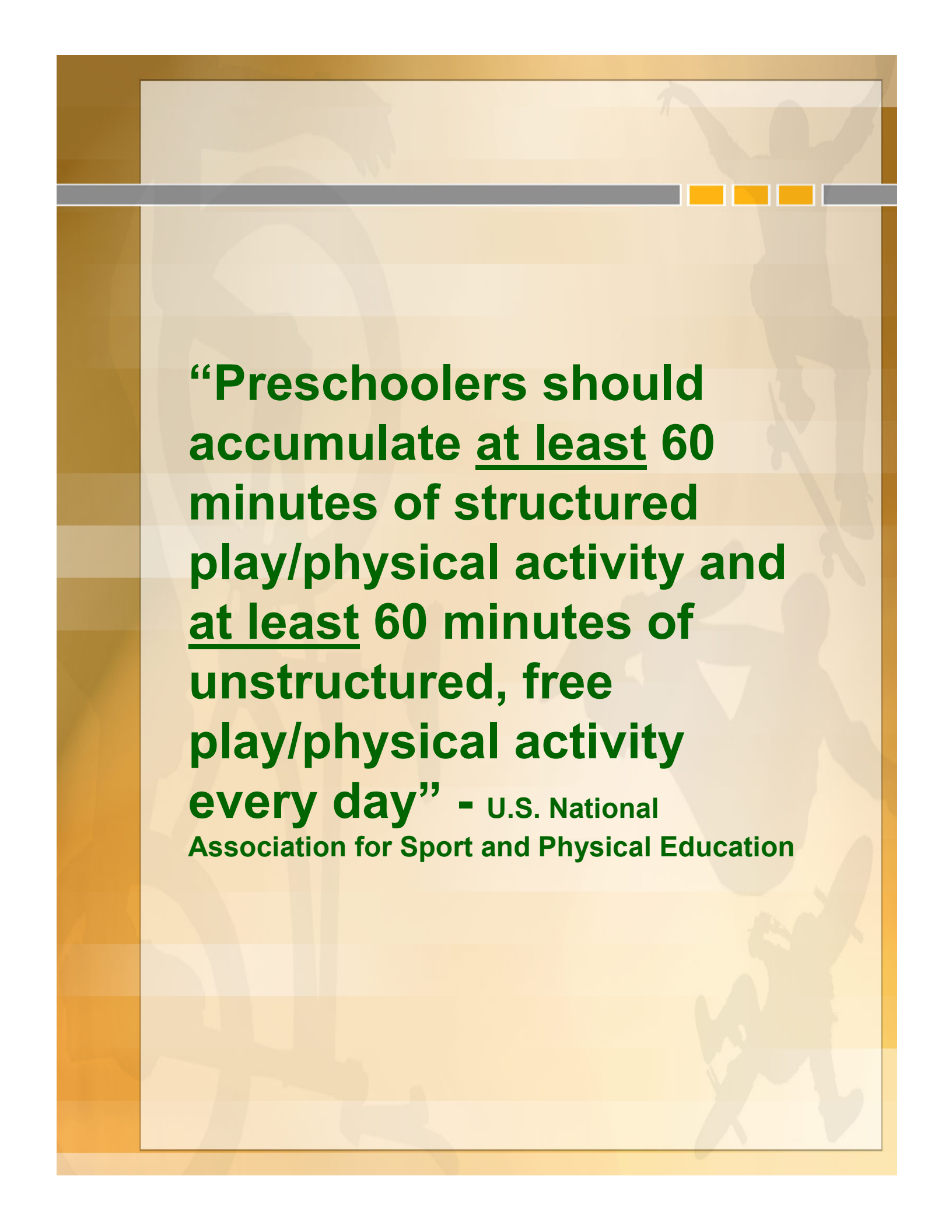


FUN First!



**On the Path to Physical Literacy and
Developing FUNdamental Motor Skills...**



**“Preschoolers should
accumulate at least 60
minutes of structured
play/physical activity and
at least 60 minutes of
unstructured, free
play/physical activity
every day” - U.S. National**

Association for Sport and Physical Education

What is '*FUN First*'?

