

Developing Ball Skills

What is age appropriate?

3-4 years	Kicking	Kicks ball forward at least 6 feet.
	Throwing	Throws tennis ball for distance from forward stance
	Catching	Catches an 8-10 inch ball from 5 feet by trapping it to chest/encircling with arms.
4-5 years	Kicking	Kicks large playground ball with accuracy
	Throwing	Throws tennis ball overhand with trunk rotation
	Catching	May begin to catch an 8-10 inch ball with hands, but may still trap to the chest.
5-6 years	Kicking	Kicks rolling ball with opposing arm/leg movements.
	Throwing	Throws tennis ball with trunk rotation and forward weight shift. Throws with accuracy to a target or person.
	Catching	Catches an 8-10 inch ball from 5 feet using hands only. Catches a bounced tennis ball using 2 hands. Catches a bean bag in one hand.

Strategies - applicable to all categories, please see each category for different activity ideas

- Use a larger ball first, progress to smaller as able
- Start with a ball lighter and/or less bouncy and easier to control (beach ball)
- Stand close and gradually take steps back increasing distance between you
- Rubber or lighter balls (8-10" in diameter) – Dollar Store/Canadian Tire/Walmart are helpful when teaching your child to catch or kick

➤ **Rolling** (sitting with legs in "V")

- Roll back and forth singing a song, play hot potato, provide a target
- Roll the ball through an obstacle course

➤ **Kicking**

- Kick the stationary ball at a target (partner, goal, hoop)
- Kicking requires balance! If your child has difficulty with single leg balance, see our Balance Tip Sheet
- Progress to kicking a moving ball (practice passing to a partner)
- Walk and kick the ball at the same time, try dribbling around an obstacle course



➤ **Hitting** (this activity will help with improving the hand-eye coordination that is required for catching)

- Younger children can start with trying to "catch" or hit bubbles
- Hit a balloon upward and attempt to keep it in the air by hitting it
- Hit a balloon back and forth, from one hand to the other
- Hit a balloon back and forth to a partner
- Hit a balloon with a table tennis paddle, then move to a light plastic bat

➤ Throwing

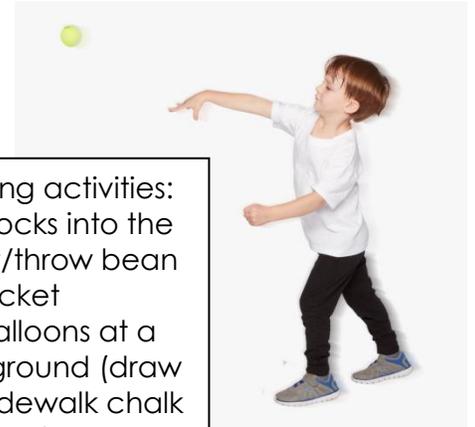
- Hand over hand – provides hand over hand assistance if the child is just learning
- Throw underhand/overhand with 2 hands to a partner or target; progress to one hand as able
- Always throw stepping forward with the opposite foot to the throwing arm shifting your weight forward.

Overhand throwing activities:

1. Throw socks into a laundry basket that is raised up (such as on the couch) and on its side
2. Stack blocks or place bowling pins/other toys on the edge of the table, throw the ball to knock them over
3. Create a target that can be hung on the wall or on the fence, throw bean bags, tennis ball, water balloons, etc at the target

Underhand throwing activities:

1. Throw folded socks into the laundry basket/throw bean bags into a bucket
2. Throw water balloons at a target on the ground (draw pictures with sidewalk chalk or use hula hoops)
3. Bowling – encourages swinging the arm down and back vs whipping arm around the body



➤ Bouncing

- Bounce the ball on a spot with 2 hands
- Bounce the ball on the spot with one hand and then the other; gradually decrease the ball size
- Bounce or dribble the ball through an obstacle course
- Bounce against a wall, let it bounce first and then catch

➤ Catching

- Catch a large ball with 2 hands; progress by catching a small ball with one hand and then the other
- Work towards catching with hands only - try not to trap the ball against the body
- Throw directly to your child and as they master catching a ball begin to throw the ball slightly to the left or right of the child's hands as they progress
- Have your child next attempt to catch a ball at various heights and angles

Catching activities:

1. Play catch and each time somebody catches the ball, take a step back until the child begins to have difficulty catching the ball, then take a step forward each time
2. Practice catching with a baseball glove

