

**EHF**

EUROPEAN HANDBALL  
FEDERATION



# KINDERGARTEN HANDBALL **Manual**

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## 1. Introduction

Kindergarten Handball is aimed at children in the age range of 3-5/6 years old depending on the educational system in your country.

Kindergarten Handball is not designed to teach handball skills but to keep the children moving, teach them basic movements, and create a connection to handball through the clubs.

Exercising supports the optimal development of the locomotor system (bones, cartilage, tendons, ligaments, muscles) and supports a proper posture. It strengthens the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, as well as improves the performance and immune systems.

Exercising teaches physical movement, perception and coordination, assurance in the movements (to avoid injuries) and is the basis for basic motoric skills (endurance, strength, coordination, speed, agility).

Exercising teaches emotions such as joy, success and failure, and helps to develop the personality of the children (self-awareness and self-assurance) and promotes independence. It also develops the social competence of children (fairness, solidarity, tolerance, acceptance, the ability to follow instructions/rules, the ability to deal with conflicts and criticism, cooperativeness, and integration into group dynamics).

Exercising will help to reduce stress and is a necessary partner and balance for education (writing, reading, counting, etc. especially after kindergarten) since it helps to increase the concentration and performance of the brain.

## 2. Organisation

### 2.1. How to organise a Kindergarten Handball programme?

Kindergarten Handball is currently organised in two different ways:

- Workshop during the day in the kindergarten
- Workshop after the day in the kindergarten organised in the clubs

Whereas both options have their pros and cons, it is of utmost importance to create a connection to the local club (e.g., include club coaches, players in the workshops) in order to ease the transition to the regular club training. The aim is to get and/or keep the children (and parents) in the handball club.

- **Workshop during the day in the Kindergarten**

**Pros:**

- All kids can be involved in the sessions
- No transport needed (if a small gym / bigger room is available in the Kindergarten)
- No additional effort

**Cons:**

- No direct connection to the club
- Workshop leader needs to be available during the day
- Workshop materials need to be transported and safety stored

- **Workshops after the Kindergarten organised in the clubs**

**Pros:**

- Club / hall facilities and material can be used
- Club coaches and players can be used as workshop leaders and assistants
- Direct connection to club: children AND parents can be involved in club life and feel part of the club family
- Parents can be involved in workshops

**Cons:**

- Availability of facilities for workshops
- Children and parents need to be willing to attend extracurricular activities

## **2.2. Structure form, set-up workshops**

Each workshop session will present one “universe” including three related exercises. A “universe” is a theme/storyline under which the session will be held.

Each session will be organised as follows:

- Grouping
- Entry into the session (warm-up)
- Workshop 1: motricity (e.g., race with obstacles)
- Workshop 2: duel (with or without shooting)
- Workshop 3: collective strategy (with or without shooting)
- Equipment storage
- Grouping: like the start of the session, create a routine for the end.
- Return to calm

The set-up should already be prepared prior to the grouping to avoid waiting time. Also, the workshop leader should greet every child when entering/leaving the hall.

Define group rules together with the children at the beginning of the season (how do you want to be treated = how you should treat others!). Make the parents aware of the rules and the consequences. The workshops should be a fun and safe place for everybody, including the workshop leaders; verbal or physical violence must be discussed with the parents to find a solution.

### Grouping:

Create a routine to start the session, e.g., introduce/play a song which signals that all children need to assemble at a defined spot in the hall/room.

### Entry into the session:

What is today’s “universe”? What is it about? Which roles/characters will the children play?

### Workshop 1 – 3:

Each “universe” consists of three workshops (exercises) focused on motricity, contest, collective strategy.

When creating your own exercises keep in mind that the exercises should be easy to understand, fit to the age/capability of the children (e.g., avoid dribbling, etc.), and have a simple set-up.

Try to avoid long periods of 'empty' time where the children have to wait for others and include additional 'exercises' instead, e.g., a small parkour when returning from a shooting exercise, etc.

Remember that children in this age group can only focus/concentrate for a short time!

#### Equipment storage:

Use games to involve the children to help store the equipment. This part should be a teamwork task with all the children involved. However, do give clear instructions as to which children are responsible for which task.

#### Grouping:

Assemble the children again (play a special 'cool down' song) and talk about the session. What did they like? What have they experienced? Give them time to calm/cool down by implementing breathing exercises or moments of silence.

#### Leaving the session:

Pay attention when saying goodbye to each child and make sure that they are picked-up by the persons in charge. Also, use this time to pay attention to the behaviour of the children after the session which might give you some insight on the group dynamic, individual traits, etc.

### **2.3. Children**

#### **Physical capacity** (excerpt of the "Circle of a handball life" manual)

Physical activity is essential for healthy child development. Physical activity should be fun and a part of the child's life every day and it is the basis to lay the foundation for lifelong physical activity. Active play is the way young children are physically active.

There is a phase of rapid motor development with more obvious perfection of various forms of movement and the appropriation of first movement combinations. It is necessary to cultivate and exploit the urge to move and the curiosity to learn many different movements.

This is a stage of critical brain development. Active play is key at this stage as it builds important connections in the brain, and between the brain and children's muscles.

Repetition of rhythmic activity allows brain-muscle connections to be strengthened. At this stage children begin using their imagination, as well as developing understanding, memorisation, and movement presentation.

In the first stage of long-term performance development (kindergarten handball), it is important to convey general enjoyment of movement and specifically to arouse interest in and with balls.

Focus on improving basic movement skills such as running, jumping, crawling, climbing, balancing, hanging, swinging, pulling, pushing, carrying, throwing, catching, kicking,

inventing movement stories or built parkours. These basic human movements are the building blocks for more complex activities.

Coordinative skills should be given high priority in any children's physical education session. A special focus should be placed on balance exercises (e.g. standing on one leg or unstable devices).

Design activities that help children feel competent and comfortable participating in a variety of fun and challenging games and activities.

**Mental / social aspects** (excerpt of the “Circle of a handball life” manual)

The focus for children between the ages of 3-6 are acquisition of basic skills and creating habits that build the foundation for physical and social development.

Children start the slow process from complete dependence on others towards independence by ‘discovering the world’ through small group activities with very simple targets explicitly defined and clarified.

The child is developing physically, becomes more mobile and discovering that he/she has many skills and abilities, such as putting on clothes and shoes, playing with toys, etc. Such skills illustrate the child's growing sense of independence and autonomy.

For example, during this stage children begin to assert their independence, by walking away from their mother, picking which toy to play with, and making choices about what they like to wear, to eat, etc. (in case of sport/handball sessions: putting props in their places after use, putting on equipment and taking it off, changing shoes).

A delicate balance is required from the parent/coach, as the child must be allowed to have enough room for learning through the ‘trial-and-error’ method. They must try to avoid doing everything for the child, but if the child fails at a particular task, they must not criticise the child for failures and accidents (particularly when toilet training). The aim has to be “*self-control without a loss of self-esteem*” (Gross, 1992).

If children in this stage are encouraged and supported in their increased independence, they become more confident and secure in their own ability to survive.

If children are criticised, overly controlled, or not given the opportunity to assert themselves, they begin to feel inadequate in their ability to survive, and may then become overly dependent upon others, lack self-esteem, and feel a sense of shame or doubt in their abilities.

During this period, the primary feature involves the child regularly interacting with other children at kindergarten/physical session. Central to this stage is play, as it provides children with the opportunity to explore their interpersonal skills through initiating activities. Group/teamwork being the environment in which every child contributes with his/her behaviour focused on mutual/common achieving, rather than self-oriented.

Children begin to plan activities, make up games, and initiate activities with others. If given this opportunity, children develop a sense of initiative and feel secure in their ability to lead.

A quality training in a safe environment: physically, mentally, and social-emotionally, with an accent on socialising, tutoring, integrating, and belonging – as being of great significance at this age category.

#### **2.4. Workshop leader and assistants (tasks, profile, etc.)**

The workshop leader and assistance should

- have a positive and open attitude,
- enjoy working with children,
- be patient,
- always treat the children respectfully (no bad words, do not embarrass them,...),
- treat all children equally,
- should not change their mood (children need to feel safe),
- give the children the chance to explore the exercise and find solutions,
- be able to communicate the exercises in a clear way,
- involve the parents in the workshops,
- etc.

#### **2.5. Parents**

Parents can and should be an active part of “Kindergarten Handball”. You can either involve them in every session (e.g., when you are lacking assistance) or you organise special “kids & Parents days” where the parents attend the session together with their children.

Children imitate in this age. Meaning, if you want your child to be active and healthy you should be the respective role model and be active and healthy yourself. Furthermore, sport helps to strengthen the connection between parents and children.

However, make sure, that the parents are aware that there is no other ‘prize’ to win other than to spend some quality time with their children e.g., it is not about winning, being the fastest, best scorer, etc.!

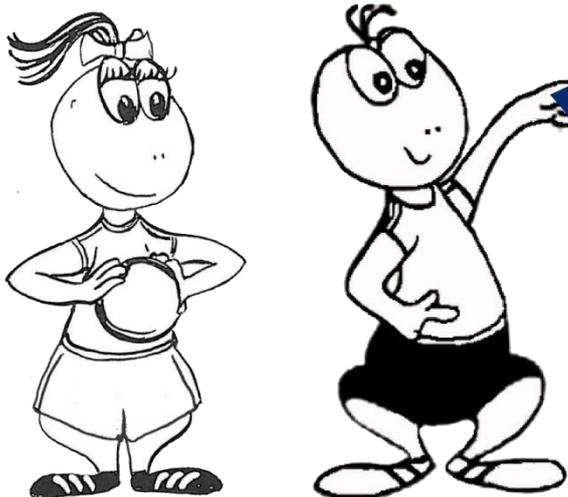
Also involve parents in welcoming/supporting parents new to ‘Kindergarten Handball’. Nominate one parent to be the ‘buddy’ for a new parent explaining procedures, infrastructure, etc. Do the same when a new child joins the group.

In addition, you can involve the parents into the club life. Invite the children and parents regularly to your club matches and ask them to contribute (buffet, etc.). If the parents feel like a part of the club, the children are more likely to stay in the club (and in the sport)!

### 3. Workshop exercises

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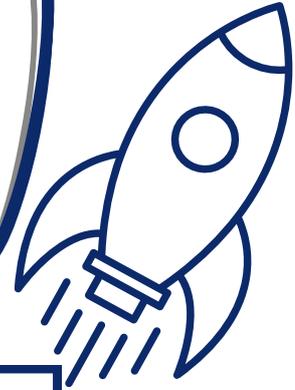
**Be curious!**



# In the space



Today, we are going to travel to space! After a long rocket trip, we are going to go out for a walk on the Milky Way in the middle of the stars and meteorites! Are you for the journey, "to infinity and beyond"?

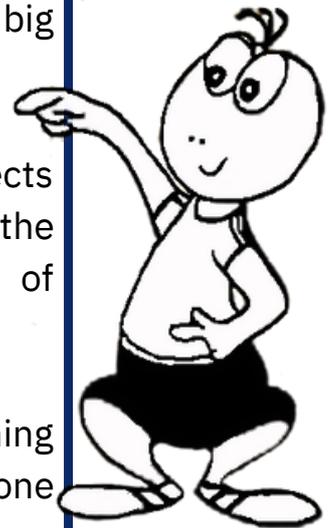


## Warm up

During Josy's story, the children are seated. Invite them to get up and put on their astronaut outfit: the jumpsuit, the big boots, the gloves and of course the helmet!