- 'FUN First' is a program that explains the necessity of daily physical activity and education and acts as a resource with numerous games and activities readily available for Early Childhood Educators to use. The games and activities are age appropriate, cover all the basic **fundamental** motor and perceptual skills, are easy to interpret, explain and demonstrate and most importantly they are FUN!



- **Physical literacy** – “The mastering of fundamental motor skills and fundamental sport skills.” (Whitehead, 2001). To become physically literate, one must master fundamental motor skills and then apply these skills to various situations; always learning new ways to adapt, learning to move the body more efficiently and effectively. “Being physically literate, one will be aware of all aspects of their physical environment, anticipating movement needs or possibilities and responding appropriately to these, with intelligence and imagination” (Whitehead, 2001).
- **Fundamental motor skills** - Basic skills (such as running, throwing and jumping) that require voluntary body and/or limb movements. Children start to develop these skills naturally at a young age by playing and can be mastered through practice and guidance. Fundamental motor skills are needed to live a healthy, active life.



Statistics

- “The 2006 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on physical activity for children and youth has given Canada a “D” grade. Physical Activity Levels – “D” grade: Less than half of Canada’s children meet the minimum daily physical activity requirements to support basic healthy growth and development. Family Physical Activity – “D-” grade: Only 36% of parents regularly engage in physical activity with their children, and as many as 32% report that they rarely or never play active games or sport with their kids. Overweight and Obesity – “F” grade: New direct measure data indicates obesity in children continues to rise, most notably among adolescents aged 12-17.” www.activehealthykids.ca
- In Prince Edward Island, 52% of youth aged 12-19 are not active enough for optimal growth and development. (2000/01 CCHS).
- The best predictor of exercise behaviour in kids is perceived competence. Kids who feel good about their fitness abilities are more likely to participate in the type of activity necessary to improve health and fitness...*Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, vol 67, 324-336, 1996.
- Barriers to physical activity: 74% of Islanders cite lack of time, 69% lack of energy, **38% lack of skill**, 64% lack of interest or motivation, **47% report feeling ill at ease/uncomfortable**, 50% illness and disability, **39% fear or injury** and 43% due to cost (Canadian Community Health Survey 2000/2001).



Why was FUN First Developed?

- The earlier children start to lead active lifestyles and incorporate physical activity into their daily lives the better. These children will grow up being active and most likely be active as adults which will help to prevent and reduce the rate of chronic diseases like heart disease, type II diabetes and high blood pressure among others. This will in turn reduce health care costs by reducing the demand and strain on our already exhausted system and health care workers.
- Also, physical activity is linked to cognitive development and has been shown to improve math and reading comprehension. "Preschool physical education has been shown to assist developmental delays." (Zittel & McCubbin, 1996).



- In some provinces, children are in the school system at age 5 and have access to physical education class. Here on Prince Edward Island that is not the case, therefore it is imperative that our 5 year olds do not miss out on a year of quality physical activity and education. When children miss out on developing vital motor skills in these key years they could be less likely to join and stay with sports or other types of physically active activities later in life. They may not have the necessary skills, feel incapable and/or have low self esteem about any type of physical activity.

- This resource program was developed for Early Childhood Educators teaching preschool and kindergarten (keeping in mind that they are not phys ed teachers and do not necessarily have any background in phys ed) to help our children develop these skills by increasing their opportunities to play, practice skills and receive proper instruction and feedback.



- Genes, nutrition and experience (opportunity to play and practice) are the three main factors contributing to the different motor skill abilities and development found in children. Genes cannot be altered but nutrition and the opportunity to develop these motor skills can be. The resource material presented here is intended to develop motor skills through experience.
- Nutrition is a huge part of development and should not be ignored as something separate from physical activity and physical education. Proper nutrition is highly linked to behaviour, ability to concentrate and energy levels. Without proper nutrition, the ability to learn and properly perform physical skills is greatly reduced. Therefore it is highly recommended that everyone, including children aged four to six follow Canada's Food Guide to healthy eating.



