounce and Catch. Use a large 10" ball.

'X' if the ball is out of control one out of three tries.

8. Ball Bounce. Use a large ball. Students may use two hands in Grade 1.

'X' if the child cannot bounce at least 3 times.

9. Ball Catch. Use a 10" ball. Stand about two metres from the child and toss the ball using an underhand toss. The child must catch the ball using fingers and hands (not arms and body).

'X' if he/she doesn't catch it two out of three times.

10. Angels in the Snow. The children lie on their backs on the floor. Move the body parts as indicated.

right arm

right leg

left arm

left leg

right arm, left arm

right leg, left leg

right arm, left leg

left arm, right leg

all



'X' if the child has difficulty distinguishing between right and left, or has trouble moving two body parts at the same time.

11. Running. Observe children running from both the front and the back. Watch arm movement, leg movement and head position.

'X' if the arms or legs move sideways, if the feet are flat, if the head is down or the child is kicking feet too high at the back.

Lesson Outline

Organization is the key to a successful P.E. program. If you teach a routine and then perform the same routine each time in the gym there will be little time wasted and each lesson will be effortless. The students should know all the movements and what is expected at each part of the lesson. It will certainly make your job much easier!

The components of a successful P.E. program are:

Finding a personal space
Warming up
Gross motor exercises
Game

Getting to the gym

Practice walking quietly to the gym. You want to get to the gym without disturbing other classes and without wasting time. Perhaps these poems will help!

I'm giving myself a great big hug.
I'm standing straight and tall.
I'm looking straight in front of me.
I'm ready for the hall.

(to the tune 'Mary Had a Little Lamb')

Come and follow in a line,
In a line, in a line.
Come and follow in a line,
Hush now, here we go.

(to the tune of 'Hokey Pokey')

My eyes are straight ahead
My hands are at my side
I keep myself so quiet
As I walk right down the hall.



Every time I get in line,
I stand so straight and tall;
I keep my arms down by my side,
I do not move at all.
My head is facing forward,
My eyes look straight ahead;
My lips are closed, my eyes are open,
Listening to what is said.

Finding a Personal Space

As soon as the students enter the gym, ask them to find a personal space, a self-space or a 'home'. It helps to use the markings on the gym floor, if possible, for personal spaces. Each child can find a 'home' in a closed space on the floor, one that is not too small. No two children can be in the same space. This is a simple concept, and ensures that the children will all be separated. (It also teaches open and closed spaces, a math concept.)

Have the children walk away from their space and then turn and come back home. They can run away from the space, hop away, crawl away, skip, etc. Now that they know their space, throughout the P.E. period you can say, "Back home!" and the children will be instantly separated in their original spaces.

Understanding Self-Space

Practice the concept of personal space by playing 'Bubbles' or 'Far Away'.

A personal or self-space is all the space that the child can reach without moving from one spot. Use a marker (beanbag, carpet square, etc.) to identify your self-space. You can't move from there. Pretend you are on an island. Unless the teacher asks you, keep your self-space to yourself. Pretend you are in a bubble and that the size of that bubble is as far as you can stretch and reach with your body parts.

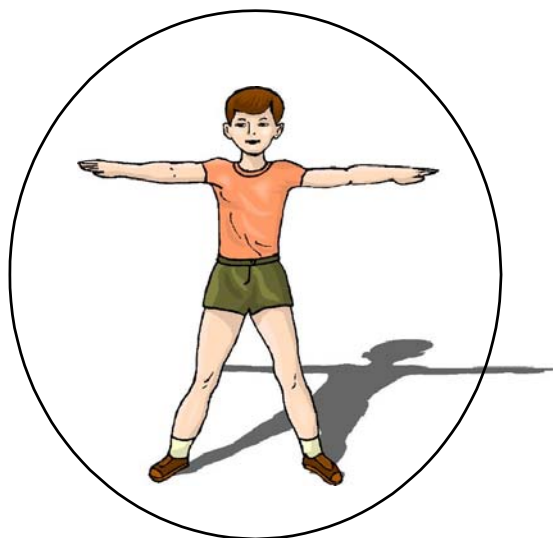
To Move in a Self-Space

Your self-space (or bubble) can move with you. The bubble will pop if it is touched by something. Keep your self space as far from others as you need when playing movement games. Keep your eyes up, watching to avoid others. If you look down you are going to crash into your classmates.

Look for, and move to, open spaces. 'Go where others are not.'