Then, in space where you will have scattered objects representing stars and meteorites (cones, cups, etc.), the children will go for a walk, walking slowly with a lot of amplitude like astronauts.

Then they go faster and faster but should avoid touching objects. At the signal, the children must stand still on one foot, then you tell them the colour of a star to retrieve. Announce the winners, then start again.



## Workshop



**The Frozen Stars - duel**

Material : a ball, 4 cones .

**The Attack of the Comet-** shoot with precision

Material : 1 swiss-ball ; 1 ball per child.

**The Hunt for Stars** – motricity and challenge

Material : 20 cupels, hurdles.

# The Frozen Star

## Story

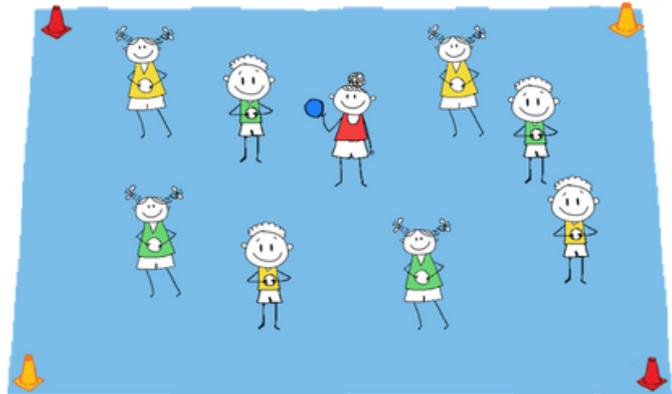


While walking in space, the astronauts have all recovered a star. One of stars comes from Neptune, the icy planet. The astronaut who caught it has fun chilling his friends by touching them.

Attention! The frozen star does not leave the astronaut's hand.

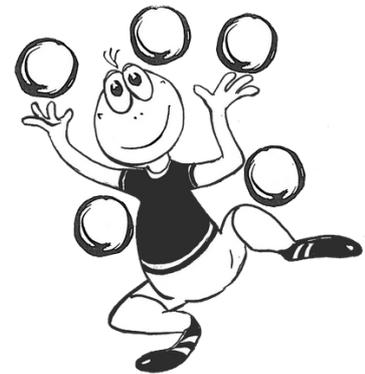
## Organisation

In the defined space, place a cone at each corner. The child who plays the role of 'ice creamer' is holding the ball.

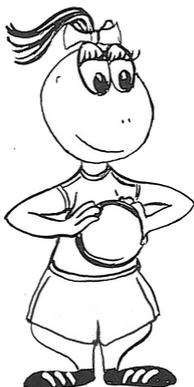


## Instructions

The 'ice child' must touch a number of astronauts who, in a limited time in order to warm up, must go and touch a rocket represented by a cone as quickly as possible.



## Advice



**To make it easier:** for the 'ice child' add another 'ice child', for the others, you can expand the space.

**To develop:** ask the 'chilled' astronaut to touch one or more rockets to warm up to be able to continue wandering in space.

# The Attack of the Comet



## Story

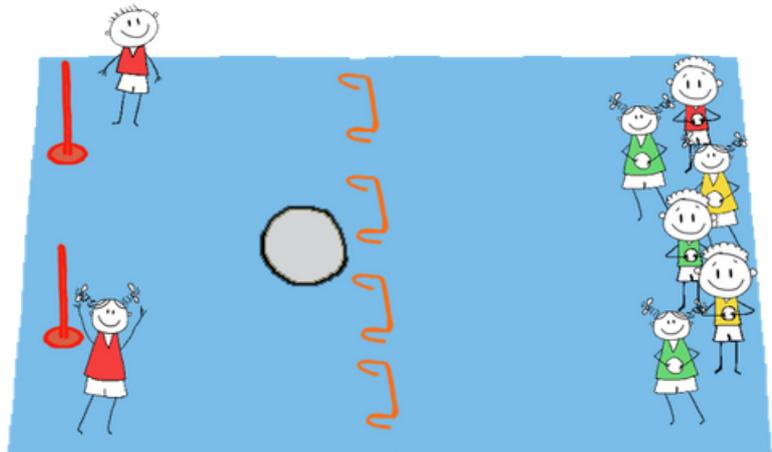


A huge comet threatens to crash into your planet! You go on the attack with your magic stars to send the asteroid, ball of fire, very far into space.

Place 2 parents or 2 children in the space of the comet to return the balloons to the shooters..

## Organisation

Define a space with wedges or benches in which you place an inflatable ball and two stakes to represent a large goal. Children with a ball each are placed on the other side of the swiss-ball.



## Instructions

Children must shoot at the comet to make it pass through the goal and send it to another galaxy.

The assistants return the ball to the children as quickly as possible. You can add a timer time for more rhythm.

## Advice

**To develop:** you can launch a challenge between two teams. Place the children in front of two large goals facing each other place the inflatable ball, representing the comet, in the middle. The children must shoot the comet to send it into the opponents galaxy. For this part, make it clear to the children that they cannot touch the comet with their body.



# The Hunt for Stars



## Story

On a mission in space, the astronauts must collect as many stars as possible to better observe them in their spacecraft.

You can use all kinds of objects to represent stars.

## Organisation

Scatter cones and cups indicating the stars on the other side of hurdles. Split up the children into pairs, with each pair standing next to a hoop to symbolise their spaceship.



## Instructions

At the signal, one child from each pair runs to look for a star by stepping over the hurdle. When the child has placed the star in their ship, the second of the pair can go to pick up a star in turn. When there are no more stars to recover, the astronauts count the stars on their ship.

## Advice



**To make it easier:** you can remove the hurdles.

**To develop:** you can give instructions of various movements (running, reversing...).

You can also add more obstacles that symbolise meteorites that are to be avoided.



What about going to the farm today? We will meet animals and the farmer will take us to visit his vegetable garden where we will discover delicious vegetables!

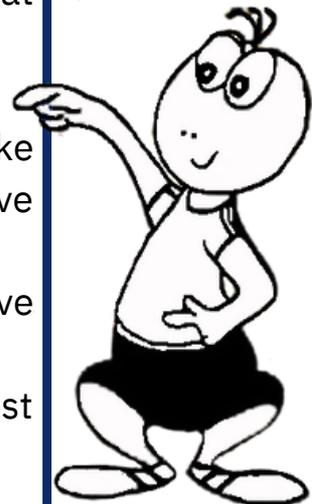


## Warm up

As you tell the children about farm animals, suggest that they:

- Hop like the rabbit: arms up to imitate the big ears.
- Stand still on one foot like the sleeping hen and wake up by flapping their wings and have children move their arms with wide rotations.
- Walk like a duck: squatting, have the children move around with their hands on their hips.

You can also ask the children themselves to suggest positions to imitate other farm animals.



## Workshop



**Cheeeeeese !** – Motricity

**Material needed :** 1 inflatable ball per child and 8 cones.

**The greedy rabbits** - Motricity & shoots

**Material needed :** 8 hurdles, a box with 15 balls, 2 goals, 8 cones and 2 hoops.

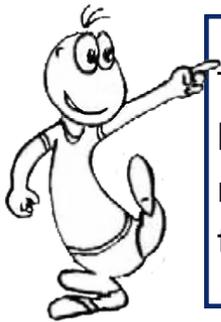
**Hens and Foxes** – Duel & run

**Material needed :** cups and hoops

# Cheeeeeeeese !

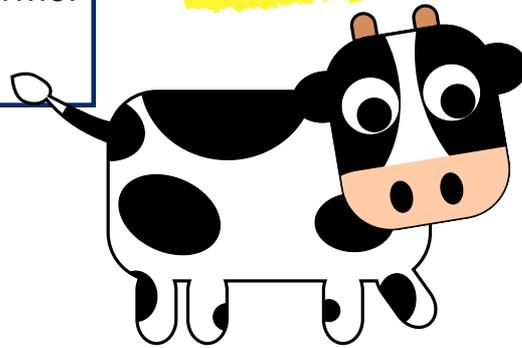


## Story



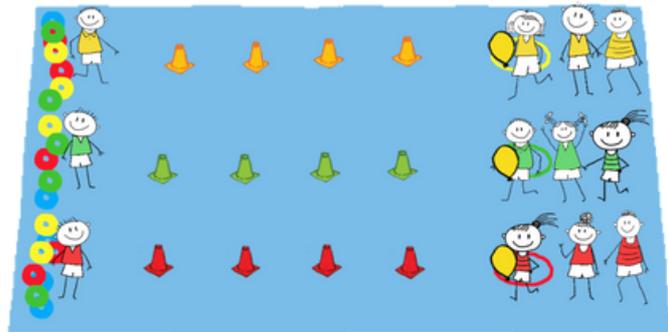
To get good cheese you have to carry your cows' milk jug to the farmer through the forest!

Keep more inflatable balls in reserve.



## Organisation

Divide the children into 2 teams (or more depending on the number) at the start of a slalom (cones marking the trees in the forest). 1 child at the end of each course plays the role of the farmer. Place cupels (or other little objects) at the end of each course to represent the 'cheese'. Give an inflatable ball to each first child in line.



## Instructions

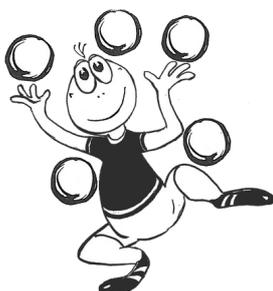
You have to keep the ball in the air without dropping it and without clutching it in your hands to cross the forest by slaloming between the trees. When you arrive, you give your ball to the farmer who takes it back to the next one by running. During this time, you take a 'cheese' and bring it back to your hoop and the next player can start.

The team that brings back all its 'cheeses' first wins (allow for 2 runs per child).

## Advice

**To make it easier:** remove the cones, and then invite the children to run through the field.

**To develop:** add hurdles and other obstacles on the way.



# The Greedy Rabbits



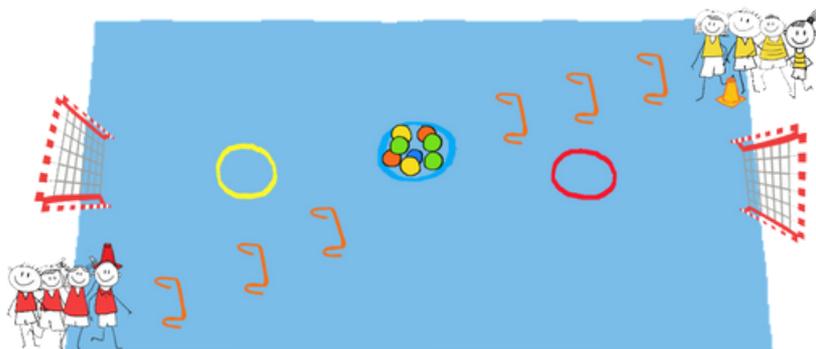
## Story

The greedy rabbits have spotted the carrot supply in the middle of the garden. To get there, they have to avoid the obstacles left by the farmer.

You can place different obstacles to vary the movements.

## Organisation

Place two goals at the ends of the playing area. In the centre, place a box filled with balls representing the carrots. Place hurdles to mark two courses and 2 hoops about 4 meters from each goal. The children are divided into two teams placed at the beginning of each course next to a cone.



