

Structured Gross Motor Play Time Activities:

Children develop motor skills, body awareness, motor coordination, balance and strength through their ability to explore the world of movement. Structured gross motor play is important to allow children the opportunities to learn how relate to the environment and a sense of how to move. Physical activity is vital to the whole development of a child in all domains of social, physical and academic skills. Motor abilities are acquired during spontaneous playtime however children with disabilities or developmental delay often need to be shown or assisted with the movements until they are more familiar. Children with disabilities need more time to understand and organize these movements or may need to modify the components to get success with these activities. Below are some suggested gross motor games and activities that can be incorporated into classroom activities. All games can be modified for ability level and may not be appropriate for all children.

0-18 month functional age:

- Ball Play - Rolling: reciprocal ball play, corralling, extends arms at shoulders & elbows
- Ball Play - Kicking: increases weight shifting, balance on one foot briefly, strengthen & coordinates lower extremities
- Catching Bubbles: increases visual tracking, eye-hand coordination, starts motor plan to jump & reach , strengthen
- Balloon Toss: increases throwing and catching, using bilateral arms to midline. (Game: to stand or sit and throw/catch/keep balloons moving)
- Parachute: Sit in circle with everyone holding on, create clouds by wiggling, have one child in middle feel like they are in clouds or practice lifting parachute up and bring back down, lift up & child try to run/crawl through. Will increase vibration input, hand grip, upper extremity and lower extremity strength.
- Going on Bear hunt: circle and pat knees going on bear hunt come to lake (swim motion), then mud (squish motion), shake off mud, tall grass (push out of way), wind (make noises & pretend to be blown over), then in cave its dark, feel something with a nose, ears, fur, teeth,...IT'S A BEAR...run back through the path.
- Rock-n-roll: Using blanket have child lie in middle on back, others hold on edges and gently rock back & forth. This will increase vestibular input, increases large muscle activation, coordination and body position in space.
- Carpet Ride: Child lie in middle of blanket and other person drags around can be done lying down or sitting. This will increase balance reactions, use of upper extremity support and sense of body position in space.
- Kiddie Burrito: wrap child in towel or blanket and pull one end gently so he rolls out onto soft rug. Increasing body position in space, movement, increases ability to roll over.

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- Roll Down the Hill: set up foam wedges for kids to pretend is a hill and roll down. Provides opportunity for vestibular input and muscular coordination.

2-3 yrs of age:

- Obstacle course: set up different objects, chairs to walk around benches to crawl over, boxes, squares to jump to, jump rope to jump over, pop up tunnel to crawl through, throw bean bag into basket, hula hoop to walk around, walk through & jump into & out of. This would increase agility, motor planning, balance, reciprocal movement of lower extremities
- Red light / Green light: Use signs that say Stop (red) and Go (green), one child gets be leader, rest start ~20 ft ahead, child that's it turns around and holds up a sign. When it says go, children may move forward quickly but when sign says stop all kids must freeze. The child that reaches the "it" first becomes new leader. This address' coordination, quick stops and starts
- Duck duck goose: One leader stands outside the in circle, runs around circle or walks tags one person to be goose. Gooses then chases "it", the "it" then runs around the circle to the spot where the goose was sitting. If the goose tags the "it" before it is seated, then the "it" remains it, otherwise the goose becomes it. This increases speed and following directions.
- Follow the leader: uses variety of different actions, let the rest of class follow. (I.e. Place hands on head, jump up & down, touch toes, spin in circle, walk tiptoes etc...) This is good for coordination, following directions, mimicking what others are doing and body awareness.
- Bear Hunt: circle and pat knees going on bear hunt come to lake (swim motion), then mud (squish motion), shake off mud, tall grass (push out of way), wind (make noises & pretend to be blown over), then in cave its dark, feel something with a nose, ears, fur, teeth,...IT'S A BEAR...run back through the path. Good imagination skills, practices using large muscle groups in realistic patterns.
- Simon says: Allow one child to be Simon and direct the other children in what activities to do. Simon says put your hands on your head. All children follow, if Simon does not say Simon says (i.e. touch your toes) and someone does that child sits down. Last child to still follow Simon's directions is the next Simon.
- Musical Chairs: (or mats) have the mats/chairs lined up back to each other with one less chair than child, while music plays kids walk in circle around chairs. As soon as music stops everyone must find a seat. One child that doesn't must sit out, all stand up remove one more chair and start music again. Last one to get a chair wins. Works on following directions, listening skills, sit to stand, and ability to follow directions.
- Hot Potato: Can be played sitting or standing in circle, with bean bag toss to person sitting next to you when music stops or the signal "stop" is

given. The person holding the beanbag is out. And the game continues until there is one person not caught holding the potato. This game facilitates passing objects to partners, speed, hand coordination and listening skills.