Slow down or speed up to avoid coming into contact with others.

Stay within the boundaries.



Warming Up

With each child in his/her space, do some warm-up exercises. Have the children follow your lead.

Do the following to a silent count of 10 each. Encourage the children to feel 'loose and relaxed', not stiff.

- Stand tall in your space.
- Wiggle your fingers, turn your wrists and wiggle your fingers.
- Move your forearms at the elbow, and move the whole arm from the shoulder.
- Can you do all of those at once?

- Lie flat on the your back.
- Raise the feet and legs.
- Wiggle your toes, turn your ankles.
- Move your legs at the knee and then the whole leg from the hips.
- Can you do all of those at once?

- Stand up tall.
- Move your head forward and back by seeing how far your eyes can see over your head when you tip your head back.
- Turn the head from side to side. How much of the room can you see without moving your shoulders?
- Make your head go in circles.
- Put hands on the hips and bend sideways, keeping both feet firmly on the floor. Bend forward and back.
- Bend at the waist, keeping the knees straight. Touch the floor, and then reach to the sky, slowly, stretching the body.
- Standing tall, lift each knee to the chest, hugging it for a second.

Gross Motor Skills

Do one of the following lessons each P.E. period, and after you are familiar with the sequence and skill building, improvise your own using other equipment or no equipment.

Each exercise should take from 20 seconds to one minute. Gauge whether the children have had time to practice the skill a number of times, but don't give them time to become bored and be doing something else. It is not necessary to use all the exercises or do them in an exact sequence, as long as the exercises progress from the easier to the more difficult.



Ball Skills

You know that there will be a wide range of gross motor abilities in your early primary class. Some of the students will already be very adept with the ball skills, but many more will have difficulty catching, throwing, bouncing and rolling a ball. To increase their skills they must have repeated opportunities to practice. This 10 to 15 minute lesson, if repeated several times each week, will steadily improve the ball skills.



1. Have the children sit in their personal space. Hand out the balls by rolling a ball to each child, saying the child's name. Begin with large balls and decrease the size as the children become more capable.

2. Practice the rule - 'Stand in your space and hold the ball in two hands when I signal.' You can use a whistle, a clap, or other noise as a signal for the children to stop and listen.

3. The exercises: Make the instructions brisk. Model the exercise so everyone knows what to do. Make sure the children are using control. A poor performance will not improve skills.

- Hold the ball with two hands out in front of you, drop the ball then catch when it bounces. Repeat.
- Push the ball downwards as you drop it, then let it bounce upwards and catch it as it comes back down again.
- Toss the ball up gently, let it bounce and catch it.
- Toss the ball up and catch it. Discuss throwing skills as well as catching.
- Try bouncing the ball. (Demonstrate that you *push* the ball each time with a curved hand, not slap it.)
- Walk to the nearest wall, toss the ball gently at the wall, let it bounce once and catch it.
- Sit on the floor, roll the ball at the wall. Try to roll it so accurately that it comes back to you.
- Find a partner and a good space in which to work. Sit on the floor with legs apart and roll the ball back and forth on the floor.
- Stand and toss the ball between you and your partner letting it bounce once.
- Play catch. If you are missing the ball, it means that you should stand closer to each other.
- Practice making basketball shots.

4. Collect the balls.

Other ball activities:

- Put the ball on the floor in the centre of your space. Walk around it, jump over it with two feet, jump, straddling it, etc.
- Balance the ball on your palm. Move your flattened hand and the ball to the floor, as high as possible, out to the side. Transfer it to your other palm and repeat.
- Use your feet to make the ball follow a line on the floor. Use feet to send the ball to a partner and return it.

Gross Motor Exercises with a Beanbag

These beanbag exercises, in order to be effective and make a difference in a child's gross motor skills, must be repeated frequently. If you are especially concerned with a number of your students, have someone video tape them in an early lesson so you can follow their progress later.