## Instructions

One at a time, you jump the hurdles to retrieve a carrot and throw it into your goal. Then you come back by the same path to pass the relay to the next rabbit. If you don't reach the goal, you put the ball back in the hoop before passing it to the next player.



## Advice

**To develop:** You can add a child in front of each goal to play the role of the farmer who wants to keep his carrots! If the farmer stops the ball, he puts it in a hoop near the goal.



# Hens & Foxes



## Story

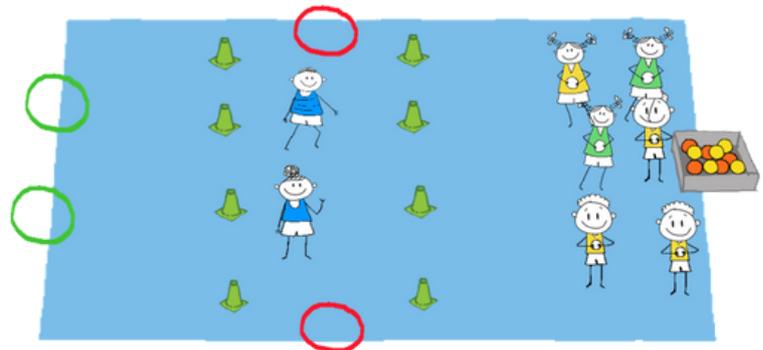


The hens have spent the day in the wild and have laid their eggs in the large field. Before nightfall, the hens want to take their eggs back to the henhouse, but the foxes, hidden in the forest, would like to have some eggs for their dinner.

You can use other objects than balls to represent the eggs.

## Organisation

Place balls or other objects in a box on one side of the playing area and place 2 hoops on the other side. Mark the border of the forest with cones that the foxes must not cross. Place 2 hoops near to the foxes.



## Instructions

The children must carry the eggs into the henhouse (red hoops) but if a fox touches them, they must give him their egg by putting it in his (green) hoop.

The foxes cannot cross the forest boundary and the hens can cross the forest at the same time.

When there are no more eggs (balls), the foxes count their catch. Who will be the best fox?



## Advice

**To make it easier or to develop:** depending on the balance of power, you can choose to place one or more foxes in the forest, and you can also reduce or extend the fox forest.



You are young firefighters, and you need to train to put out fires and rescue people in danger. In the barracks (in the area) you will run, jump on the spot, roll on the ground, move around squatting, etc...

At the signal (the siren), you line up as quickly as possible on the 6-metre line to put on your firefighter's outfit. Ready?

## Warm up

If you are on a handball court, invite the children to stand on the 6m line. At the signal they must trot without leaving the area.

When you clap once, they should jump as high as possible; when you clap your hands twice, they must lie down on the ground; and when you whistle loudly, they should stand on the 6m line.

Repeat the instructions 3 or 4 times then invite them to put on the firefighters' outfit: overalls, jacket, boots, and helmet.



## Workshop

**The chain of firefighters** - manipulation of balls

Material needed : hoops, balls, 2 containers.

**The best firefighters** - shoot with precision

Material needed : 10 cones, 3 or 4 balls, hoops, rings, plots, little hurdles.

**The fight against the flames** - challenge and motricity

Material needed : 12 cones of different sizes (rather high)



# The Chain of Firefighters



## Story

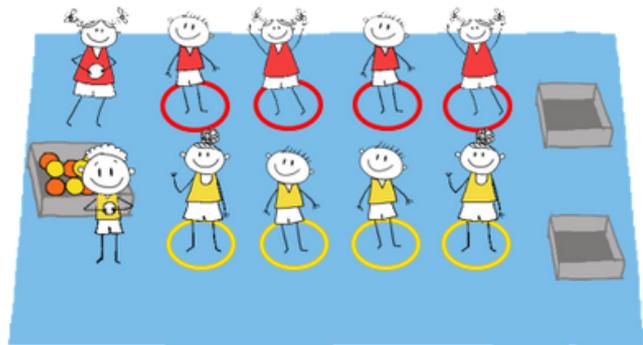
You are firefighters who will bring buckets of water to fill the truck which must be ready to go and put out the fires.



You can replace the hoops with a rhythm ladder to materialize the "big ladder" of the firefighters.

## Organisation

The children are divided into two teams, placed in hoops representing the rungs of the ladder. At the end of each team is placed a crate representing the tank of the truck. Another large box is placed opposite between the 2 teams, and in which are deposited ten balls representing the buckets of water.



## Instructions

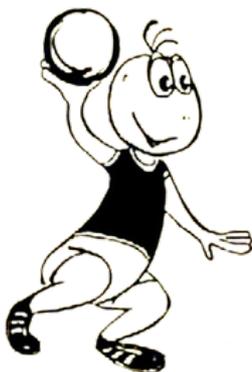
At the signal the child close to the reserve takes a ball and throws it to his partner. The ball carrier must check that his teammate is ready to receive the ball. The relay is done from pass to pass until the last child who has to throw the ball into the box.

When there are no more balls in the reserve, the children count the balls in their crate and the team with the highest number wins the round. Move the children with each round.

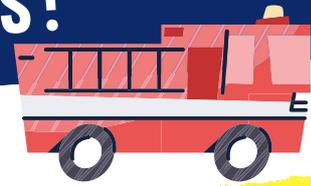
## Advice

**To make it easier:** Bring the children as close together as possible. When they are very close, vary the movements to pass the ball (over the head, between the legs, sideways, etc.).

**To develop:** Move the hoops away to space the children. If the ball falls, it is taken back to the starting box to be refilled with 'water'.



# The Best Firefighters!



## Story

It's practice day for the best firefighting teams in town. A building is on fire, and they have to cross a forest to extinguish the flames. Which team will be the most effective?

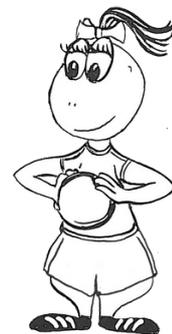
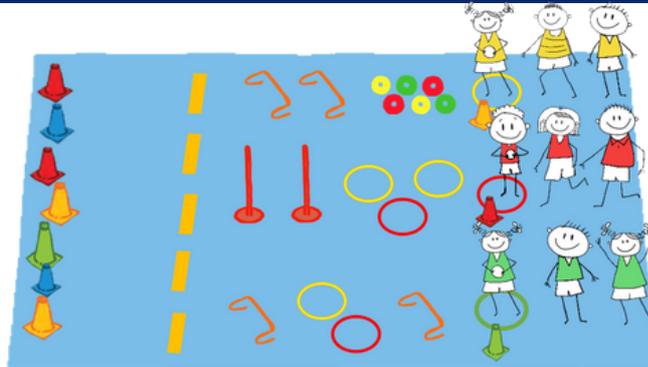
If you have a handball cage, you can also hang bibs on the crossbar to have high targets.

## Organisation

Set up courses by placing obstacles representing the trees and rocks of the forest.

The children are divided into several teams of 3 or 4 and the first has a ball representing the bucket of water to throw on the flames. The first firefighter is placed in a hoop with a cone next to him.

At the end of the courses, place objects of different sizes, representing the flames, and limit an area with floor markers (slats).



## Instructions

At the signal, the first firefighter of each team moves as quickly as possible, crossing the obstacles to shoot at the flames. If a target is hit, the team scores a point. The firefighter collects their bucket (ball) to give to the next firefighter who must fill it by touching the cone next to him. Determine a time, and when it is up, the team that has scored the most points win the round.

## Advice

**To make it easier:** do not place obstacles in the way of the shot.

**To develop:** ask the firefighter to fill the bucket with water by performing a motor instruction (bounce the ball 3 times or throw the ball in the air and catch it...).

# The Fight against the Flames



## Story



Firefighters arrived in the forest to put out the fire. They fight against the flames, but the wind makes the flames rise again... Will the firefighters be fast enough to beat the wind and put out all the flames?

You can use cones of different sizes to vary the movements.

## Organisation

Spread a dozen cones in a smaller space.

Two children play the role of 'wind', the others are firefighters.



## Instructions

Within a set time, the firefighters must knock down as many cones as possible while the children representing the wind lift them up to rekindle the fire.

**Children should use only their hands to knock down or raise the cones.**

At the end of the time, the firefighters count the number of flames knocked down. If there are more fallen cones than standing cones, firefighters have won the fight against the flames.

## Advice



You can make the role of firefighters easier or more difficult by changing:

- The number of children playing the role of the wind
- The space in which the cones are placed and separated.

# At the Circus



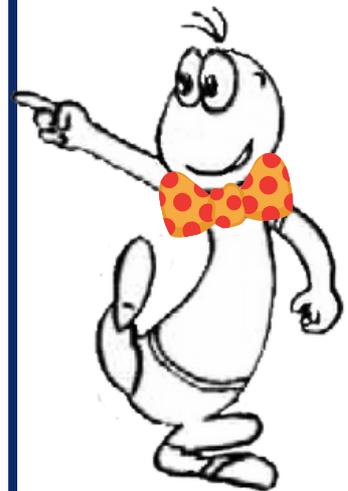
*Hello! Today, I invite you to follow me to the circus. We will meet the clowns, acrobats, and jugglers under the big Top!*  
***But before we do that, I suggest that you put on your clown costume: pointed hat, big trousers, bow tie, huge shoes, and of course, a red nose. Then let's walk gently under the big top like clowns!***

## Warm up

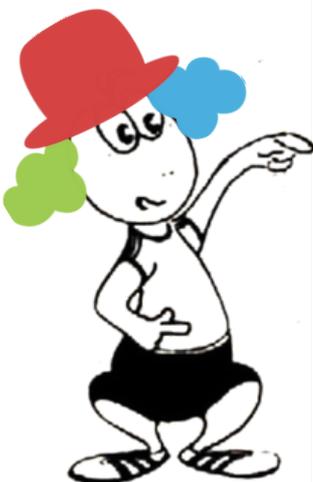
By inviting the children to put on their clown costume, you will ask them:

- to stretch the arms very high to get the pointed hat and lower them slowly to put it on the head
- to be balanced on one foot for at least 3 seconds then on the other for putting on the pants
- to jump with both feet to put on his shoes and bending to tie the laces

Then when the movements have been done 3 or 4 times, then invite them to move slowly, taking big steps with their big shoes.



## Workshop



**The Great Clown Cleaning Crew** - motricity and challenge  
**Material needed** : 1 hoop per 2 children (4 colours), rings (4 colours), hurdles (or other obstacles to separate the space).

**The Acrobat Race** - motricity and shoot

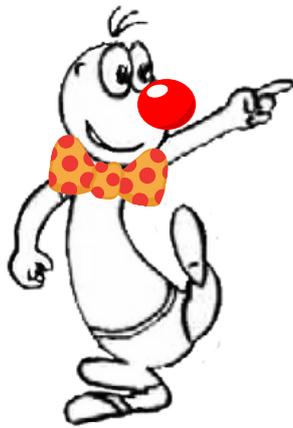
**Material needed** : 4 little hurdles, 6 cones, 2 stakes, 2 mini-goals, 2 hoops, 1 ball per child.

