



Developing Ball Skills

Toddlers love to play with balls and they come in many different sizes, textures and shapes. Balls are AMAZING, because children can use them in so many ways - ways that change as children gain new skills and discover what they can do with them.

For younger children, ball play can help them to develop many physical skills such as gripping and grasping skills, development of hand and finger muscles, hand-eye coordination and the ability to move objects from one hand to another. It also encourages the tracking of the eyes and supports thinking skills.

Treasure basket

Start by creating a treasure basket suitable for children to explore the properties of the different types of balls



Bouncing

Using light balls or balloons encourage your child to bounce them off the ground as high as they can.

Next try introducing a washing basket and bounce the balloon or ball into the basket.

How many balloons will fit in?

Posting

Using old cardboard tubes or spare down piping, fix them to radiators using coloured tape.

Using the selection of balls collected from the treasure basket see which will fit down the tubes.

How long do they take to go through the tube, do the textured balls take longer? Do they bounce at the bottom?

Explore and have fun!

Try some of the following ideas to become ball confident and develop ball skills through play

Ball play develops gross-motor skills, such as kicking, throwing, catching, aiming, rolling, bouncing, and tracking. It also supports early social skills such as co-operation with other children, understanding turn taking, the introduction of easy rules, winning and losing and much more.

Playing ball games will develop interests in sports such as football, rugby, tennis, basketball and cricket. All the best sports people started off developing a love of sport through play!

Bowling

A fun and shared way to support rolling is **bowling**

Using a large ball to start with, aim this at natural pinecones or something light to encourage success in knocking them down. Then introduce a smaller ball and weighted bottles. This will help develop balance and co-ordination.



Catching

Start with throwing and catching a large ball with a small space between you and your child. As their skill progresses, try 'Velcro ball'.

To help little hands succeed in catching, use a plastic ball and add small Velcro dots around the exterior of the ball. Placing gloves on your child will help them find it easier to grasp the ball as it lands in their hand, developing confidence.



Kicking

Kicking is a difficult skill and can be challenging, because it requires shifting weight from one foot to the other, so start with something light like balloons.

Set up a goal between two chairs and encourage your child to aim for that space or fill a paddling pool up with balloons. Standing the child in the middle, encourage them to kick all balloons out of the pool.