- London Bridges: Two people hold hands facing each other forming the bridge; the rest of the group walks around in a circle as all singing "London Bridges Falling Down falling down falling down, London bridges falling down my fair lady". Now the bridge lowers and traps the one child gently swaying them back and forth between grasped hands. Then "take the key and lock her up, lock her up, repeat" That child becomes part of the bridge and repeat. Good for vestibular input, teamwork, locomotion and following directions.
- Circle Game: All children holding hands in circle, sing "Here we go loop de loo", go left, go right, go in, go out, go up, go down. Practices moving in different directions and associating directional words and meanings, cooperating with others.
- Build Tower Knock it Over: Using blocks and other objects encourage children to build tower together. Encourages team work, squat to stand, manipulation of objects, UE strength, fine motor skills.
- Bowling Bodies: set up objects (2 liter bottles, blocks) that children must roll down (various ways) a slight inclined foam wedge to knock over. Spread objects further apart to make children stretch out arms and legs to knock them over. Good for body awareness, body position in space, motor planning and control of muscles to move forward.
- Carpet Squares: (Or blankets/mats) Make a carpet trail, to play follow the leader touching only the carpet squares. Try walking, jumping, hopping, skipping, forwards, backwards, sideways, on tip toes, or by squatting low. This incorporates LE strength, motor planning, balance, following directions and body coordination.
- Roll to/ away: All kids lie on floor and roll from one side of the room to other, also can be done on variety of textures (blankets, floor, pillows, grass). Good for understanding directions, body position in space, sensory awareness, vestibular input and body coordination.

3-4 years of age:

- Simon says: see above directions
- Hide-n-seek: One child is "It" closes eyes and counts to ten, then "ready or not here I come" tries to find all the other children that are staying in hiding spots. The first one found gets to be the new "It". This game encourages following directions, counting, using deductive reasoning where the kids could hide, kids that are hiding are maintaining a position for a period of time (performing muscle contractions) and learn to stay quiet to not be found. Good if performed outside too.

- “Limbo”: Using a broom, or jump rope have 2 people hold the ends starting near head level, then line up the children and have them go under without touching the limbo stick anyway they can (not just bending back at trunk). After entire line has gone under the limbo stick is lowered. Last person to go under without touching wins. Encourages creative ways to clear height, flexibility, muscular control and strength, motor planning and taking turns.
- Mini Kick Ball: Child kicks ball forward and attempts to reach 1 base (can use up to 3 bases as kids learn concept of game) next child takes turn kicking and the other child tries to return to start point. Can start the kicking motion by having ball stationary while seated in a chair or as get better can have a rolling ball kicked from standing position. This works on LE balance, standing on one leg momentarily, quick movements to reach base, and body coordination.
- Bean bag toss: Need separate children into teams, line them up, 1st child has three bean bags that are to be tossed into basket, after all bean bags tossed they are collected and passed to next child in line, also the basket can be moved further away as the game progresses. Score can be kept if a winner is to be determined. This works on UE strength, throwing/tossing aim and hand eye coordination.
- Parachute Trading Places: Group spaced around parachute holding on with both hands. Adult leader call out “1, 2, 3 lifts up and then down.” Once group gets up down motion, adult leader will call out two children’s names and they are to run under the parachute and trade places before the parachute falls to the ground. All children are to be given a turn. Children must acknowledge name, improves quick locomotion and motor planning in order to know where to run too.
- Balloon Volleyball: Divide children into two groups, with jump rope on the floor as line for net, two teams must hit balloon back and forth, when the balloon hits the floor a point is scored. At end of designated time team with most points wins or team that gets to X points first wins. (To make more or less challenging raise the level of the jump rope) Incorporates team work, taking turns, UE strength, motor planning, balance and muscle coordination.
- Scooter board: Start with child on scooter board on stomach and ask to propel with hands and knees, (make harder by sit, kneel or on back) then ask to follow set up course or gather up bean bags scattered about room. This encourages UE and LE strength, reciprocal pattern or moving extremities.
- Imitate the animal: With various picture cards of animals face down, have each child pick one and take turn acting out how that animal moves or sounds without showing the other children the card. Animals such as frog, elephant, bird, monkey, horse, pig, turtle, snake, rabbit, tiger, etc. This encourages imaginative play, develops body awareness, special awareness and muscular coordination.