**The Jugglers** - manipulations of balls

**Material needed** : 1 inflatable ball per child, 1 hoop per 2 children.

# The Great Clown Cleaning Crew

## Story

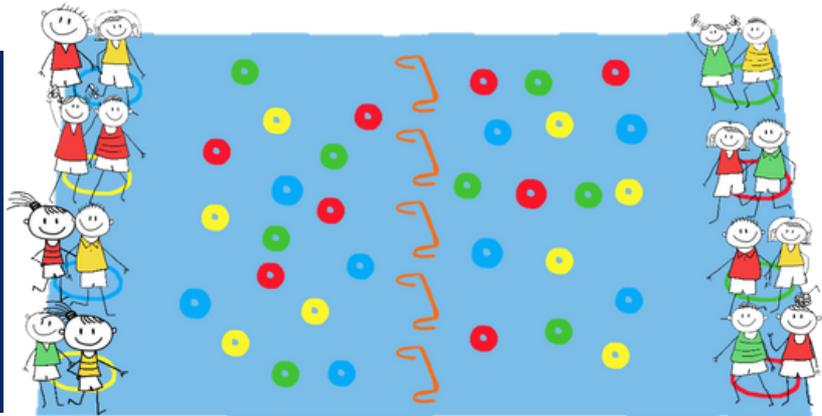


The clowns have partied and have to put away all their gear before the circus manager comes back. But as they always want to have fun, they have set themselves a new team challenge: that of bringing objects of the same colour back to their plot as quickly as possible.

You can use all sorts of objects to replace the rings, but it is important to use several colours.

## Organisation

Separate the space into two parts: scatter the objects on both sides. Divide the children into pairs next to a hoop.

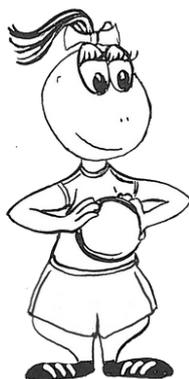


## Instructions

The children take turns moving to retrieve an object of the same colour as the hoop they are associated with.

Back at the hoop, the child tags (gently slaps) the hand of the friend who starts in turn. When there are no more objects to collect, the children count their collection.

## Advice



**Attention!** Children should only carry one object per run.

**To develop:** give additional instructions to the children: hopping around on one foot, walking backwards, jumping with both feet on the way back, etc.



# The Acrobat Race

## Story

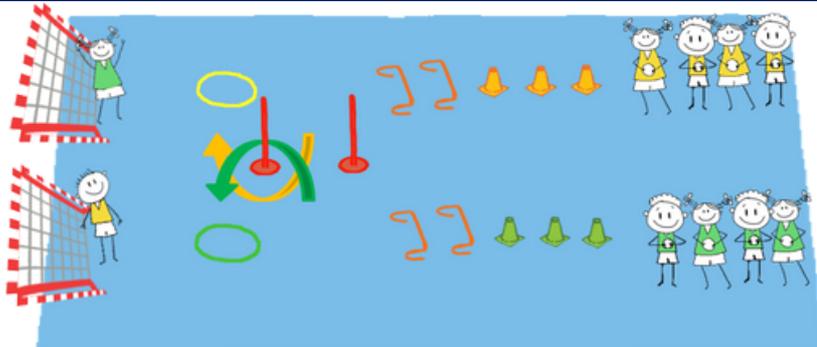


Acrobats play handball practicing for their next show using obstacles before shooting towards the goal. Before shooting they also must make a half turn to practice pirouettes. Which team of acrobats will score the most goals?

You can also enhance the role of the goalkeeper by giving one point per ball touched.

## Organisation

Arrange two identical courses that the children must complete before placing themselves in a hoop to shoot towards the goal. Add a door (using two high elements) placed perpendicular to the paths. The children are divided into 2 teams and one child from each team is placed in front of a mini-goal.



## Instructions

The starting signal for each child is given by the animator. The children then run through the course (slalom and jumps) and cross through the door, turning around to place themselves in the hoop and shoot to score the goal. For each goal scored, the team scores 1 point. The first team to reach 5 points wins the game.

## Advice

**To make easier:** you can remove the obstacles but maintain the passage through the door which allows you to develop location in space.

**To develop:** place about fifteen balls in a box placed between the teams. At the signal, the first take a ball to shoot after realizing the course. The sequence is done when the shooter comes and claps the buddy's hand. This includes the notion of speed.

# The Jugglers



## Story

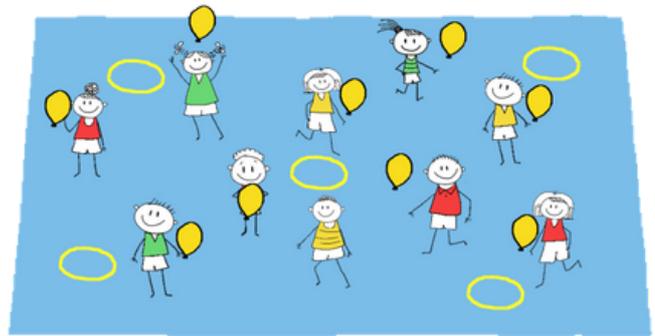


We are at juggling school.  
We are going to train so that we can be part of the next show of jugglers under the big top!

Prepare several others inflatable balls and keep them in a reserve...

## Organisation

In a smaller space, arrange the hoops (1 for 2 children) by separating them sufficiently.  
Give each child an inflatable ball and invite them to stand on the field, occupying all the space.



## Instructions

1. Give instructions to the children to handle the ball:
  - Hit the ball from below to make it go up to the sky, alternating right and left hands
  - Then tap always from below with both hands
  - Throw it skyward, then catch it with both hands.
2. When the children are comfortable, collect half of the balls then invite those who have a ball to place themselves in a hoop. Children without the ball choose a teammate by approaching the hoop. Together, the children:
  - Exchange the ball by hitting underneathThen exchange the ball by throwing and catching it with both hands

## Advice



The hoop allows the children to have a reference point **to keep a good distance**; ask them to exchange the ball while staying around the hoop.

Develop: replace the inflatable ball with a small foam or PVC handball ball.

# The Olympic Games



Every 4 years, we attend the Olympic Games!

All athletes dream of participating. So, we too are going to prepare ourselves to live this great adventure with the symbols of this universal competition. Before going on an adventure, let's wake up our body.

## Warm up

Invite the children to perform movements by citing the limbs, joints or muscles used:

- Movements of the pelvis: hands placed on the hips
- Neck movements: back and forth, slow rotations
- Movements of arms, wrists, hands, fingers
- Movements of flexion and extension of the ankles with heel-toe alternation
- Flexion while touching the ground, keeping the back quite straight and extension while stretching the arms towards the sky
- Children jog in place, then raising the knees to the chest, then touching the buttocks with the heels.

Pay attention to the correct and slow execution of each movement by alternating very short series that can be repeated.



## Workshop

**The Challenge of the Rings** - shoot with precision

Material needed : a handball goal, 5 hoops, floor markers (slats), 2 cones, 2 balls.

**The Olympic Torch Relay**- motricity

Material needed : cones, hurdles, hoops, rings, 3 balls.

**The Medal Race** – Run and challenge

Material needed : 20 cupels, 20 objects to represent medals, 4 hoops.



# The Challenge of the Rings



## Story



Two teams want to conquer the Olympic rings! Which team will be the most precise to throw the ball inside the 5 Olympic rings?

You can use black adhesive tape to make a black hoop.

## Organisation

Use a handball goal to hang 3 rings at the crossbar. Install two more rings on cones. Place floor markers (slats) to limit the shooting distance.

Divide the children into two teams placed next to a cone for the start - 1 ball per team.



## Instructions

At the signal, the first shooter of each team moves to shoot in one of the rings, stopping before the slat. Then he collects his ball and brings it to the next teammate who can go and shoot in turn.

1 point is given for each ring crossed by the ball. The first team to reach 5 points wins the game.



## Advice

**To make easier:** you can get close to the limit for the shot.

**To develop:** you can add obstacles to cross before the shooting area.

# The Olympic Torch Relay



## Story

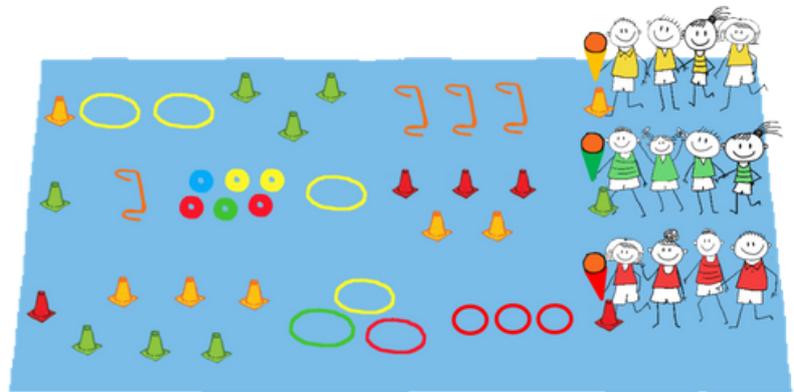


The Olympic Committee is looking for young handball players for the Olympic Torch Relay. So we will train to be ready for the future Olympic Games.

You can use identify each course with the name of a country through which the flame passes.

## Organisation

Prepare three different courses and create the Olympic flame by placing a ball on an inverted cone. The children are split into teams at the start of each course, and the first one holds the flame.



## Instructions

At the signal, the bearer of the flame makes the round trip and passes the flame to his teammate without dropping it!  
Each child completes the course once, then a rotation is organised so that the teams complete the three courses.



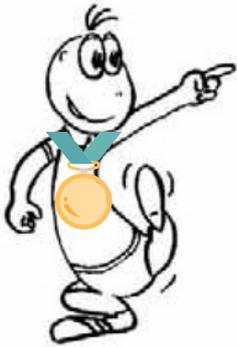
## Advice

**To make easier:** you can simplify the courses.

**To develop:** you can ask the children to throw the ball to the next torch bearer.



# The Medals Race



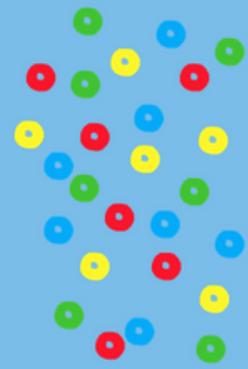
## Story

Which team will collect the most medals to distribute to the Olympic champions?

Children can make cardboard medals for the game.

## Organisation

Scatter cupels or cups and hide the various objects symbolising medals under them. The children are divided into pairs next to a hoop.



## Instructions

At the signal, one child from each pair runs towards the cupels. He lifts one of them to retrieve a medal and place it in the hoop. As soon as the medal is placed in the hoop, the second child can go out in turn. The game ends when there are no more medals to collect. Each pair counts its collection.

## Advice



**To make easier:** children can leave the cupels upside down when they picked up the medal.

**To develop:** tell the children that they can only flip one cupel at a time. If there is no medal, they still come back to their partner, who can run for the next try. You can also give instructions for various movements: chased steps, reverse...

# In the jungle

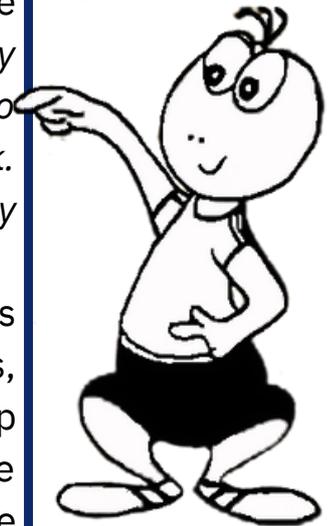


After a long trip, we arrive in the Jungle!  
In the trees, the monkeys jump from branch to branch, while the lion is sleeping...but beware!  
The crocodiles are swimming in the river to find food...