How and why should children develop fundamental motor skills?

- Every child develops differently and at different rates; physically, cognitively, emotionally and psychologically. One child may learn to walk months before another, learn to talk or count before another, or learn to ride a bicycle at age 3 another at age 6. So when children reach kindergarten and grade 1 they are developmentally at very different levels.
- We want our children to be on a somewhat level playing field academically and we therefore have a school curriculum (for math, English, science, etc.) that is flexible enough to suit the capabilities of most children of a certain age.



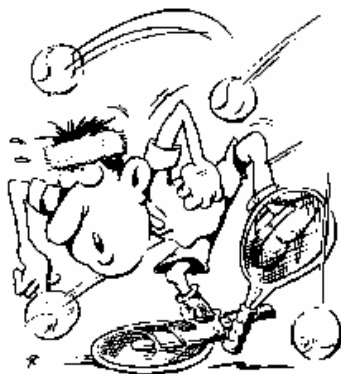
- We have a structured educational curriculum to teach kids the alphabet, then how to recognize letters and words, and how to eventually read and write. We don't just give them a book and expect them to figure out how to read by using the pictures and observing others. So why do we do this to our children in sports?
- Putting young children aged 5 and under into organized sport is more for the enjoyment of the parents than it is for the benefit of the children. They have not learned enough fundamental motor skills; let alone have any concept of what sport *is*, the competition or strategies involved or the rules and regulations - if you've ever watched a mini-soccer game, half the kids are off running in a different field or picking flowers. The kids run off because they want to "play" not to play soccer but just to play freely with other kids. Free play and organized **play** are the best ways for children (aged 5 and under) to learn, they can develop their skills and imagination.
- This is not to say that a sport organization cannot change their methods and focus on free play while at the soccer field or hockey rink – as opposed to focusing on the rules, regulations and tactics of the game.



- Sports in general are not being discouraged as FUN First! can be a useful tool in the “Active Start Stage,” of the new Canadian model of the Long-Term Athlete Development program which builds physical literacy in all children, from early childhood to late adolescence by promoting quality daily physical activity(www.ltad.ca). Thus FUN First! both promotes daily physical activity AND helps to develop athletes, thus advancing sport in PEI and Canada.
- However, we must still remember that our children need to learn how to crawl before they can walk, walk before they can run, jump and hop before they can gallop, slide or skip. Children need to learn **all** of the basic motor skills before they are registered for one or two sports because this often leads to specialization in that sport. This may in turn inhibit athleticism and lead to injuries because they will not have the opportunity to develop a broad base of fundamental motor skills. Even if a certain sports team focuses a lot on practice and learning the techniques involved, those techniques are often very specific to that one sport (and maybe a few others).



- “By age 12, many youth baseball players know how to throw a curve and lay down a bunt, but few can nab a line drive hit in an awkward spot. Similarly, young basketball players can make some amazing jump shots, but often play defence with very little grace or body awareness. When the athlete is asked to go outside their sport's narrow performance spectrum and extend to an unusual position or make an unfamiliar move, he or she often cannot.”
(Gambetta, Vern, 1996).



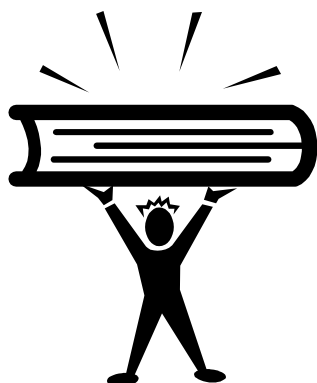
Nature vs. Nurture

- Another common misconception is the role that “nature” plays in the development of athletes. Quite often, too much emphasis is put on the genetic importance of athleticism, the ‘natural athlete’ – people do not emphasize the importance of ‘nurturing’, teaching and developing skills through practice and education. Many people think that kids are natural-born athletes or they are not and that’s the end of it. Physical education class is not often recognized as an academic class and many people think children shouldn’t be graded down if they perform poorly, they should be marked on their effort* and not their technical performance. Yet they will accept a poor mark in math if the child is not performing where they should be at that stage of development.
 - *Not to undermine the importance of effort as it is always an important part of grading.



