

# Playing with balls

## Rationale:

Balls make physical activity fun. Throwing, catching, rolling and kicking balls works your child's arm and leg muscles, improves hand-eye coordination and increases fitness. It is very satisfying for your child to notice how he can improve his ball skills with practice. This is a good way for him to build self-esteem and confidence. It also helps him to understand that he can learn and get better at something if he practises and puts in effort. Playing with a ball is also just a great way to spend quality time with your child and build your relationship.

## Age range information

3-6 years

## What you need

You and your child can play with balls of any size, colour and texture. Bigger, softer balls are easier for younger children to kick and catch. Small balls can be fun to bounce or throw at a target.

You probably already have a ball or two at home. You can even make a soft ball to use inside using a pair of rolled-up socks, or a scrunched-up piece of newspaper and some tape. Start with what you have.

## How to do it

Start with the basic ball skills – catching, throwing or kicking. As your child gets better at these skills you can kick or throw a ball at a target or into a goal, through a hoop or to another person. Just pick an activity that you and your child enjoy. Try these ideas:

- Teach your child to catch using a big, soft ball. Start close together and slowly increase the distance between you as his skills improve. Praise him and remind him of how close you started when he was just beginning.
- Play with soft balls (or a ball of socks) inside with your child. Take turns to throw them into a bucket or laundry basket. You could move the bucket or basket closer when it is his turn.
- Take a ball to the playground. Practise kicking it to each other or to a goal or target. Pick an easy target so he has encouraged to continue.
- Take a ball outside and bounce it together. Your child could practise dribbling it like a basketball player, or you could bounce it back and forth to each other.

### Adapting for children of different ages

Kicking is a difficult skill that requires your young child to be able to balance on one foot. If he has trouble kicking, he could hold onto a tree or a piece of playground equipment while you kick a ball back and forth.

For older children, you can introduce bats or racquets in ball games. You could take a baseball bat to the park. You could also just hit a ball of scrunched-up newspaper across the living room with a tennis racquet.

Your older child might also like to play a ball game at the park with a group of his friends. Keep the rules simple and be on hand to step in if sharing or losing becomes challenging for anyone.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

### Recommended Reads

- [I like to play](#)
- [Bear and ball](#)
- [Encouraging Physical Activity in Toddlers](#)