## Warm up

To begin the session, line up all the children on the 6-metre line. Position yourself in front of them in the area and tell the story: "*You are crocodiles standing on the shore. You're ready for a quick workout before you go hunting. Hop! You jump into the river (in the area), then quickly climb back up the bank. Hup! You jump into the forest (outside the zone), and quickly get back to the shore.*"

Alternatively, "*inside, outside, on the bank...*"; offer various jumps (feet together, on one foot, spreading arms, squatting...), also offer them static positions to develop proprioception. If the room does not have a zone, you can use any other line and indicate that the river is on the side where you are placed.



## Workshop

**The River Crossing** - duel

Material : 10 cones or cupels.

**Crocodiles and Ouistitis** - shoot

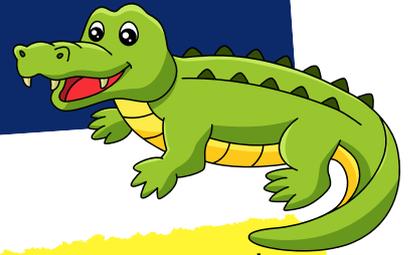
Material : 10 cones or cupels, 5 hoops, 20 balls.

**Lions and Gazelles** – duel and shoot

Material : 5 cones, 1 ball, 1 hoop, 1 goal.



# The River Crossing



## Story

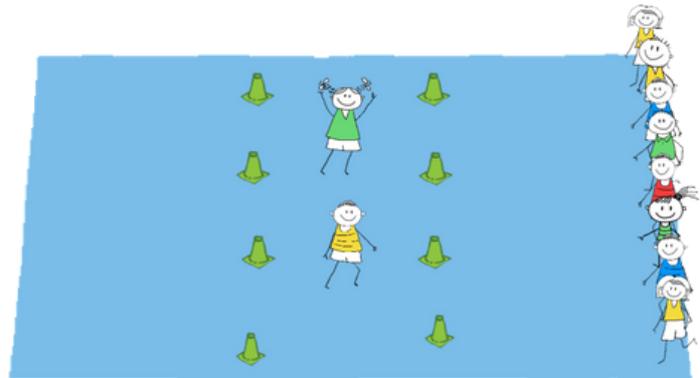


You are clever little monkeys, and you want to cross the river where dangerous crocodiles are swimming. If you are touched, you replace the crocodile.

Start with the initial situation and then propose the changes to make the children progress.

## Organisation

Set up a river with cones or cups. The children are lined up on the sidelines, and 2 or 3 play the role of crocodiles, placed in the river.



## Instructions

At the signal, the 'clever little monkeys' cross the river to reach the other bank. As soon as a monkey is touched, it replaces the crocodile that caught it.

The crossings are launched at the signal of the animator (all the children start at the same time).

## Advice

**To develop:** each little monkey has a coconut (ball) that he must carry across the river. If touched by a crocodile, the child puts the ball in the crocodile's reserve (a hoop) but continues to play to defend his friends. Stop the game after a certain number of passes and count the number of balls recovered by the crocodiles.

This evolution induces behaviours that lead to the development of a collective strategy: I protect my teammate to keep the maximum number of balls.



# Crocodiles and Quistitis



## Story

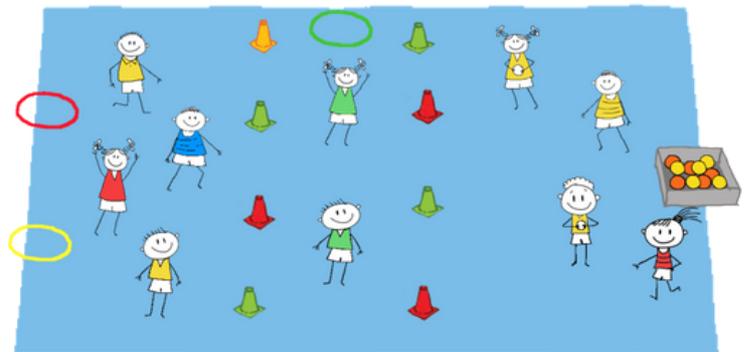


You are clever little monkeys and have to send all your coconuts to your friends on the other side of the river. But the hungry crocodiles will try to get the coconuts when they pass over the river.

Vary the width of the riverbed according to the power of the shooters.

## Organisation

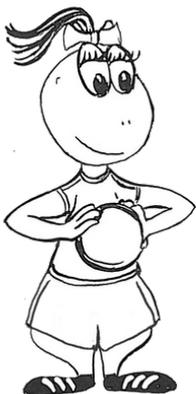
Make a river with cones. The children are divided on both sides of the river in which 2 children playing the role of crocodiles are placed. The balls (coconuts) are placed in a box on one side of the river for the monkeys (passers).



## Instructions

At the signal, the passers throw the balls to the receiving monkeys on the other side of the river, avoiding the crocodiles who are trying to intercept and retrieve all the balls that pass across the river. The balls caught by the crocodiles are placed in their hoop, while the monkeys place their balls in their hoop. The game ends when the passers have sent all their balls. The monkeys and crocodiles then count their collection.

## Advice



**To make it easy:** more crocodiles to make their job easier, less crocodiles to increase the monkeys' success.

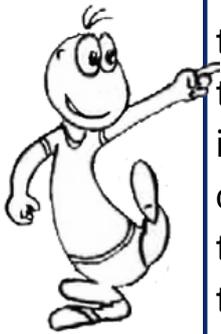
**To develop:** impose a bouncing pass in the river: the monkeys make ricochets to reach the other bank. Be careful - this evolution implies the use of low separations to create the river!

# Lions and Gazelles



## Story

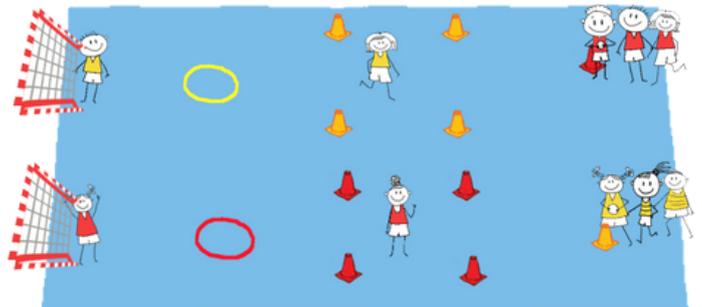
The gazelles must cross the plain to throw the food into the reserve, avoiding the lions. To shoot, the gazelles must be in a hoop and, to get there, they must cross the plain without being touched by the lion. If the lion touches the gazelle, the gazelle returns to the hoop to give the ball to the next gazelle.



Run two workshops parallel, if necessary, depending on the number of participants; this will limit the time the shooter have to wait.

## Organisation

Use 4 cones to mark the plain - 1 goal, 1 hoop, 1 cone (to start), 1 ball. Two children play the role of Lion: 1 in the field (hunter) and 1 in the goal (keeper). The other children are placed at the starting block. Caution! The lion hunter must not leave his space.



## Instructions

The children must cross the space marked by the cones, without being touched, to shoot in the goal defended by a goalkeeper:  
If touched, the child returns to the cone and passes the ball to the next player.

- If he manages to cross without being touched = 1 point.
- If he scores the goal = +1 point.
- If the GK touches the ball, the GK scores 1 point.
- If the defender touches the player carrying the ball, he scores 1 point.



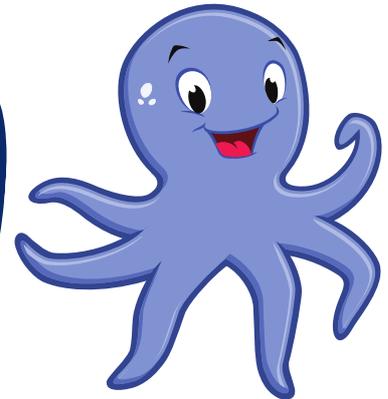
## Advice

**To make it easy:** vary the size of the plain where the lion is hidden: smaller if it's too difficult for the lion; larger if it is too easy for the lion.

**To develop:** the gazelles have a supply of food (a hoop with 8 balls). They must carry them without being touched. If the lion touches the ball carrier, he gives him his ball (also provide a hoop for the lion's supply).



Today, we are going to have a good time by the sea! Let's discover the deep sea and play at the seaside!



## Warm up

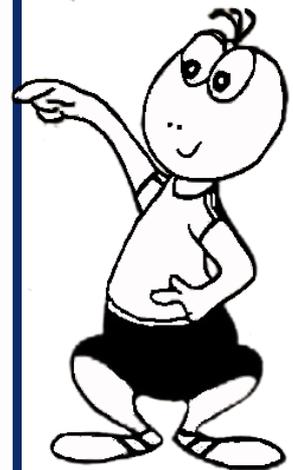
### Organisation:

The children spread out around the court so that they have enough space for exercises. The trainer performs movements by imitating people, fish, or plants in the sea.

### Instructions:

- close the nose with the hand and "dive" several times (we perform squats).
- in a standing position, we wave our raised arms left and right as if we are algae that the water. Throw from the left to the right side (deflect the body).

we lie down on our front and wave our arms above our head as if we were swimming (several types of swimming: crawl, breaststroke, backstroke, dolphin).



## Workshop



**Fish and Fisherman** : motricity and duel

**Material** : 4 hoops, 20 balls (or others objects to represent fish)

**Throwing Pebbles in the Sea** : shoot

**Material** : a ball per child - benches (or others obstacles to separate the ground)

**Sandcastles** : motricity

**Material** : cones, plastic cubes and/or cardboard boxes

# Fish and Fisherman



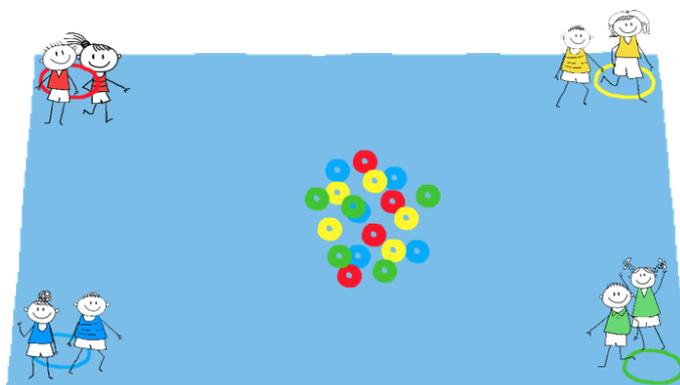
## Story

We are fishermen who sail the sea on our boats and catch fish in our nets.

You can replace the balls by various objects to represent fishes.

## Organisation

Children are divided into 4 groups (teams). Each team has its own hoop (or box) for balls. The balls (fish) are scattered on the ground.



## Instructions

At the signal, a child by boat leaves to retrieve a ball (fish) and bring it back to its hoop (net). The game ends when all the balls have been collected in the hoops. Then, with the help of the coach, we count the balls and announce the winners. The team with the most balls in their hoop wins.