The Objective

- The objective of this project is to avoid overplaying sports and sport specialization while encouraging the development of a broad range of fundamental motor skills.
- The activities and games listed in this manual are meant to be a useful resource for Early Childhood Educators to help young children develop basic fundamental motor skills. They need these skills to serve as building blocks before they are placed in organized sports and to ready them for a life long habit of being physically active, by becoming physically literate and ultimately physically educated.



Implementation:

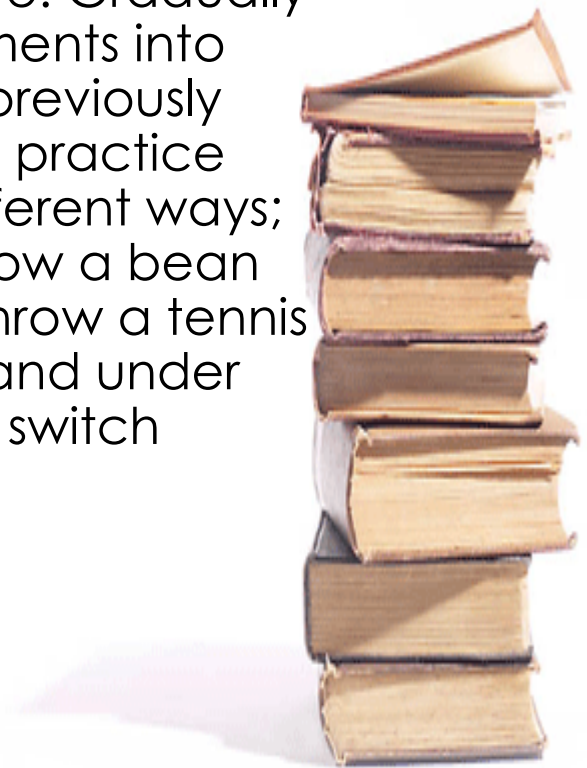
- Every day children should accumulate AT LEAST 60 minutes of free 'active' play and 60 minutes of organized 'active' play. Many children are in some form of child care and every child attends kindergarten, therefore child care centres are good venues for children to be exposed to this program and reap its benefits. It is not being suggested that children obtain ALL of their 60 minutes of free play and 60 minutes of organized play while at child care, but a majority of it can be. Parents are responsible as well for giving their children the opportunity to play and be active everyday.
- The games and activities in FUN First! are meant to be quick and easy to understand and play. The activities are separated into three main categories, loco-motor activities, manipulation activities and stability activities, as well as subcategories such as yoga-oriented activities, parachute activities...etc.



- There are many opportunities throughout the day to do a few quick games, such as during 'circle time,' right before snack or lunch break, right before nap time, during lunch break (with children who are done eating), outside time – take the children to a designated "activity area," so that they know they are going to play an organized game and it is not free play time. You could also designate a few times during the day which will be dedicated to a fundamental motor skill activity. You may wish to do a yoga-type activity at the end of the day before the kids go home or right after outside time to quiet them down before they are brought back inside.
- It may be a good idea to schedule a monthly cycle where you would work on loco-motor skills during week one, manipulation skills week 2, stability skills week 3 and everything else week 4. You could then focus on certain skills each day during those weeks, such as running and galloping day one, jumping and landing day two, crawling and rolling day three and so on.



- Before beginning the activities and games it is important to remember that children at this age learn best through explorative play and repetitive activities; they learn through practice, practice, practice! This practice can be highly structured or very loosely structured as long as the skills are taught gradually. Emphasize one skill at a time and when correcting a skill such as kicking, focus on only one technique at a time to avoid overwhelming the child and discouraging them from trying again. They will not get it right the first time and encouragement to keep trying is imperative. Gradually combine single movements into combinations, review previously learned skills often and practice a skill in a variety of different ways; throw a basketball, throw a bean bag, throw a frisbee, throw a tennis ball, throw over hand and under hand, use both hands, switch hands, etc.



