

## **Fun and Fitness for Kids**

### **Games to enhance Movement Quality, Co-ordination and Balance.**

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The aim of this article is to provide coaches, trainers and parents with simple training drills for improving a child's physical fitness and level of participation in sport and physical activity. The games or drills identified below are easy for kids aged 4-12 years to play and require minimal equipment and can be played in small or large groups. The aim of each game is to promote and teach a number of important physical components such as Aerobic and Anaerobic conditioning, Strength, Speed, Power, Acceleration, Co-ordination, Stability, Balance and Functional Flexibility, The improvement and development of mental cognition / awareness and peripheral vision [and to aid in the prevention of childhood obesity\(Botelho-Sottovia, 2002 and Wallace, 2002\)](#). All are essential components in day to day life with regards to fundamental skills not just sport or physical activity, but also help to prevent harm or danger such as *injuries, falls and scaldings* and improve school performance and their learning ability.

As a trainer or coach and even as a parent it is important to expose children to many different sports and skill related stimulus (Russell, 2002), therefore reframing from performing or encouraging 'sport specific' training in young children as it can interfere with the learning of new skills and overall participation of all activities.

### **Stealing the Cheese**

Equipment Needed:

- 1 Multi Coloured or 4 piece ladder between 4 children
- An odd number of balls (can use any type) such as reaction balls, footballs or

Purpose: *Foot Speed and Agility*

How to play:

1. In the centre of the intersection of the ladder/s place an odd number of reactions (The Cheese).
2. Each of the 4 participants will run through the ladder using a specified drill such as two feet in each square, and pick up one ball at a time and return it to the mouse hole (at end of their ladder).
3. Players can steal the cheese from other participants by moving diagonally left or right. This can only occur when the other mice have left their mouse hole and if a child is tagged while stealing cheese they forfeit their cheese to the tagger and must start again.
4. The winner is determined by having the greatest amount of cheese (reactions balls), upon none being left in the centre.

Drill courtesy of Speed Power Stability Systems and Jamie Tout.

## **Catch the Rabbit**

Equipment Needed:

- 1 Speed and Agility Ladder between 2 children
- A marker or cone

Purpose: Fast Foot Speed

How to play:

1. In pairs, the first child runs through the ladders placing both feet in each square.
2. When the 1<sup>st</sup> runner reaches the marker placed beside the ladder the 2<sup>nd</sup> runner begins to chase the 1<sup>st</sup> child but placing only one foot in each square

Drill courtesy of Speed Power Stability Systems and Jamie Tout.

## **Around, Through and Over Race**

Equipment Needed

- 6 Cones/hats or mini hurdles

Purpose: *Multi directional movement and quickness and increased foot speed.*

How to Play:

1. Note: This is more difficult game and physically challenging, requiring greater aerobic and aerobic conditioning as both mental and physical fatigue may occur in less conditioned participants.
2. Set up the 6 cones or mini hurdles in a line.
3. The child begins at one corner of the course and faces square in the direction throughout each of the 3 circuit components (around, through and over). With each component to be completed as quickly as possible.
4. On the coach's command, the child will shuffle laterally (side to side) to the end of the hurdles, run backwards, behind the line of the hurdles or cones, shuffle laterally in the opposite direction and run forward to start. This is the around component.
5. The Through circuit immediately follows and involves the participant swerving in and out of the cones and returning to start position.
6. The final component

*Drill from Twist, 2001.*

## **Shark in the Tank - Tag**

Equipment Needed:

- 4 hats or cones per group of 10-20 players

Purpose: *Incorporation of all fundamental movement skills*

How to play:

1. Using a grid 10m x 20m (The Tank), the coach selects from 3-5 sharks depending on the number of children. Everyone else are the swimmers.
2. Time is measured, how long it takes for the sharks or groups of sharks to attack (tag) the swimmers. Make note of any positive or negative movements and the ability of each child to change direction and remain stable.
3. Those swimmers tagged or attacked early can perform a specific drill such as (standing on one leg till the game ends) for balance or continuous jogging around the outside of the grid for general conditioning effect.

*Drill from Lawson, 2001.*

## **Ready, Set, Go**

Equipment Needed:

- 1 Reaction Ball between 2 children
- 1 Marker or cone
- A Hard or firm surface (Basketball Court)

Purpose: *Enhance Reaction Time, one step acceleration and multidirectional speed*

How to play:

1. In pairs one child stands 2-3 metres from the other with the reaction ball held extended out above their head (1) the other child (2) stands facing towards them.
2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> child (2) stands tall with their weight on the balls of their feet and waits for the 1<sup>st</sup> child to drop the ball.
3. When the ball is dropped the athlete explodes towards the ball, trying to catch it before it bounces a second time.
4. Have the partner dropping the ball, move back 30-40cm with each successful attempt.

*Drill from Verstegen and Marcello, 2001.*

## **Truck and Trailer**

Equipment Needed: A set of Evasion belts between 2 children

Aim: Evasion Skills, Change or direction and Increased Concentration and ability to focus on a task

How to play:

1. In pairs the children start facing the same direction, attached via an evasion belt. The Child in front is the attacker (Truck) and the child at the rear in the defender or trailer.
2. The game is generally played in a grid 10-30 in length with a width of 5 -10m.
3. The attacker can move forward, laterally (side to side) and even stop, but cant not run backwards. The drill continues until the two children are no longer attached via the evasion belt.

*Drill courtesy of Speed Power Stability Systems and Jamie Tout.*

## **References**

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