1. Have the children sit in their own space. Hand out one beanbag to each child.
2. Practice the rule - 'Stand quietly in your space when I signal'. You can use a whistle, a clap, or other noise as a signal for the children to stop and listen.
3. The exercises: Allow approximately one minute or less for each exercise. Make sure the children are using control. Poor performance does not improve the skills.
 - Balance the beanbag on your head, your knee, stomach, hip, shoulder, hand, wrist, elbow, neck, back, and so on. If it is possible, walk away from your space and back to it without dropping the beanbag. What positions will be used to do the balancing? Try the different positions.
 - Put the beanbag on your head and jump to shake it off. Catch it when it falls. How far can you walk without dropping the beanbag?
 - On your hands and knees, put the beanbag on your back and shake it off.
 - Throw the beanbag into the air with two hands and catch with two hands.
 - Throw it from one hand to the other.
 - Throw with one hand and catch with one hand.
 - Throw and catch as you walk, hop, run.
 - Put the beanbag on the floor. Step carefully around it. Jump over it forwards and backwards with two feet together. Hop around it on one foot.
 - Lie on your back. Grip the beanbag with your feet, raise your legs and drop it on the floor behind your head. Pick up the beanbag with your feet and return it to its original position.
 - Put the beanbag on the floor. Find ways of making it move around the room without touching it with your hands.
 - Place the beanbag on the floor. Rest one hand on it. Move quickly around the beanbag like a 'coffee grinder', with just that hand and the feet touching the floor. Change hands and direction.
 - Crab walk with the beanbag on your stomach.
 - Hold the beanbag between your knees and hop like a rabbit.
 - Invent a new exercise with your beanbag.
4. Collect the beanbags.



Gross Motor Exercises with a Skipping Rope

You will need a skipping rope of suitable length for each child.

1. With the children in their personal spaces, have one or two children run to distribute a skipping rope to each of the other children. As he or she receives a rope, the child should place it on the floor in the shape of a circle, sit in the middle of it with legs crossed, and wait quietly for instructions.
2. Practice the rule - 'Stand quietly in your space when I signal.' You can use a clap, a whistle, or other noise as a signal for the children to stop and listen.
3. Allow 30 seconds to one minute for each gross motor exercise. Make sure the children are using control. Poor performance will not improve gross motor skills.
 - With the rope in a circle on the floor, hop with two feet in and back out without touching the rope. Hop in and out the other side, forwards and backwards. Hop in and out around the circle.
 - Hop on one foot, as above.
 - Place the rope in a straight line. Walk its length without falling off.
 - Hop across the length of the rope, forwards and backwards, without touching it.
 - Hold both ends in one hand and twirl the rope in front of you, beside, then over your head.
 - Hold the rope in both hands so the rope is taut and your hands are as far apart as possible. Keeping the rope taut, move the arms up, down, to each side.
 - With a partner, hold one end of one rope. Swing it around at floor level for the partner to jump.

Learning to skip

To skip, one must teach the body to move to a rhythm. Singing and doing aerobics to music will help to develop the ability to move to a rhythm. You can probably predict which students will have difficulty. They will have poor rhythmic skills which, coupled with problems of understanding their bodies in space, will make it difficult for them to learn this activity. Learning to skip, however, will help to decrease those problems. These children must have the opportunity for lots of practice time with no pressure. It may be helpful to give them a rope to practice with at home after the teaching sessions.

Here are the steps:

- Practice making small jumps to a slow rhythm, so there is time for a smaller secondary jump between each main one. You can clap this out - a loud clap and a softer one. Practice this until the children are comfortable with it.
- Have two helpers turning a long rope. They begin with the child (or several children) standing beside the still rope and then the turning begins. You can clap to the rhythm as above.
- Give the children an opportunity to skip by themselves every day. Turning the rope yourself and jumping is a bit like rubbing your stomach and patting your head at the same time, and it will take time to learn! Each day they can count how many times they skip without the rope stopping, and they can try to keep increasing that number. Once they understand and can follow the rhythm it will become much easier.
- Try turning a long rope and having the children run right through. This is, of course, simply a matter of timing. Tell them they don't have to crouch or run fast if they can follow the rope as it goes away from them. Demonstrate!
- Skip outdoors when the weather is fine. Teach long rope jumping to the children who are ready.



Gross Motor Exercises with a Hoop

You need a medium to large size hula hoop for each student.

1. With each child in his/her personal space, roll a hoop to each one. When a child has received a hoop, he should sit on the floor, legs crossed, inside the hoop circle and wait quietly for instructions without touching the hoop.

2. Practice the rule - 'Stand quietly in your space when I signal.' You can use a clap, a whistle, etc. as a signal for the children to stop and listen.

3. The exercises: Allow each exercise only a minute or less. Make sure the children are using control. Poor performance does not improve the gross motor skills.

