

Inexpensive Home-Made Play Props and Activities

Physical Activity with Young Children!

- It is recommended that preschool age children experience at least 60 minutes of active play every day.
- Children tend to tire easily but recover quickly, so they need opportunities to move throughout the entire day at both school and home.
- Provide “a little activity here and a little activity there” to have children move in short bursts. These short bursts of activity add up throughout the day.
- Music and homemade play props can help provide activity in limited spaces with limited budgets.
- Adults can help children practice motor skills and enhance school readiness skills while leading an activity that elevates their heart rates.
- Adults can also gain health benefits by participating as a play partner with children.



Play and Learn with Spot Markers

Spot markers give children a sense of “place” and can be used as props for activities. Make spot markers from waffle shelf liner. Cut the material into different shapes, letters, numbers or even fruits and veggies

Travel to the Spots

Scatter the spot markers around the available play area, and provide children challenges as they travel from spot-to-spot. Review various school readiness skills during this game using the examples below. Create your own challenges.

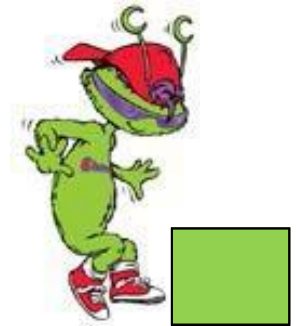
Examples:

March to a red shape. When you get there, stand on top of it and balance on one foot. Can you gallop to the number 4? Can you jump to a shape with four sides?

What is the first letter of your name? Can you skip to that letter?

What letter makes this sound? (Make the sound of the letter.)

Can you walk backwards to that letter?



Home Made Twister

Place the spot markers closer together to play a game similar to “Twister.”

Examples:

Place your hand on a blue shape. Now place a foot on a fruit. Place your head on a number that is lower than “5.”

Place your elbow on your favorite letter.



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Play and Learn with Scarves!

Inexpensive paper napkins or wedding tulle purchased from a fabric store can make inexpensive scarves. Scarves can provide great play props for practicing hand-eye coordination because they are slow-falling objects. Scarves can also be used to act out words, make shapes, and pretend play. Scarves can be slippery when stepped or jumped on, so encourage caution when using scarves on the floor.



Color Matching and Patterns

If using different colored napkins or tulle, ask children to match scarves of the same color or create a pattern or graph representing the various colors.

Making Shapes

- Challenge children to make different shapes of various sizes.
- Can you fold your napkin into a rectangle? Can you make a smaller rectangle?
- Can you make a square with your napkin? How many sides does a square have?
 - Can you jump over your square four times?
- Can you make a triangle with your napkin?
 - Can you count the number of corners while touching each one with your elbow?

Pretend Play

Children will use their imagination to act out a variety of pretend situations with a scarf.

- Can you pretend your scarf is
 - a kite flying high in the sky; or a cloud floating low to the ground
 - a tail of a horse as you gallop in the pasture
 - a butterfly flying from flower to flower; or a bee flying from hive to hive
 - a hula-skirt as you dance
 - a paint brush. Can you paint up-and-down? Can you paint side to side? How about in a circle?
- Create your own movement activities with a scarf.

Tossing, Catching, and Balancing

- Practice tossing and catching with a scarf as you review different movements and vocabulary words.
 - Can you toss the scarf up high and then catch it low?
 - Can you toss the scarf and catch it with the same hand? Can you catch it with the other hand?
 - Can you toss the scarf and clap two times before you catch it? How about 3?
 - Can you toss the scarf and then turn around before catching it?
 - Toss the scarf and have it land on different body parts (back of hand, head, foot, back, etc.)
 - Place the scarf over your face and blow the scarf off, then catch it.
 - What else can you do with your scarf?

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Play and Learn with Ropes!

Yarn, nylon string, or jump ropes can be used to have children practice writing and drawing using large arm muscles. Plus, large letters and numbers on the floor can be paired with practicing action words. Actually, *experiencing* letters, numbers, and shapes extends learning and adds opportunity for active engagement.



Making Shapes

Make different shapes (circle, square, triangle, etc.) and pathways (straight, curved, zig-zag).

- Can you draw a square with your rope?
 - Can you count how many sides your square has as you jump on each one?
 - Can you balance on one foot and count to 4 inside your shape?
- Can you draw a circle on the floor with your rope?
 - Can you trace your circle with your foot?
 - Can you walk along your circle?
 - Can you stand up and make a circle with your arms?
 - Make circles with both arms?

Writing Letters

- Can you write the first letter of your name on the floor with the rope?
 - Can you name an animal that starts with that letter?
 - Pretend to be that animal.
- Can you write the first letter of your favorite fruit? Veggie? Color?
- Help your child write simple three-letter words that rhyme, such as: bat, cat, hat, etc.

Writing Numbers

- How old are you? Can you write that number on the floor with the rope?
- Count how many times I clap my hands, and then write that number on the floor with the rope.
 - Can you jump over your number that many times?
- Create patterns with shapes using the ropes.
 - **Example:** circle, square, circle, square, etc.
 - **Example:** square, square, circle, square, square, circle, etc.
 - **Example:** big triangle, little triangle, big triangle, little triangle, etc.

Be Creative

Use ropes to draw a picture, just as you would on a piece of paper such as a boat, flower, or house. Use your imagination! Ropes can be used to draw body parts (hand, arm, foot, toes, etc.). If you have several ropes or a small group, work together and create a giant body.