So...What Exactly are Fundamental Motor Skills?

- There is a continuum for fundamental motor skills with gross motor skills at one end and fine motor skills at the other. Fine motor skills are those produced with small muscles and require a great deal of precision and accuracy, such as writing, painting or playing an instrument. Gross motor skills are produced with larger muscles making large bodily movements such as running, jumping and hopping. The focus of this resource material is on gross motor skills, which are grouped into loco-motor skills, stability skills, and manipulative skills.

–Perceptual skills are also associated with fundamental motor skills and they include movement awareness, body/kinaesthetic awareness, spatial awareness, rhythmic awareness, directional awareness, vestibular awareness and temporal awareness.

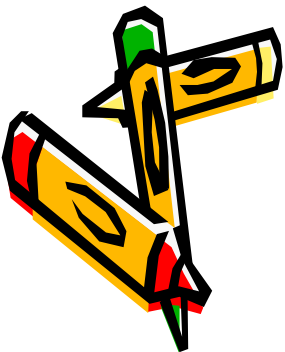
- To provide a better understanding of the fundamental motor skills, what they are, how to teach them, and how to evaluate them, listed on the following pages are definitions of the skills with what to emphasize when teaching the skills.



Definitions:

Loco-motion - The ability to move from one point to another using any basic movement or combination of movements in a smooth, fluid manner without breaking the pattern of movement.

- Walking - stepping (heel to toe) by transferring the weight from one foot to the other. **Emphasize swinging the arms naturally in opposition to the feet (right leg forward, left arm forward).**
- Hopping - standing on one foot, take the weight off this foot by bending the knee and pushing off the floor with the ball of the foot. The same foot is used to land, bending the knee to absorb the impact. **Emphasize bending the knee and staying balanced.**
- Jumping - bend at the knees and swing the arms back and then forward and up while pushing off the floor with the balls of the feet- pull your knees toward your chest and land lightly on the balls of the feet first then heels. **Emphasize bending the knees to absorb the impact.**



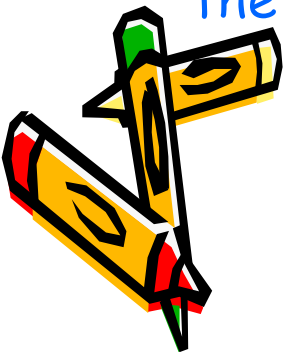
Fundamental Motor Skills (loco-motion) - Definitions:

- **Jogging** - similar to walking except that in between steps both feet are off the floor. Make sure feet are underneath the hips and are not crossing in front of each other or stepping out to the sides. Arms swing alternately to feet placement and are bent because they act as pendulums and therefore make the movement (jogging) more mechanically efficient (than if arms were straight). **Emphasize bending and swinging the arms.**
- **Running/sprinting** - similar to jogging except faster and instead of pushing with a heel-toe movement, only the ball of the foot touches the floor. The arms pump vigorously in opposition to steps. **Emphasize keeping the head up, looking forward.**
- **Leaping** - usually preceded by a run. The body is in the air longer than it is when running or jumping. A leap is usually done by pushing off the ball of one foot and extending the opposite leg in front as far as possible for a landing. **Emphasize moving forward during the leap.**
- **Galloping** - bring the back foot up to but not past the front foot, the front foot is then stepped ahead. The same foot leads throughout the movement, knees should be bent and heels do not touch the floor. **Emphasize keeping the same foot in the lead.**



Fundamental Motor Skills (loco-motion) - Definitions:

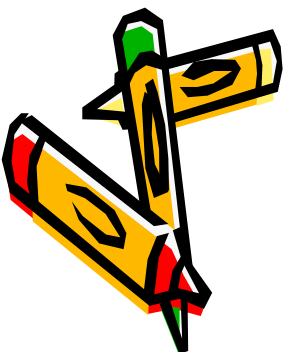
- **Skipping** - a step and then an immediate small hop on the same foot (which is also the front foot). Alternate feet with each step and swing your arms in opposition to feet placement. **Emphasize the correct foot placement.**
- **Sliding** - feet are in line with each other, keeping knees bent move one foot laterally to the side and the other foot follows. Movement is perpendicular to the direction you are facing. **Emphasize correct foot placement.**
- **Crawling** - a creeping mode of locomotion, on your hands and knees, alternating limbs (right hand forward left knee forward). **Emphasize alternating limbs and keeping head up.**
- **Chasing** - using any form of locomotion to follow something (moving in the same direction and not losing track of it) like a ball or a person. **Emphasize keeping eyes on the target and following it closely.**



Fundamental Motor Skills (stability) - Definitions:

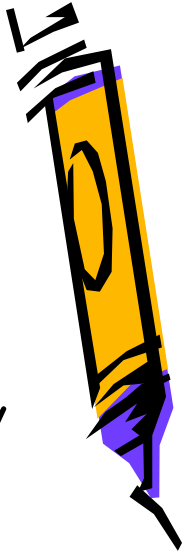
Stability: the overall capability of the body to maintain proper alignment, in particular the ability to recover when forced out of equilibrium.

- **Balancing** - The ability to maintain body position and to distribute weight accordingly to maintain equilibrium/balance. **Emphasize maintaining balance while performing fundamental motor skills like walking, jogging, hopping, leaping, etc. (i.e. not falling down every few feet while running).**
- **Turning** - to change direction - usually quickly and while in motion. **Emphasize turning quickly.**
- **Twisting** - to rotate the body in some way; about the hips for example. **Emphasize twisting in a slow, controlled manner.**



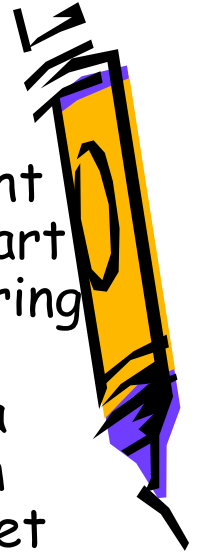
Fundamental Motor Skills (stability) - Definitions:

- **Rolling (front)** - the act of transferring weight to adjacent body parts around a central axis. Start in a squatting position leaning on hands. If doing a roll over the left shoulder, place the left hand slightly ahead of the right hand and have the fingers pointing in a little (towards each other). Turn the head slightly to the right and tuck chin to chest, drop left shoulder and push off with feet and roll from the top of the left shoulder diagonally across the back to the bottom right side of the back (so the child is not rolling on their spine or head). Assist by helping them to get rolling by giving them a boost and help them stay in a tucked position. **Emphasize rolling from the shoulder to the hip, avoiding the neck and spine and coming to a controlled stop - sitting or standing.**
- **(backward roll)** - start in a squatting position, tuck chin to chest, push backwards off feet, keeping a tucked position roll from the lower back up to one shoulder and bring knees over that shoulder, not rolling on the spine or head. Assist a child by giving them a push so they can roll over. **Emphasize rolling over the shoulder, avoiding the neck and spine.**



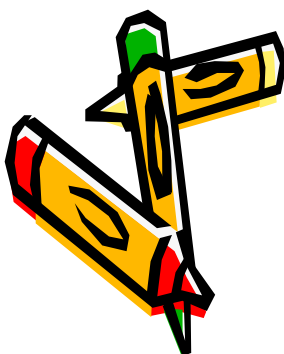
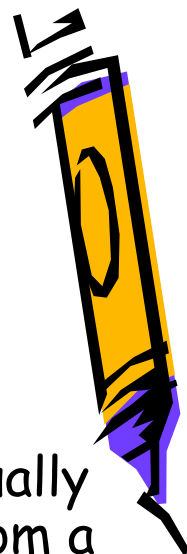
Fundamental Motor Skills (stability) - Definitions:

- **Transferring weight** - transferring weight on and off equipment or from one body part to another. For example, simply transferring weight from the left leg to the right leg while walking or more complicated doing a forward spring; transferring weight from the feet to the hands and back to the feet again. **Emphasize maintaining control of the body during weight transfer.**
- **Bending** - to curve or deviate the body and limbs from a straight line. **Emphasize controlling the body.**
- **Flexibility** - the absolute range of motion in a joint or series of joints. **Most children are pretty flexible but that does not mean they do not need to stretch regularly to improve or maintain their flexibility.**
- **Stretching** - static stretching - stretch a muscle(s) to a point of slight discomfort and hold it for at least 10 seconds to maintain or increase **flexibility** of that muscle(s) and the joint(s). Dynamic stretching - moving a joint through its range of motion repeatedly. **Emphasize holding a static stretch for at least 10 seconds and controlling dynamic stretches - NEVER HOLD A STRETCH AND 'BOUNCE' this can lead to injury.**



Manipulation: using the body to skilfully control objects.

- **Kicking** - to strike out with the foot; usually to move a ball. To properly kick a ball from a stationary or moving position, weight must be transferred to the non-kicking leg and placed beside the ball, squaring the body towards the target ('point the laser beam from your belly-button at the target'). The kicking leg is bent at the knee, pulled back and then the knee is extended, bringing the foot towards the ball, striking it with the instep or top of the foot (laces). If the ball is to stay on the ground when kicked the body must be over the ball when kicking. If the ball is to lift off the ground the body must be leaned back when kicking the ball.
Emphasize distance and kicking hard before accuracy.



Fundamental Motor Skills (manipulation) - Definitions:

- **Punting** - kicking a ball from the air instead of the ground. The ball is held in the hands, released and kicked into the air. Hold the ball away from the front of the body, arms outstretched. The non-kicking leg is in front, bring the kicking foot back towards the butt, bending the knee. Extend the leg at the knee and bring the foot forward, drop the ball from the hands and make contact with the top of the foot. **Emphasize timing and distance before accuracy.**
- **Collecting** - to gather or bring objects together in one place. Observe if the children are making use of both hands/arms to carry objects and if are they collecting the correct objects (right size, colour, etc?). **Emphasize using both arms to collect and carry objects and that they are to match the objects appropriately (if matching is needed).**

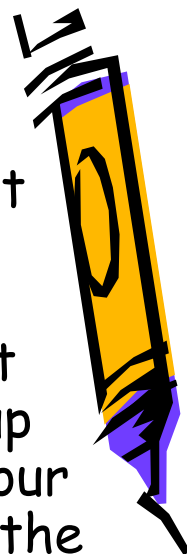


Fundamental Motor Skills (manipulation) - Definitions:

- **Throwing (overhand)** - to propel an object through the air with a forward motion of the hand and arm. Step forward with the left leg (opposite of throwing hand), point left hand at the target, lift right elbow up to shoulder level, bring arm back, point your laser beam (out of belly button) towards the (right) side, now start to throw by pointing the laser beam toward the target, arms acting like a windmill, the left arm comes down and back and the right arm moves up then forward while releasing the ball.

Emphasize stepping into the throw (opposite leg of throwing arm forward), throwing the ball in a general forward direction and throwing hard.

- **Throwing (underhand)** - point non-throwing arm at target; step towards the target with leg opposite to the throwing arm; turn hips to the side (pointing laser beam to the side); swing the throwing arm down and to the back; turn hips to the front; swing arm forward and up; let go of the ball, letting it roll off the fingers just as it passes the front leg. Emphasize timing, throwing hard and in a general forward direction.

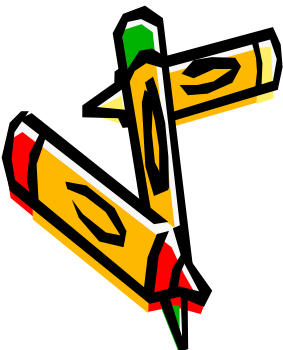
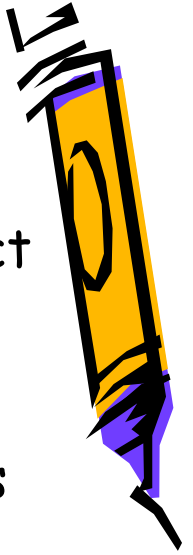


Fundamental Motor Skills (manipulation) - Definitions:

- **Catching (ground ball)** - seizing an object while in motion. Stand in a wide stance (like a monkey - arms hanging down, in between feet, almost touching the ground). Do a 'monkey hop' or slide across to get the body in front of the ball. Keep your eyes on the ball at all times and watch yourself catch/pick up the ball.