- Put the hoop flat on the floor. Jump in and out. Jump across the hoop - out, in, out.
- Jump in and out around the hoop circle.
- Begin with the hoop on the floor. Step in and lift it high overhead with two hands.
- With the hoop flat on the floor, run and jump into the 'pond'.
- Pre-skipping exercises:
 - With the child holding the hoop in front of him, he turns the hoop and skips forward through it, moves the hoop over his head and jumps forward over the hoop again.
 - Have the children swing the hoop back and forth under the feet, jumping forward and backward over the hoop.
 - Skip with hula hoop, both forward and backward.
 - Stand beside the hoop and roll it across the gym, under control.
 - Bowl the hoop to a partner. Partners can exchange hoops by rolling from one to another.
 - Place all the hoops on the floor in two rows with all the hoops touching.
 - Run through the hoops, placing one foot in each hoop opening.
 - Move like different animals (dog, bear, rabbit, frog, etc.) going from hoop to hoop.
 - Bounce and catch a ball in each hoop, moving from one to another.
 - Each child puts the hoop on the floor in his space and throws a beanbag into it, seeing how far back he can go and still be accurate.
 - Have one partner hold the hoop up while the other throws a ball or beanbag through it.
 - Try to use the hoop as a hula hoop around the waist. Demonstrate!
 - Move the hoop around the room without touching it with hands or feet.
 - Think of a trick with the hoop.



4. Collect the hoops.

Gross Motor Activities Without Equipment

One wonderful thing about these gross motor activities is that all students can participate equally, and all are getting suitable exercise. As often happens in games, the children who need improvement most participate the least.

Are you in a hurry, or haven't had time to plan? The following is a simple gross motor lesson without equipment - handy to use when your time is limited.

1. Begin with the children in their personal spaces.
2. Practice the rule - 'when I clap (or whistle, etc.), stop the activity and stand quietly in your space.'
3. The exercises: Allow approximately one minute for each exercise.
 - Directed by the teacher, move various parts of the body in circles - chin, head, shoulders, elbows, wrists, arms, waist, hips, knees.
 - Stretch up high, reaching to the sides, reaching in front and touching the floor. 'Stick your feet to the floor, try to touch the ceiling and all the walls, and the floor.'
 - Walk on the spot, lifting the knees as high as possible.
 - Walk on the gym lines - don't fall off. If you meet someone on a line, turn around and go the other way.
 - Walk, stepping on either side of a line.
 - Jump back and forth over a line. Then angle the jumps so you are moving along the painted line.
 - In your space, stand with feet apart and follow arm motions made by the teacher - big circles, fists at the chest and then out in front, etc.
 - From a crawling position, bring the chin to the floor and back up.
 - From a crawling position stretch first one leg, then the other, straight out behind
 - Lie on your back and pedal a bicycle.
 - Lie on your back and stretch up high with your feet.
 - Move like an animal - try being a frog, a snake, a kangaroo, an elephant, a rabbit, a horse, etc.
 - Jog around the gym (not race) several times. Give the teacher a salute, a high five or a big, big smile as you pass.
 - Rest in your space. Can you relax every muscle? Make your body limp or 'floppy'.

Simple Floor Exercises

- Walk on a line, hop on a line, run around the gym but do not step on a line, go from one end of the gym to the other on a line, play tag on the lines.
- Jump over the line with two feet together. Jump backwards over the line on two feet.
- In your space, use both arms fully extended to point - 'Touch the ceiling, touch the floor, touch my head, touch the door. Touch my nose, touch my toes, see the windmill and AWAY IT GOES!' (Swing both arms around and around).
- 'Jamie (any student's name) wants an animal, an animal, an animal, Jamie wants an animal, What does he want?' The child says the name of an animal and the class imitates the walk of that animal - a hopping rabbit, a lumbering elephant, a jumping kangaroo, a slithering snake, etc.

Games and Activities

Other Warm-Up Activities

Searching for a Lion

This is similar to the choral speech of "Goin' on a Lion Hunt" but is designed for a warm-up activity.

Decide where 'home' will be. An area of the gym floor large enough for the whole class without crowding, touching a wall, etc. will be suitable.

This warm-up activity uses a story to help students practice their gross motor movements. The teacher tells the story of movements involved in a lion search and the students follow the teacher's directions. "Sing" the words with an exaggerated rhythm.

'We are going to go on a trip today! We are going to search for a LION! Fill your (*imaginary*) backpack with food, a sleeping bag, and a tent. Put your backpack on your back and off we go!

Begin marching in unison, in place.

