

## CARE & LEARNING SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE FOR

### BALL SKILLS

There are many different skills that you use to control a ball in order to play games such as football, basketball and rounders. This includes being able to roll, catch, throw, bounce, hit, dribble and kick a ball.

#### Coaching Tips:



Start at the level that a child can do successfully and then slowly increase the level of difficulty so that the child is challenged slightly each time, but does not lose self confidence

Give specific praise, eg “good looking” when the child is following the ball with their eyes

Give lots of encouragement and praise for effort, eg “good try”

Some children may be frightened by a ball coming towards them and may be more focused on avoiding it than controlling it

If so, start with a variety of slow moving objects, such as a balloon, beach ball or foam ball

To make the child more aware of their hands, get them to warm up by rubbing their hands together or clapping their hands



Get your child’s attention first so they know the ball is coming towards them. Remind them to look at the ball and have their hands / feet ready

Split learning into different tasks, eg throwing is one task, catching is another

Help your child learn from unsuccessful attempts by discussing reasons, such as was the throw too hard? Did you close your hands too late?

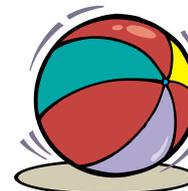
With each catch or throw of the ball, upgrade and make the task slightly harder, eg taking one step backwards to throw the ball further

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

### Rolling a Ball

This is a good skill to start with

- Sit on the floor, place the ball on the floor and roll it towards the child
- Encourage them to stop the ball with their hands and then roll the ball to someone or something else
- Roll the ball in various directions, eg forwards, backwards
- Roll the ball around shapes, eg a hoop for a circle, a rope placed on the floor in a shape
- Roll the ball up and down the arm, leg, around your waist

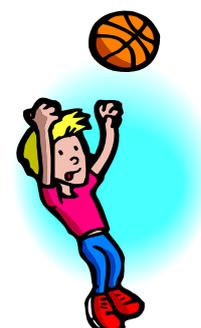


### Throwing

- Start with underarm throwing and progress to over arm throwing
- Throw at a target; start with a large target, such as a hoop, then work towards a smaller target
- Begin by using an item that will not move when it lands, such as a beanbag
  - This helps with learning as a child can see where it lands and what they might need to change next time
  - Once they have mastered this, work on different items, such as balls

### Catching

- Start by using a light ball, beach ball or textured ball
- Encourage a “clap catch”, where your 2 hands come together as if clapping in order to catch the ball
- If 2 handed catching is too difficult, give the child a container to hold, such as a basket
- You can help by cuing a child when to catch, eg “ready, steady, catch”
- Stand close to the child so that they are successful; gradually move further away from the child
- With larger distances, use a bounce and catch, before progressing to a direct catch
- Move onto using a smaller ball and increasing the distance between thrower and catcher
- *Practice the above activities before progressing onto throwing and catching with a partner*



## Bouncing

- Bounce a large, soft ball on the floor and catch it with 2 hands
- Once this is achieved, move on to using a smaller, firmer ball
- Working up to bouncing the ball on the ground whilst walking



## Hitting



- Start with a foam ball or balloon
  - Encourage the child to hit the ball with their hand before introducing a bat
  - Play batting a balloon to and fro each other, using your hands
  - Move on to using a bat; try ones with a large surface area, such as a plastic tennis racquet
- Start throwing the ball from a short distance; if a child is successful, slowly increase the distance
  - Allow the ball to bounce before it is hit to help the child with the timing
  - Once successful, move on to using a smaller, firmer ball

## Kicking

- A ball can be kicked with the front or side of the foot
  - Kicking the ball with the front of the foot allows the ball to travel further
  - Kicking the ball with the side of the foot allows more control
- Start by kicking a large stationary ball
- Set out wide goal posts and place the ball close to the goal so the child is able to easily score a goal; slowly increase the distance of the ball from the goal and move the goal posts closer together
- Walk slowly, dribbling the ball in a straight line
- Build up to controlling the direction, such as dribbling around a cone and then weaving the ball in and out of cones
- Practice running and kicking a ball
- Passing skills and stopping the ball with the foot is a more advanced skill to work on



## Combining Skills

- This is when any of the above skills are joined together, eg throwing and catching
- See this as a new skill, so as described above, use an easier ball, start with small distances and build up from there