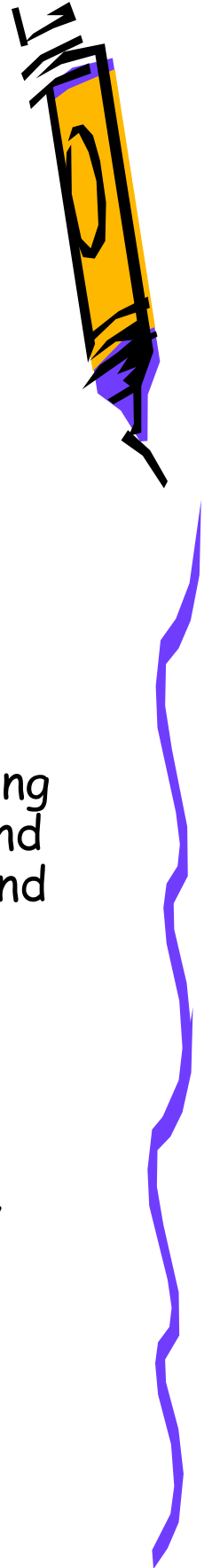
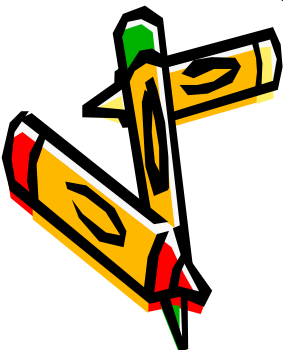
Emphasize watching the ball and watching self catch/pick up the ball.

- **Catching (in the air)** - Keep eyes on the ball at all times. Reach arms out towards the ball and as the ball comes closer, start to bring elbows in and wrap arms around the ball and bring it in to the chest. Emphasize keeping your eyes open and watching the ball at all times.



Perceptual skills: understanding of one's body and surroundings and having the ability to effectively adapt the body to various situations.

- **Movement Awareness** - ability to conceptualize and form effective movement responses to sensory information. **Emphasize responding appropriately to different situations.**
- **Spatial Awareness** - is the understanding of how much space the body occupies and the ability to move through space, around other people and objects. **Emphasize 'personal space' and not running into objects and people.**
- **Body Awareness** - understanding the various functions and parts of the body as well as their potential movement capabilities. **Emphasize a conscious effort while performing bodily movements.**



Fundamental Motor Skills (perceptual skills) - Definitions:

- **Temporal awareness** - the ability to predict the timing of a moving object - as well as the knowledge of the temporal mechanics of the body and how to coordinate the two. **Emphasize patience and using the hearing, seeing, feeling senses.**
- **Directional Awareness** - having the ability and understanding of how to apply directional concepts such as up, down, right, left, front and back. **Emphasize concentrating on the directions, right, left, up, down, etc.**
- **Rhythmic Awareness** - the ability to recognize and produce rhythmic, repetitive movements and/or patterns. **Emphasize recognizing the pattern or rhythm before attempting to repeat.**
- **Vestibular Awareness** - understanding of the body's relation to gravity - one of the foundations for balance and body positioning. **Emphasize using various techniques to maintain balance.**

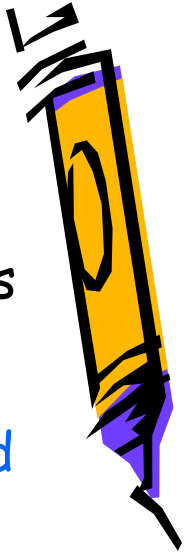


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*Games and activities typed in green font require a large space and some are best played outside.

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