Teacher: Going on a lion hunt,

Class: Going on a lion hunt,

Teacher: Going to catch a big one,

Class: Going to catch a big one,

Teacher: I'm not scared!

Class: I'm not scared!

Teacher: Tall trees (*class repeats*)

Green grass (*class repeats*)

And look at those flowers! (*class repeats*)

Oh - oh! (class repeats)

A hill! (*class repeats*)

Spend about 30 seconds 'climbing the hill', with the students lifting their feet as they climb. At the end of this exercise say:

Teacher: We have come to the top of the hill.....Lion?

Class: LION?

Teacher: Are you there?

Class: Are you there?

Teacher: No lion! (*class repeats*)

Continue the search by going back to marching in place, repeating the chant until the last line.

The last line can be:

A river! (*pretend to swim using large arm movements*)

A tunnel! (*crawl or move on the stomach on the floor*)

A tree! (*pretend to climb a tree*)

Vines! (*swing from vines*)

At the end of any of the exercises the teacher can say:

Teacher: We have come to the end of the tunnel (top of the hill) (top of the tree) (other side of the river)Lion?

Class: Lion?

Teacher: ROAR!

The children race back to 'home' to be safe. The teacher may chase them.



I See

Children begin in their personal spaces. The teacher begins by saying, 'I see!'

The children answer in chorus, 'What do you see?'

The teacher responds, 'I see everyone hopping without touching anyone.' or... 'I see a herd of elephants'or.... 'I see snakes everywhere!', etc. Children respond to this signal with the appropriate movements until the teacher again says, 'I see....' The children stop and answer in unison, 'What do you see?' The teacher responds with a new challenge - locomotor skills, bend and stretch, animal movements, etc.

Activities for Teaching Personal Space

Bubbles

This is to teach the concept of personal space when moving around the area.

To start the exercise, talk about soap bubbles and how they float through the air (even better, as a splendid introduction, do this exercise outdoors and blow some bubbles. Ask children to tell you something that happens to the bubbles as they move through the air). Discuss how bubbles that stay 'bubbles' the longest are those that don't touch any other bubbles or anything else, but if a bubble does touch something else, it POPS and cannot move anymore. Inform students they will be moving like the bubbles today, trying not to touch anyone or anything else.

Have students find a good self space, one in which they can't be popped by anyone else or a wall, equipment, etc. Make sure they have all done this correctly before starting to move. On signal they should begin moving around (start off by walking and then slowly progress to sliding, skipping, hopping, etc.) the area trying to avoid being touched by anyone or anything else.

If students do touch another or something they are considered 'popped'. They come over to the teacher where they sit on the floor for a few seconds while the teacher 're-inflates' them by pretending to pump them up with a bicycle pump. This is a good time to remind them how to move safely through general space.

Far Away

This is another exercise for teaching the concept of personal or self space. This is a game where those who do best are those who can move the farthest away from each other. Tell the students you'll be selecting two or three at a time to act as 'judges'. The judges will be watching the other students as they move around the area. When you give the signal to 'freeze', each judge will pick one student who is very far apart from other students. This student becomes a new 'judge', while the old judge joins those who will be moving. A student who doesn't immediately freeze when you give the signal cannot be chosen as a judge, even if he is far apart from others.

Begin the activity by choosing judges, then have all other students find a personal space. Call out the way students should move (walk, jog, hop, jump, skip, slide, gallop, leap). After approximately 20-40 seconds, give the 'stop' signal and have each judge pick one student who is farthest away from others. Continue until most students have had the opportunity to become a judge.

You can use music as the start and stop signals.

More Activities for Teaching Ball Skills

Introduction

- Bounce a ball in any way.
- Find another way of bouncing.
- Who can find a third way?

Possible ways to bounce a ball -

- in front - standing, kneeling, sitting
- quickly - moving forwards, backwards, sideways
- slowly - high
- to the side - low
- the other side - bounce ball around you
- right hand - you bounce around the ball
- left hand - bounce under leg, left and right
- alternate hands - bounce in and out of legs
- with the foot, elbow, etc. - bounce behind back

Combine some of these in a sequence and repeat.

Movement tasks

Individual:

- throw and catch - one hand
- throw and catch - two hands
- throw and catch while running
- throw, clap, catch
- roll the ball, run after it, pick it up and keep running, repeat
- throw and catch without making a sound
- bounce the ball without looking at it
- bounce the ball to music, keeping the beat
- bounce while walking, bounce against the wall

In groups:

- in pairs, bounce to each other
- in fours - eight feet. apart, bounce to the person on the right, left, across
- in a circle, bounce left, right and across the circle.