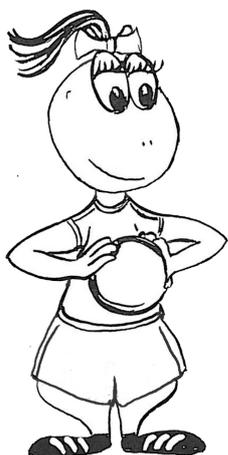
## Advice

**To develop:** ask the children to perform various movements when moving

- like a crab: with feet and hands on the ground.
- like a dolphin: making small jumps to move forward...

If you are using balls, you can also give handling instructions as they return with the 'fish':

- throw the ball to the ground and catch it with both hands (older ones can dribble)
- throw the ball in the air and catch it with both hands, etc...

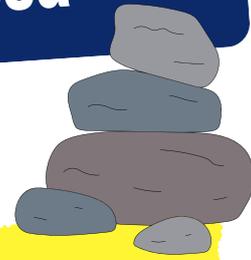


# Throwing Pebbles in the Sea



## Story

What a nice game of throwing pebbles into the sea. Josy and her friends have decided to have a contest by throwing more pebbles into the sea.

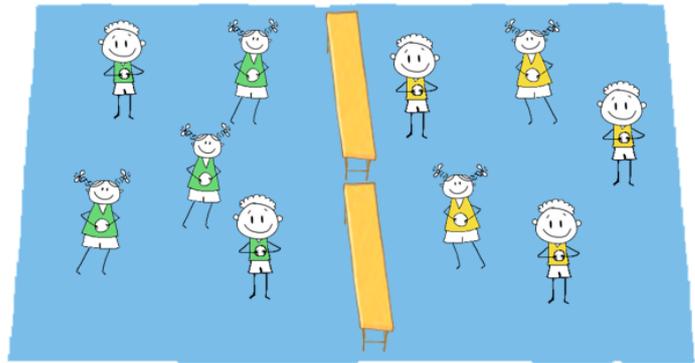


Parents can stay around the ground to stop the balls.

## Organisation

Divide the children into two teams on either side of a limit marked by benches (or other obstacles).

Each child has a ball in hand (pebble).



## Instructions

At the signal the children must throw their balls as far as possible in front. At the second signal, the children must sit on the ground and then we count the balls in each space. The team with the fewest balls in its space wins.

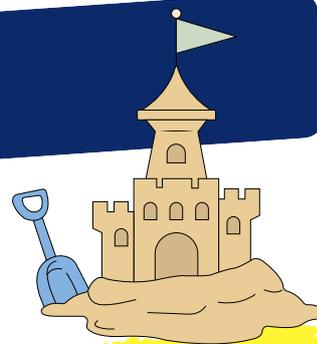


## Advice

Pay attention to the way of throwing, making it clear that only the hands should be used to throw the ball.

**To develop:** you can ask children to jump (above a wave) before throwing the ball.

# Sandcastles



## Story

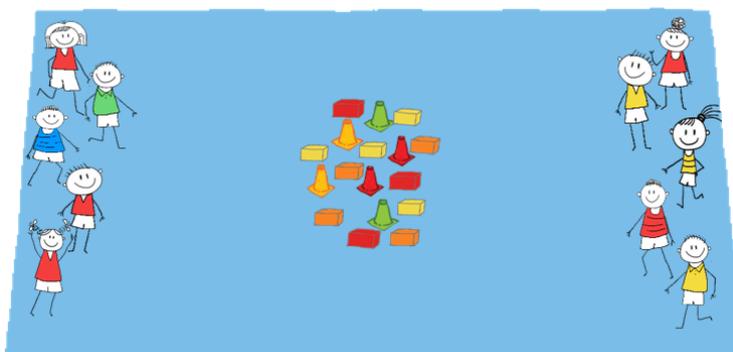


The sea coast is adorned with a large number of sandy beaches where, with a little imagination, we can build large sandcastles. Let's help Josy build as many as possible...

You can use cardboard boxes or shoe boxes, etc...

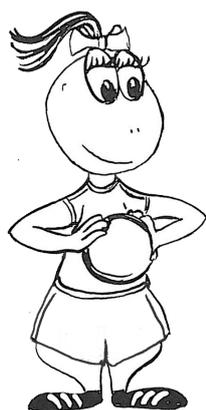
## Organisation

The children are divided into two teams. In the middle of the space there are plastic cubes, cones, other objects that children can stack...



## Instructions

The goal is for children to develop basic biotic movements such as crawling and move in sitting position. On this way they develop the strength of the abdominal muscles. When the coach gives the signal to start stacking the tower, count out loud how many seconds the teams still have (for example: 10,9,8...). Of course, if children need more time, they will count more slowly or start from higher numbers.



## Advice

**To develop:** you can apply different criteria to designate the winner: which is the tallest castle? Which is the most beautiful castle? Which is the strongest castle?



Today we embark on great ships to cross the oceans! We are famous pirates who want to get all the gold in the world! But you also have to be a good sailor to go as far as possible.

## Warm up

The children are lined up facing the animator.  
The story can begin: "port - starboard".  
On a boat, the left side is called port and the right side is called starboard.  
Invite the children to move by indicating "port" or "starboard" (Be careful! You are in a mirror position, so the right of the animator is the left of the children!):  
movements in chasing steps, in crossing steps, crouching, clapping your hands over your head, jumping...



## Workshop



### **The pirate treasure** - duel

Material : 3 carpets - cupels or pastilles - 2 bibs

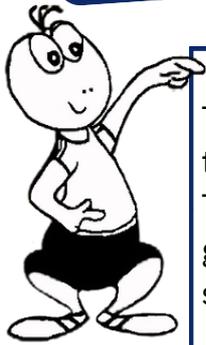
### **The best pirate** - shoot & duel

Material : 1 cage - 2 balls - 4 hurdles - 2 hoops

### **The pirates attack** – shoot & duel

Material : 12 cones ; hurdles ; benches ; slats

# The pirate treasure



## Story

Two pirate ships have located the King's caravel full of gold. They are going to conquer the gold coins to take them on their ship.

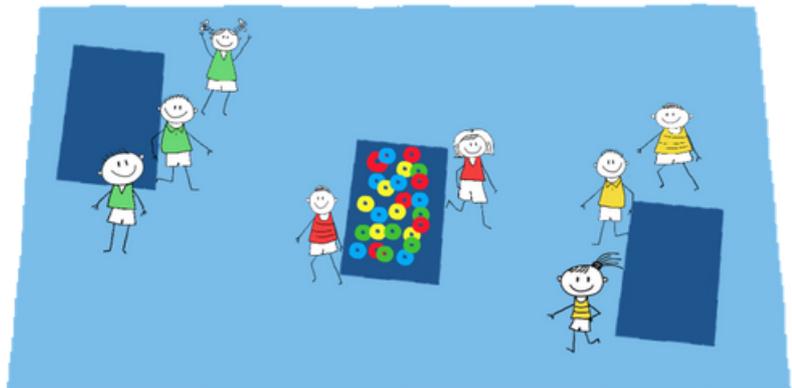
Be watchful that children only carry one piece!

## Organisation

Three carpets (tatami style) are aligned but about 4 meters from each other. They represent boats.

The pastilles (which symbolise the treasure) are placed on the central carpet (king's boat) protected by 2 children who play the king's soldiers.

The other children are divided on the outside carpets (pirate ships) and form two opposing pirate crews.



## Instructions

When the signal is given, the pirates go out to collect the gold coins. They can only take one coin at a time. If they are hit, they must return their coin to the king's ship.

The game ends when there are no more coins on the king's boat.

Designate one child from each pirate crew to count the booty. The ship with the most coins wins.



## Advice

**To make it easier,** materialise only one ship for the pirates where all deposit their booty.

**To develop,** replace the pellets (all or only some) with balls and talk to the children to get them to throw the balls so that they are not hit by the ball in hand and so adopt a collective strategy.

# The Best Pirate



## Story

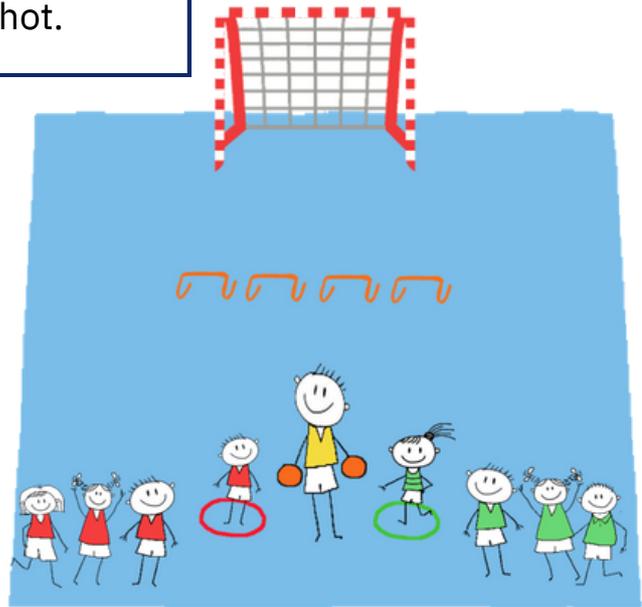


Two crews of pirates challenge each other to attack a ship. The first one to retrieve the ball thrown by the Captain, shoots it into the boat and then goes to the front to protect it from the second pirate's shot.

Do not throw the balls too far to allow the children to catch them before the shooting limit.

## Organisation

Divide the children into two columns facing a goal in front of which are placed hurdles delimiting the shooting zone. The animator is placed between the two columns with two balls in hand.



## Instructions

At his signal, the animator throws a ball slowly towards the goal. The children rush to get the ball, the one who catches it first throws it into the goal and then goes in front of the goal. The other child then picks up the second ball thrown by the facilitator and shoots into the goal, this time protected by a goalkeeper.

1 point is awarded to each scorer.

## Advice



**To develop**, you can impose starting positions on the children: seated, turned around, stretched out...

**Evolution** : Place the 2 balls in 2 different coloured hoops. At the signal, the coach announces the colour corresponding to the hoop of the first ball to be collected. Before shooting the second ball, the pirate must touch the starting block.

# The Pirates attack



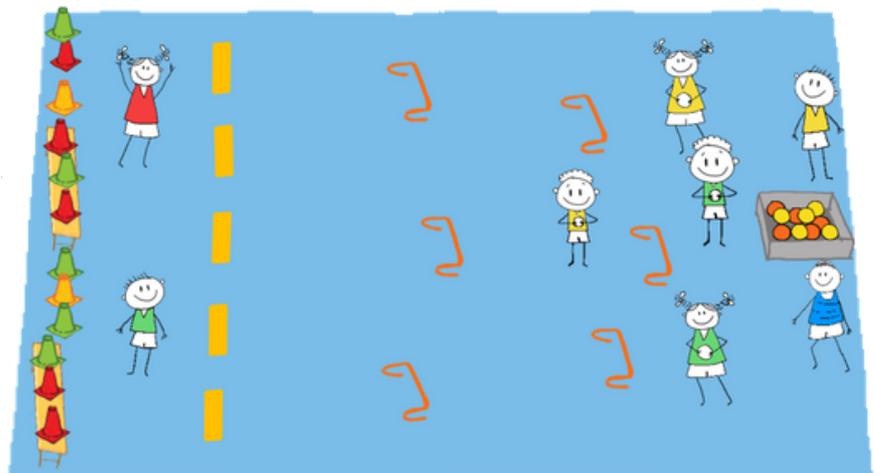
## Story

The Pirates are going to attack the King's ship by shooting cannonballs. But the King's soldiers bravely protect him.