- Scooper Game: cut off bottom of 2 liter bottles or milk jug and turn upside down to use as scooper, scatter ping pong balls or crumpled paper around to scoop up & dump into a bucket. This is good for eye hand coordination, strengthening LE through squats, good for aim.
- “Sardines”: Just like hide and seek, however one person hides and everyone else tries to find him, as each other child finds the original hider they too must hide and stay in that same spot. All the children hiding together in one spot. The last child to find them is the new hider. This is important for strength, endurance to hold one position for period of time, ability to keep quiet, deductive reasoning and cooperating as a group.
- Relay race: This can be done in teams or just individually to see who is fastest. This can be set up in any fashion with a variety of tasks that the children can accomplish. Use walking, hopping, skipping, sliding, tunnels, hula hoops to jump into, weave through cones and climbing over bolsters with a start and stop line. This would encourage agility, motor planning, following directions, strengthening, and body coordination.
- Monkey in the middle: Can be played in groups of 3 people, with a ball being thrown over head of the “monkey”, the monkey then has to try to jump up to catch it. Once caught it, the person that threw the ball now becomes the monkey. This encourages jumping, reaching, balance and strength.

The autistic/ sensory classroom:

(These children have harder time participating and following directions, often become over stimulated or need more reinforcement to attend to tasks. With these types of issues simple games, with few rules and which often involve music are more successful for gross motor types of activities.)

- Everybody do this just like me: Each child takes turn being leader chanting: “Everybody do this, do this, do this, Everybody do this just like me. (perform action such as clapping, stomping, jumping, turning, body parts, hop 1 foot, etc.) Everybody (clap hands, clap hands, clap hands), Everybody (clap hands) just like me. This encourages following directions, imitation, and increase gross motor skills.
- Blanket Swing: Using sturdy large blanket have child lie in middle on back, gently lift blanket and swing back and forth, singing “rock a bye baby”. Good vestibular input, body awareness in space and decreases fear in elevation activities. Do not perform if child appears anxious or frightened, can just rock in arms for that child’s turn.
- Circle Game: All children holding hands in circle, sing “Here we go loop de loo”, go left, go right, go in, go out, go up, go down. Practices moving in different directions and associating directional words and meanings, cooperating with others.
- Popcorn: Sit around sheet/parachute with small balls on parachute and watch fly “pop” into air.
- Shoe mix up: Group sits in circle and takes off shoes; leader puts all shoes into center of circle and mixes them up. Each child gets an individual turn to get up

and find their shoes in the mix. Increases sit to stand strength, squatting, manipulating objects, recognizing their own shoes.

- Freeze Game: Using music have children scatter about the room, when the music begins the kids can move freely jump wiggle and dance about the room when the music stops the kids must freeze in their positions for 2-3 sec, then begin music again. This game encourages children to explore different ways to move about and strengthening different muscle groups, as well as exploring body awareness and body coordination.
- Ring around the Rosy: All children hold hands walking in a circle, singing "Ring around the rosy, pockets full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down." Then drop hands and fall to the ground. This incorporates play with other children, moving together in direction, sidestepping or walking in circle, practicing controlled fall and LE strength from floor to stand.
- Hokey Pokey: All children in a circle singing "I put my right arm in, I put my right arm out, put right arm in and shake it all about, I do the hokey pokey and I turn myself around that's what's its all about." Repeat verse with left arm, hands, right foot, left foot, elbows, shoulders, head and whole self. If right and left is difficult can just do the body parts, and start simple and progress to harder body parts. This promotes body awareness, body awareness in space, concept of placement (in/out), body coordination, single leg stance time and use of large muscle groups.
- Pin Tail on the Donkey: Each child gets turn, have paper donkey (or other animal with tail on wall), give each child a paper tail that will stick, turn in circle three times (as child gets better can blind fold) and ask them to place it on the donkey. This gives children vestibular input, learn control of body and equilibrium, improves locomotion and motor planning.
- Musical chairs (or mats): *please see above*
- Surprise Jars: 2-5 plastic containers with/without lids use small toys or favorite treats, show what's in jar & place away from child where it encourages him to move towards it. Improve locomotion skills and object permanence, as well as serve as motivational factor.

Suggested therapy equipment to use:

Sock Tunnel
Therapy Balls
Trampolines
Bean bag toss
Jump Ropes
Foam wedges
Parachute

Bowling pins or 2 liters
Music to dance to is great exercise too

Animal pictures
Sturdy blankets
Blocks
Balls
Balloons
Scooter boards
Stop watch
Carpet squares
Mats/ Chairs

Disclaimer: All games listed are categorized by activity level and may not be appropriate for all kids. As kids develop some of the more complicated games can be attempted. Most activities can be modified for all to participate and if a child needs more assistance assign a helper so that child can be successful in these activities.