Make up routines.



Games

Pirates

Half of the class are Pirates and line up at wall about 10 feet from the other team. The other half stand on a line with their legs apart, feet touching their neighbour's. This is the wall. The students who are the wall can move their arms but never their feet.

Put 'treasures' (perhaps unifix cubes) between each student's feet. The Pirates try to capture the treasure and take it home. The 'wall' can tag anyone within reach. If tagged a Pirate must return the treasure, run to his home, touch the real wall, then run back and try to get more treasure. Pirates can run behind the wall and try to get treasure that way, too. Treasure successfully snatched is taken to a 'home' and the player returns to capture more.



Man from Mars

All children line up on one side of the gym. The teacher is the Man from Mars and stands in Mars (center circle). The kids chant, 'Man from Mars, Man from Mars, will you take us to the stars?' The Man from Mars says, 'Only if you're wearing blue (or only if you're 7, or only if you have white socks, etc.)'. The students who have what is asked for can run to the other side of the gym for free. Then you say 'go' and the rest run and you catch whoever you can. Those caught join you in the circle and help capture other children. Play until there are five left.

Lobo, Lobo, Lobo

'Lobo' is Spanish for wolf. One child wears a pinnie and stands on one side of the wall and is the wolf. The rest of the children form a circle, hold hands and skip around the circle singing: (*tune Here we Go Round the Mulberry Bush*)

'Let's go out in the woods today while the wolf is away.'

Let's go out in the woods today while the wolf's away.'

Then they say,

'Where are you, wolf?'

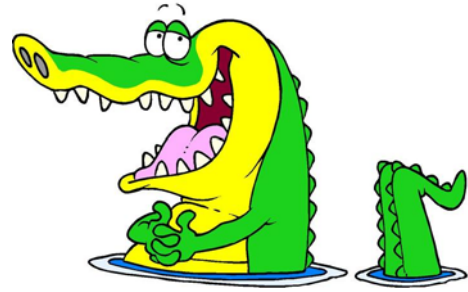
The wolf can make up things like, 'I'm sleeping', or 'I'm brushing my teeth'. If he says, 'I'm on my way to eat you!' everyone runs to a wall. You are safe at the wall but you can only stay for as long as it takes you to say 'Lobo, lobo, lobo, lobo, lobo.' Then you have to run to the opposite wall and repeat. If the wolf tags you the teacher will make you into chicken stew!



Alligator Alley

The students must be familiar with the basic types of jumps - (one foot) hopping, leaping, two foot jump, one-to-two feet jump; two-to-one foot jump, etc.

As a good ‘instant activity’ as well as a review of the types of jumps, have each student get one hoop, place it in a self space on the floor, and stand in the middle of the hoop. At your signal, call out a type of jump (hop, for example); students must then hop out of the hoop and then hop back into the hoop. No matter what type of jump they perform, they should always end up back in the middle of the hoop. If necessary, demonstrate each type of jump before calling it out; give students the chance to practice each of the jumps, such as two-feet out and two-feet back in; from one-foot to two-feet and back in the hoop using one-foot; etc.



For the game, first scatter all of the hoops around the playing area so that each hoop is close enough to another so that students to jump from one to the other. (You may need to use only half of your gym or playing area in order to do this.) Four students will be chosen to be the ‘alligators’; these students will use foam balls in order to gently tag other students. All other students will be spread out on different end lines, so they are not close to each other.

On your start signal, students will jump from the end line to a hoop, then proceed to jump from one hoop to another. Their goal is to reach a different end line without getting tagged by the ‘alligators’ (you can choose to also have alligators jump in order to move). Alligators may only tag someone that does not have both feet in a hoop. When both feet are in a hoop, a student is ‘safe’; only one person is allowed in a hoop at a time. Taggers may not ‘guard’ a hoop, waiting for a student to jump out; and a student may not stay in a hoop for more than a count of ten.

When tagged by an alligator, the student must go back to their beginning line and start once again. Periodically stop the game; allow each tagger to give the ball to a new student, and everyone begins again at an end line.

During the game, you can specify different types of jumps for the students to do, or allow them to choose their own jumps.