Adapt the shooting distance to the strength of the children.

## Organisation

Cones placed on the benches will serve as targets; slats will delimit the defense zone (about 2 meters from the targets); hurdles are placed in the attack zone. About twenty balls in a box placed opposite the targets. Two children are placed in the defense zone to protect the targets, they can also raise them when they fall. The other children are shooters, placed at the start around the balls box.



## Instructions

At the signal, the shooters (pirates) go for the targets, stopping at the limit after jumping over the waves.

If the ball comes back into play (stopped or thrown back by a king's soldier), the shooters can play it again by going to the box to exchange it.

If the ball is stopped, the soldier keeps it and hides it behind the targets.

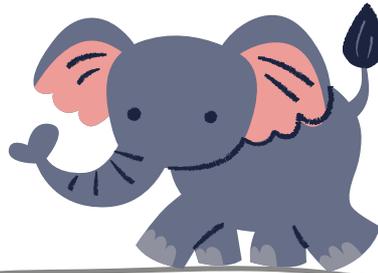
The game ends when there are no more balls or when all the targets have fallen.



## Advice

To make it easier, with more or less soldiers to defend the targets.

# Visit the zoo



Today, we are going to spend the day at the zoo to meet many animals and to help the zookeepers who have a lot of work to do!

## Warm up



To get closer to the animals, you have to imitate them: walk with your arms stretched out until touching the sky to grow like the giraffe, do little jumps like the clever monkey, walk heavily like the elephant, walk on all fours close to the ground like the big hippopotamus...

## Workshop

### **The gluttonous hippos** - motricity

Material : 3 hurdles, 8 cones, 7 hoops, 1 box with cupels, beanbags...

### **The elephant dinner** - shoot with precision

Material : 3 hoops, 2 cones, floor markers (slats), balls

### **The escaped monkeys** – duel

Material : floor markers (slats), bibs



# The gluttonous hippos

## Story



The hippos are very hungry! But in order to get some good fruit, they have to cross the obstacles in their enclosure.

Make different paths available, with one circuit for two kids.



## Organisation

Set up courses all directed towards a box full of objects representing fruits (beanbags, cupels, etc.).

Divide the children at the start of each circuit, indicated by a hoop.



## Instructions

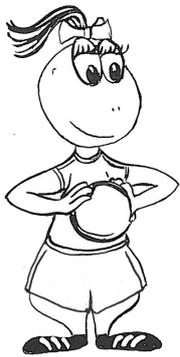
The children take turns picking up a piece of fruit and putting it in their basket (hoop), clearing the obstacles in their way. When there is no more fruit, each pair counts their collection. The group with the most fruit wins the round. Then the children change the circuit to play several rounds with different motor constraints.



## Advice

**To develop,** after a first run, you can ask the children to create circuits to give the other pairs a harder access.

# The elephant dinner



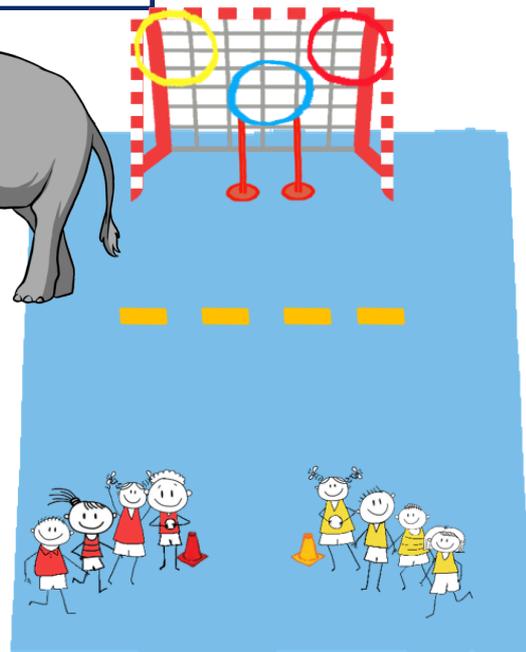
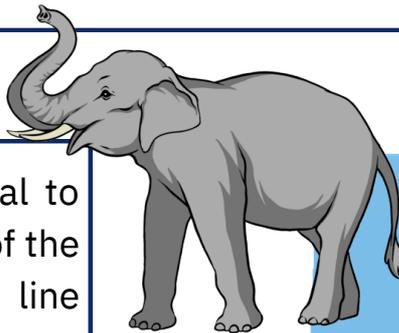
## Story

It's time for the zookeepers to feed the animals, and tonight the elephants are very hungry. You will be a great help in throwing apples to big and small elephants.

Choose the limit for shooting depending on the child.

## Organisation

Place 3 hoops in a goal to represent the mouths of the elephants. Place a line about 3m away with floor markers (slats) and divide the children into 2 teams each placed next to a cone.



## Instructions

The first of each team goes to the goal to shoot at one of the elephant's big mouth hoops. If the target is reached, the team scores 1 point. The shooter then picks up the ball and quickly gives it to the next child. Decide how many points you need to score to win the round (5 points?).



## Advice

**To develop:** you can set up a slalom or hurdles to jump over to add motor skills before the shot.

# The escaped monkeys



## Story

The clever little monkeys have escaped!  
The zookeepers will have to be tricky to catch them before nightfall...



It is important that the playing area is very restricted.

## Organisation

In a well-defined area create an enclosure with floor markers (slats). Three children with bibs play the role of zookeepers, the other children are escaped monkeys.



## Instructions

The little monkeys run around while the zookeepers have to touch them to get them into the enclosure. Monkeys in the enclosure can be liberated if another free monkey touches them. The round is played for a limited time (3 minutes), then the number of monkeys caught is counted before the zookeepers are changed for a new round.

## Advice



**To develop:** place 3 or 4 hoops (depending on the number of children) on the playing area. These hoops symbolise trees in which the little monkeys can hide. The monkeys hiding in the hoops must stand on one foot and when they lose their balance, they must leave the hoop.



How nice it is to walk in the forest! We can meet a lot of nice little animals like squirrels, hedgehogs...and also collect delicious fruits and mushrooms.



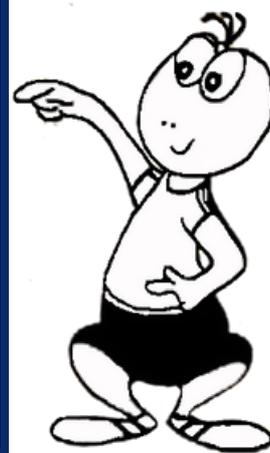
## Warm up

The children are sitting and stretching gently like the tree of the forest that wakes up and stretches its branches towards the sun.

Then they rise slowly and grow to try to touch the sky, and move slowly, without making noise not to wake the small animals still sleeping.

They bend down to pick mushrooms, gather pretty flowers... and hop around so as not to step on the hedgehogs hidden under the leaves.

When the signal comes, we will curl up like the hedgehog. Then we will jump like the squirrels going from tree to tree, until we stop, stretching our big branches to form a beautiful forest.



## Workshop

**The Squirells** - Motricity

Material : cones, hoops, hurdles...

**The Chestnut Harvest** - shoots

Material : balls, 2 goals, 3 hoops, 2 cones, bibs.

**Mushrooms Picking** – duel

Material : 10 cupels, 10 cones.



# The Squirrels



## Story



In order not to run out of food during the winter, the little squirrels will collect nuts and put them in their hiding place. To do this, they will have to cross all the obstacles in the forest.

## Organisation

Place 4 hoops representing the squirrels' hiding places at the 4 corners of the field. In the centre, place a box filled with pucks (or other objects) representing hazelnuts. Place many obstacles all over the field (hurdles, hoops, cones, stakes...). Divide the children among the hiding places.

Regularly encourage children to overcome obstacles.



## Instructions

The children move over hurdles, jump through hoops, slalom... to retrieve a hazelnut (only one at each run) and bring it back, again over the obstacles, to their hiding place. When there are no more nuts in the middle, each group of squirrels counts its nuts. Which ones will have recovered the most for this winter?

## Advice



**To make it easier:** you can remove some elements to simplify the courses.

**To develop:** the squirrels can go and steal nuts in the other reserves, but always overcoming obstacles. If a squirrel is hit with a nut, it must put it back. This evolution leads to a collective strategy.

# The Chestnut Harvest



## Story

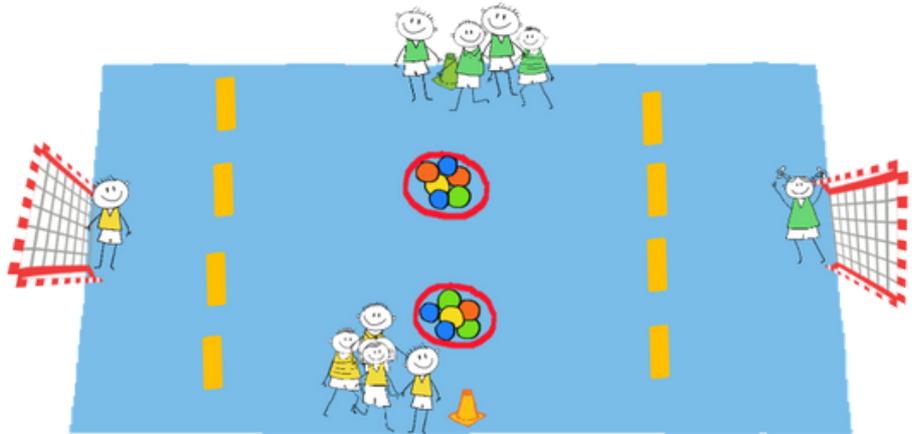


All the chestnuts have fallen from the trees, and you have to pick them up quickly before the bears come and eat them.

Use bibs of the same colour as the cones to make it easier for children to gather information.

## Organisation

Divide the children into 2 teams. Place hoops symbolizing chestnut trees and filled with balls representing chestnuts between 2 popup goals. The 2 goals represent the harvesting nets of each team. 1 child from each team plays the role of goalkeeper, placed in front of a goal. Place 2 cones of different colours at the same level as the chestnut box.



## Instructions

Each team should throw as many balls as possible into their goal. If the goalkeeper stops the ball or if the ball is shot out of the goal, the shooter puts it back in a hoop. But before you can get a new chestnut, you have to touch the cone (tree) of your team. When there are no more chestnuts to pick, the children count the balls in their respective goals and between the pickers and the bears who will have the most.



## Advice

**To develop:** each team prevents the opponents from touching the cone that allows them to get another ball.

# Mushroom Picking



## Story

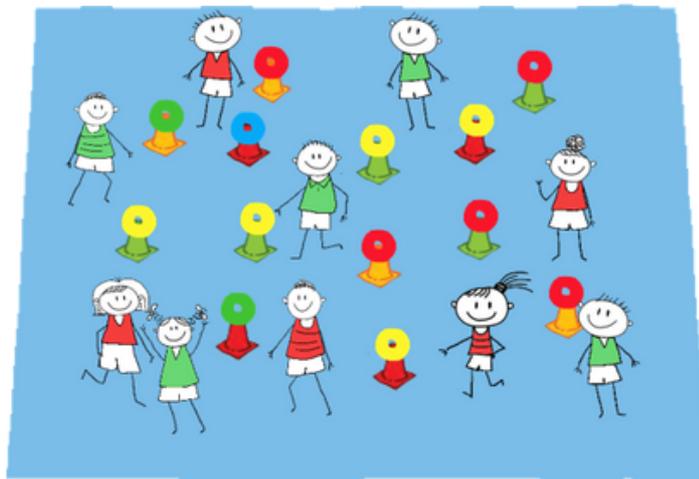


While you want to pick lots of mushrooms, the little elves in the forest prefer to keep them whole! Who will have the most mushrooms at the end of the picking?

