

Kicking & Catching

LEVEL: Active Start 3 - 6 years old

DURATION: 50 - 60 minutes

CATEGORY: Object Manipulation

EQUIPMENT: Balls of various sizes, textures and weight. Alternate objects such as a rope with a knot, folded or rolled up socks, handkerchiefs.

Quick Start/Warm-Up 5 minutes

Set up a few targets around the activity space – for example:

- *two cones to make a goal*
- *a hula-hoop taped against a wall*
- *two chairs with a rope stretched between their tops*
- *tape on the wall*
- *a rope between two stands*

Each child has a ball. Invite the children to dribble with their feet around the activity space and kick their ball at the targets. They should try kicking with both feet. If they can consistently hit a target, encourage them to try kicking at from further away to increase the challenge.

Kicking 25 minutes

Tell children that to kick a ball with power, they need to start with their body behind the ball. They take a step forward with their non-kicking foot and plant it 10-15 cm beside the ball. Their kicking leg swings towards the ball and they should contact the ball with their laces or instep. They should follow through with their leg continuing to swing forward and across their body. Power comes from quality contact and complete, coordinated body movement, not from simple leg strength. Arms should be raised slightly like “airplane wings” to provide balance, and knee of planted leg should be bent slightly.

Activity 1: Kicking Practice

Have each child circulate through the activity space as in the warm-up activity. Encourage them to try some of the following progressions;

- *kick to a target farther away*
- *kick a ball up in the air*
- *kick a ball rolling towards you*
- *kick to a partner*

CUES

Provide some spatial awareness/safety cues at this point. For example, kickers should make sure no one is in the path of where they are going to kick.

CUES

- **Step forward**
- **Plant your foot**
- **Use your laces**
- **Follow through**
- **Airplane wings up**

CORRECTION AND POINTS TO STRESS

There are quite a few technical points to kicking and including all of them would make the explanation too long for this age level. Focus on making sure the children plant their non-kicking foot next to the ball and contact the ball with their laces (instep).

Activity 2: Clean Up

Divide the group in half and have one team on either side of the activity space. Use two lines on the floor or set up two lines of cones to establish two boundaries that are slightly set back from the center line on either side. This marks the middle “forbidden” zone that neither team is allowed to enter. This forces the two teams to be a safe distance apart for kicking.

One team starts with all the balls.

On the signal, the kicking team starts kicking the balls as quickly as possible across to the other team’s zone.

If a ball stops in the forbidden zone, either team can retrieve it, but they must return to their zone before attempting to kick it to the other side.

Play for a fixed amount of time, then stop and count which team has the most balls in their opponent’s zone.

Balls in the forbidden zone do not count; this provides incentive for children to retrieve them from the forbidden zone to continue playing.

Catching 25 minutes

Tell children they are now going to practice a very important skill that is used in a lot of sports: Catching. Knowing how to catch well will let them enjoy a lot of different activities, including just going outside with friends and playing with a ball. Explain that to catch well, they need to make sure they are always looking at the object they are catching. They should also get their body behind the object. If they see it is coming to one side of them, they should move their whole body to the side, not just reach their arms out to the side. As they reach forward to catch the object, their thumbs should be touching together if the object is above their waist. If the object is below their waist, their little fingers should be touching. As they receive the object with their hands, they should bend their arms and bring the object in towards their body.

Activity 3: Trick Catch

Divide children into pairs, each child with a ball. Children start with simple vertical tosses to themselves to practice basic catching. Then Partner 1 tosses the ball and does a trick before catching (e.g. clapping hands 2x). Partner 2 has to attempt to replicate Partner 1’s trick. Then Partner 2 does their own trick that Partner 1 will have to try to replicate.

CUES

Same as activity 1.

CUES

- Eyes on the ball
- Get behind
- Hands together (pinkie or thumb)
- Bring to body

CORRECTION AND POINTS TO STRESS

At this age, many children will attempt tosses and tricks that result in the ball landing on the ground. Emphasize practicing a trick until children can catch the ball.

Activity 4: Line Ball

Form groups of five where each group has one ball. One person in each group is the leader and stands in front of the other four members. The other members stand side by side in a line, facing the leader. The leader throws the ball to the first person in the line, who catches and throws back to the leader. The leader throws to the next person and continues with each person in line. When the last person catches the ball, they hold onto it and become the new leader.

CUES

- Eye on the ball
- Hands ready to catch

CORRECTION AND POINTS TO STRESS

Emphasize to children before the activity starts that everyone is learning and practicing how to catch. If someone drops the ball, teammates should provide encouragement such as “good try”, not negative comments.

Summary 2 minutes

Q. What part of your foot do you kick the ball with? When you reach out to catch an object, what do you need to remember to do as your hands grasp it?

This lesson plan was prepared in collaboration with ACCSports.ca

ADDITIONAL SOURCES: PHE Canada. Fundamental Movement Skills: The building block for the development of physical literacy. Active Start and FUNdamental stages, 2008.

Graham, Holt/Hale & Parker. Children Moving: A Reflective Approach to Teaching Physical Education. 5th Ed. Mayfield Publishing Company, 2001.

Be Fit for Life - Moving Alberta. Move & Play Through Physical Literacy. Card Ring.