Walking Walter

Measure off an area of a field or gym. Use a measuring wheel to determine how many times around it is equal to one kilometre. Have students walk this area for a given amount of time (you can start off with a few minutes and progress to perhaps a ten minute time limit). As each student completes a lap around the area, hand them a paper marker. At the end of the time period, have students stop and count the markers. Determine how many kilometres the total class has walked (it may be necessary to do this later if time is a problem; if it's not, this is a good counting activity for the class). Post the kilometres students have walked by using a ‘Walking Walter Worm’ - he grows a segment for each kilometre that has been walked.

This is a great ‘instant activity’, or beginning of class warm up.

Use this activity as part of a Kilometre Club, perhaps as part of a lead-up to a community run.

One Step at a Time

During activities in which students are practicing moving in the gym, you can beat a drum to a walking beat (slow to medium speed) and have the children walk to the beat of the drum.

Periodically, stop the signal and challenge students to stop at exactly the same time. Also, have them practice moving in both a forward and backward direction, as well as clapping their hands together each time they take a step.

Once they learn to do this - walking one step per beat - have the students count aloud to ten as they take ten walking steps to the beat. Next they can recite the letters of the alphabet as they take 26 steps. They can also spell words (like their own first name) as they step to the drum beat. The noise will be chaotic because each is spelling his own name. They continue to spell their own name over and over again until a stop signal is given. Gradually increase the speed of the drum and have the children move in the same manner one step to one beat.

Because the ability to control the body while moving in time to a beat is a prerequisite to success in almost every form of movement, this is a good 'screening' activity for students in the lower elementary grades. While students are moving, you can easily observe and assess their ability to move in synch with the beat.

Squirrel in a Tree

Have the children line up and as they pass name them - tree, tree, squirrel, and repeat until there are only one or two extra children. These extra children will become homeless squirrels looking for a home. Have each pair of trees join hands and enclose the squirrel in their circle.

When you blow the whistle or give a signal of some kind the squirrels must all look for a new home. Of course the extra squirrels are also looking for a new home so they run, too. Any squirrels left out become homeless and must wait until there is a signal to run and find a new home. The tree pairs should be well spread out so the children get plenty of running space.



Bean Bag War

Divide the class in half. Each half goes to the opposite end of the gym. Spread about 30 bean bags on either half of the gym. The object is to keep the beanbags out of your end of the gym; you may not cross the center line. When the whistle blows all bean bags drop. Count the ones on each side and see who has the least and wins. You can only throw one bean bag at a time.

Bean Bag - Beat the Teacher

Put a number of bean bags into a large bucket or trash container. The teacher is in the center of the floor with the container and starts to toss the bean bags out in handfuls around the room. The children try to pick them up and get them back in the container before the container becomes empty. Of course, the teacher can control his/her tossing speed!

Bean Bag Boogie

The children are divided into two teams. They stand in a line, facing one another, about four meters apart. Everybody has one bean bag to start. When the teacher says 'GO', they start throwing their bean bags at each other. If you are hit you join the team whose member hit you. There are no winners or losers, and the teacher can join a team with fewer players to even things up. You may only throw one bag at a time, you cannot hit anyone above the waist, and you cannot cross the center line unless you are joining the other team. Disagreements are not allowed!

Spiders and Flies

Choose a few students to be the taggers, or Spiders. After putting on a pinnie, they stand in the middle of the playing area. The remaining students, (the Flies or runners), line up at one end of the playing area. Make sure students are well spread out! The Spiders start by saying 'We are the Spiders'; the Flies respond 'We are the Flies'. The Spiders return 'We're going to catch you', and the Flies say 'Just you try'.

At this, the flies move toward the opposite end of the playing area, trying not to get tagged by a spider. If they do, they quickly get a pinnie and then become a spider by taking a place in the middle of the area.

Once the flies have made it to the opposite end of the field, they stay there until given the signal to return to the opposite end of the field. When only a few flies remain, start a new game by picking new spiders.

Parachute Play

Hidden in some gym storage cupboards may be a parachute. Brisk parachute play is good exercise in cooperation, physical activity and listening skills. The parachute can be used in the gym or out on the field on a warm spring day.

Here are some of the possible activities....

The Lake -

The lesson begins with the children spread equally around the circumference of the parachute, holding the edges with their fingers on top and the thumbs beneath. They begin by standing with the parachute at chest level, perfectly still. You can liken the parachute to a lake on a calm day without wind. Then...a tiny bit of breeze comes across the top of the water and the children move their hands slightly up and down. As the wind increases, the children move their hands up and down in ever increasing amounts until there are big waves on the 'water'. Explain that there are two kinds of waves, when the children move their hands quickly up and down without a pattern, and when they move their arms up and down slowly working together to make huge waves. Try moving the hands up and down very quickly and very slowly, working together.