If possible, use cones of various heights.

## Organisation

In a limited area, scatter cones and place cups on top to represent mushrooms. Divide children in 2 teams.



## Instructions

In a limited time (3 minutes) the team of pickers must drop as many cupels as possible, while the elves must place them back on the cone. When the time is up, the pickers count the number of cupels on the ground and the elves count the number of cupels on the cones. The team with the most wins the round.



## Advice

**To develop:** instead of just dropping the mushrooms, the pickers have to take them back to the hoops placed at the 4 corners of the play area. And the elves have to take them and put them back on the cones.

## 4. Communication skills

### **BIG IDEAS**

- Communication is a vital factor for coaching success, especially when working with children and young people.
- Rather than the quantity of communication, what makes the biggest difference is its quality. In other words, our goal will be to get our message across effectively using the least amount of time and effort.

In this section we are going to put forward some ideas that we hope will help you take your communication to even higher levels.

- We will first offer some key general considerations and tips to communicate effectively when working with children.
- We will then spend some time thinking through some specific situations that we may encounter and must be ready for.

### **4.1. General Communication**

To communicate effectively with young children, we need to understand the stage of cognitive development they are at and how they prefer to learn at that point. Here are some key ideas.

#### **Trial and Error**

- From the moment they are born, children learn by doing. They try to crawl, stand up, walk, reach for things they want to explore, etc. This is their primary mode of learning. This continues throughout childhood.
- Implications for coaches:
  - Maximise the doing! Let children do things. Create activities where they get lots of opportunities to try something and let them work it out by themselves
  - It does not matter if it looks messy and untidy. Learning, life, and handball are like that!

#### **Imitation**

- As children get older, they start being able to observe someone and then try to emulate and replicate what they are doing.
- Implications for coaches:
  - Give them a visual demonstration so they can form a mental representation of what they need to do
  - Use “cue words” to focus their attention on key parts of the demonstration (for example: “be a frog and then a rocket” to show them how to gather and explode on a jump).

### **Verbal Instruction:**

- Young children are also able to progressively absorb information verbally. However, their attention span, vocabulary and working memory are still developing and we have to take this into account.
- Implications for coaches:
  - Keep it short and simple. Use short sentences and simple and clear language.
  - “Chunk” information. Focus on 1 or 2 main key points at a time. Let them go and try again and next time you stop, focus on something else if needed but avoid overloading them with information.
  - Make it quick. Try to keep your explanations under 20 or 30 seconds.
  - Use vivid and memorable language that is easy to remember and recall. Analogies work very well with children. Animals, superheroes, or food can provide lots of analogies that children will enjoy and remember (for example, move like a bear, or jump like a monkey from tree to tree)
  - Use stories or scenarios. This will allow them to immerse themselves in the activity and get lost in it. This manual contains some great examples of how stories and scenarios can work very well. You can use a story or narrative as the theme for the whole session or for a single activity.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

- Young children are very attentive to environmental cues that tell them if the environment is safe. The problem is that a lot of the times, we, the adults take these for granted because most of the are unspoken
- Implications for coaches:
  - Tone and Pitch of Voice: we want to use a tone and pitch of voice that is exciting and welcoming, that draws them into what we are saying and keeps their attention. Beware of being too shouty or loud all the time, as this could be misinterpreted as being angry. At times quiet and mysterious gets it done too!
  - Body height: when talking to children, it is very important to come down to their level physically and metaphorically. Kneel or crouch down so you are not towering over them. This can be quite threatening for some children and even subconsciously put them in a “defensive” state which will compromise attention and learning. Getting down to their eyeline will draw them in.
  - Body Angle/Position: especially when speaking to a child individually, make sure you are not in a close stance which to the child may appear like they are “trapped”. Speak to them at an angle so they can see a “way out” and not feel threatened.
  - Facial Expression and Hand Gestures: be mindful that your face and how you use your hands will tell children a lot about how you feel. Are you showing excitement, pride, joy, or do you look frustrated and upset? Remember a picture is worth a thousand words!

## Reasoning and Verbalising

- Like all of us, children want to understand why they are doing things, and why they are doing them one way and not another.
- Implications for coaches
  - Be ready to share the “why” of things, not just the “what”
  - Allow children to ask questions about the activities and even to propose new ways of doing the same thing! Let them create!
  - Ask them questions and help them verbalise what they are doing or thinking. Encourage them to explain their choices and solutions and to look for new ones
  - Giving children space and time to “have a voice” will raise their confidence and motivation and encourage their creativity.

### 4.2. Specific Communication

In addition to the above general considerations, when working with young children we have to be ready to manage certain situations that are always likely to occur.

## Unengaged or Unruly Children

- Sometimes children may appear disinterested and even unruly or rude.
- As a rule of thumb, always check if the reason may lay in anything we are doing. Is the activity boring? Is it too difficult? Is it too easy? Is it, asking them to cooperate when they are only ready to do something individually? Are they waiting too long before they can have a go?
  - Implications for coaches:
    - A lot of times we can positively manage their behaviour by making changes to the activity, the set-up or by moving on to something else.
    - When things are going wrong, it is always good to have some activities in your back pocket that you know they really like and use them to bring them back to where you want them mentally.
- Sometimes it has nothing to do with you:
  - Some children “Can’t help themselves”. They are excitable, they may struggle to focus on one thing, or to be patient and take turns. A child may have a learning or intellectual disability
  - Implications for coaches:
    - Be patient, find ways to keep their attention (make them the coach’s helper, kit manager, referee, or give them an individual tasks).
    - When a child is not engaging or being disruptive, it is always important to seek advice from their parents or guardians or their teachers. They will be able to inform you if there is an underlying reason or give you some ideas as to how best to positively manage their behaviour
  - Other times, a child may be purposefully disruptive. It is important for the coach to try and understand where the behaviour may be coming from as that will influence our response. A child may be tired, hungry, frustrated, embarrassed, angry at something that happened earlier in the day, worried, etc.
  - Implications for coaches:

- Take time to understand where the behaviour is coming from before reacting
- Most of the time, a quiet word on the side is more effective than chastising them in front of everyone
- Other options to redirect their behaviour positively may include a “time out”, creating a distraction i.e., “Which TV show are you into?”, have them do a separate activity on their own or actually giving them some responsibility like being the coach’s helper, scorekeeper, even the referee.

## **Conflict Between Children**

Inevitably, from time to time, children will have a disagreement and fall out with each other. Conflict and disagreement are part of the human condition and allowing children to resolve conflict by themselves is an important skill to learn. However, sometimes conflicts escalate to a point where adults have to intervene to protect the safety of the children involved. When this happens, it is important that we stay calm and do our best to keep everyone safe and, if possible and appropriate, get the activity back on track.

## **Verbal Arguments**

- Children will regularly get caught up in “he said/she said” verbal battles; sometimes this will be highly emotionally charged.
- Implications for coaches:
  - Try to bring the emotions down. Ask the children to sit down on the floor (this will straight away lower their emotional state). Tricks like “take 3 deep breaths” and “close your eyes and count to 5” do actually work a lot of the times to bring them down to a level where you can now have a conversation with them to get to the bottom of what the issue was.
  - Rather than looking for the ‘guilty party’, sometimes it is just good to let them explain what happened, “get it off their chest” and let them move on. Depending on the severity of the incident, sometimes we may just want to monitor it but not intervene to give them a chance to resolve it by themselves.
  - If the incident is severe and one of the children really overstepped the mark cursing, swearing or name calling, it is always good to take that child to one side and have a deeper conversation to see what led to it and help them understand the implications of what was said. In these cases, connecting with the teachers and parents or guardians is mandatory.
  - Every case is different, but if a child curses or swears at another child, typically we will need to remove that child from the session until we have had a chance to discuss the issue with teacher and parents/guardians.
  - It is also important to deal with the child that was cursed or sworn at. They could be very distressed. Reassuring them and allowing to give their version of events is important so they feel valued. It is also advisable to communicate with their parents as the child is likely to mention the incident to them and no one likes a surprise.
- Physical Arguments

- This is relatively rare with young children, but sometimes they may lash out or get into a “grab and push” argument. This may be caused by an action of the game or activity, like accidentally bumping into each other, cheating, etc or may be an escalation of a verbal argument as we saw above.
- Implications for coaches:
  - As always, the top priority is to keep everyone safe.
  - If necessary, separate the children so they cannot hurt each other.
  - Take them out of the session and before questioning them give them time to calm down and reduce the emotional charge.
  - Give each child the opportunity to explain what happened and why.
  - If the incident was not severe (for example a push), give the children a chance to apologise to each other and commit to not doing it again and let them continue the session.
  - If the incident was severe and there is a clear “aggressor” and “victim”, remove the aggressor from the session and get the teachers or parents/guardians involved. Take time to make sure the “victim” is okay. They may not want to re-join the session and that is okay.
- **Bullying**
  - Bullying is a very serious issue. Different people define it in different ways, but here, bullying is defined as follows:
  - Unprovoked, proactive aggression towards another child.
  - Intentionally harmful and repetitive.
  - Typically associated with a power imbalance.
  - Can include making threats, spreading rumours, physical and/or verbal violence or exclusion from a social group.
  - When bullying is reported, or suspected action must be taken straight away
    - Take every report of bullying seriously.
    - Reassure the child reporting it that you are on their side and that together you will resolve the issue and support them.
    - Follow the school or club’s anti-bullying policy and ask for help from the designated anti-bullying officer.
    - If appropriate, investigate the instance of bullying by talking to all involved and liaise with parents of both children.
    - Keep a record of what happened and what action you took.

### **Communication with Parents/Guardians**

- Obviously, parents/guardians play a significant role in a child’s education. The same applies to a child’s sport experience. Perhaps too many times in the past, coaches have looked at parents/guardians as “the enemy”. We believe parents/guardians are a fantastic resource coaches must engage.
  - Parents/guardians know their children better than anyone and therefore can help us understand the best way to get through to a child.

- They can also serve to emphasise and reinforce key ideas and messages that we are trying to install in the children
- In other words, coaches and parents/guardians must work together for the benefit of the child
- Implications for coaches:
  - Have clear and open communication channels with parents/guardians. Be proactive in communicating with them
    - Regular meetings
    - Text-Message groups
    - Newsletters
  - Explain your coaching goals and your philosophy and ways of working so the parents know what they can expect rather than second guessing you.
  - Have role clarity so every person knows what their contribution is.
  - Have clear guidelines of expected behaviour before, during, and after the sessions and matches, and explain why they exist (for the benefit of the child)
  - Get to know them. Parents and guardians really value when the coach takes time to build a relationship with them. A good coach-parent/guardian relationship will really help the child thrive.
  - If appropriate, find out if any of the parents would like to get involved as a helper. This can be very helpful for both coaches and children.

And that's it! It is hoped that you have enjoyed these ideas around communication when working with young children. Keep calm and coach on!