The Umbrella -

This is the first trick. The children all bring their hands down close to the ground, and when you say, 'Ready.... and UP!' they swing their arms and hands up high and keep them up, filling the parachute with air and making the umbrella shape.



The Mountain -

Make an umbrella, and when the parachute is high and filled with air, give a signal for the children to drop the edge of the parachute to the ground and try to seal the edges to keep the air in. If they use their bodies to seal it, the children like to pat the mountain.

Climb the Mountain -

Count off the children in 4's - 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1.....etc. Make a mountain, and just as it is sealed call out a number. The children with that number can climb the mountain and the others seal their spots as best they can. Quickly call the climbers back and begin again, calling another number.

In the Cave -

Number the children as before, but this time call the number before the children make a mountain. Those children dart inside the mountain as the parachute descends. Do not allow them to put their heads through the center hole. The other children make an umbrella for them to escape from the cave.

The Mushroom -

This is spectacular for people watching. The children make an umbrella, and then at your direction they walk forward four steps and then back four steps to their original position. You say, 'Ready.... and UP! Forward, two, three, four, back, two, three, four.'

The Wheel -

The children hold the parachute with their right hands and hold their left hands out. They walk around a circle clockwise until you say 'reverse!'. Then they swing their left hands in to grab the edge and their right hands out and walk in the opposite direction.

Popcorn -

Use several foam balls, make a still lake, put the foam balls on the parachute and tell the children to make them bounce - pop the popcorn.

Golf -

The same as popcorn, but the children must try to work together to get the balls into the center hole. When all the balls have disappeared, pick some of the children to retrieve the balls and make an umbrella for them.



The Roller Coaster -

This is a more difficult trick. One foam ball is used. As it moves on the parachute, each child lifts his edge just as the ball passes him. Each child must do his part or the trick won't work. The

ball should travel around the parachute on large waves.

The Finale -

Make an umbrella, and when the parachute is up high filled with air, the children let go at your signal and sit down quickly. The parachute is allowed to float away.

Aerobics or 'Fitness to Music'

This is an excellent activity to improve fitness. The leader should be familiar with the movements. Put on a jazzy tape and do simple aerobics in time to the music. Ten minutes is a suitable length of time. This is fun for students and fun for you, too! You will really see improvements in their ability to keep the beat and do the exercises, and in their endurance. If absolutely necessary, you could do this exercise in your classroom!



Picking Teams

Here are some easy ways to choose teams without peer pressure or consideration of ability.

- **Standers and Sitters (forming 2 teams)** Have everyone take a partner, with one sitting and the other standing. Standers move to a teacher designated area and form one team. Sitters become another team. This eliminates best buddies and the higher and lower skilled being on the same team all of the time.
- **Birthday Groups (forming small groups)** Have students form groups by their birthdays. If you were born in January go to the teacher designated area, February goes here, etc. To form larger teams you can ask the students to get into groups of those born from January to March, April to July, etc.
- **Seasons (forming into 4 groups)** All children born in the Spring form one group; all born in the Winter form another team, and so on, for Fall and Winter.
- **Face Your Partner (for forming two teams)** Ask the students to quickly find a partner (but

don't tell them you are about to organize them into teams). Ask one partner to stand on a line and face their partner who is standing on another line. All of the students will be standing on one of the two lines, facing one another. The children on the one line comprise one team, the students on the other line form the other team.

- Back To Back (forming two teams) Have students stand back-to-back with a partner (give them no longer than 10 seconds to perform this). Use the following options for forming groups:
 - - Have the younger of the two go to a designated area.
 - - Have the student with the larger or smaller foot size go to a designated area.
 - - Have the taller or shorter student go to a designated area.
- Every Other Student (forming 2 teams) Have the girls line up in front of you and boys behind you (or vice versa). Walk down the line and tap every other student then have him or her raise a hand. Hands up students are one team, hands down the other. You know you have approximately the same number of boys and girls on each team.



**Let your P.E. periods be a rejuvenation time
in your stressful life.**

**Get exercise that will be beneficial
for you as well as for the students.**

**It is important that you have just as much fun
as the children at this time.**

**Schedule exercise sessions as often as possible
so the children will have the practice time
needed to improve their skills.**

Laugh heartily at least once in every P.E. lesson!