



Physical Skills for Happy Healthy Kids

The following guidance is adapted from Physical Development for Nursery, Belfast Education and Library Board and is designed to help early year's practitioners to develop physical skills in pre-school.

It is intended that this is used as a guide during Happy Healthy Kids workshops, to help raise parental awareness of what to look out for when engaging in physical play with their children.

This document is for practitioner use but if shared with parents it is **very** important that they use the information to model and encourage, not explicitly coach!



Catching

Children need to:

- Move feet to place body in line with the ball
- Keep eyes focussed on the ball
- Reach out hands to meet the ball
- Keep fingers soft while cupping hand slightly
- Bend elbows to absorb impact
- Bend knees as they catch

Prompts:

- Watch the ball
- Get ready
- Soft Fingers
- Big hands
- Reach for the ball and catch with two hands
- Watch the ball come into your two hands
- Squeeze the ball to catch it
- Pull the ball to your tummy

Help if child is:

- Looking away or shutting eyes
- Having difficulty tracking ball with eyes
- Miss-timing hand closure
- Trapping ball against chest

Galloping

Children need to:

- Move feet to face the front
- Bend knees slightly and use the balls of the feet
- Have trunk, head and eyes facing forwards
- Move arms to assist the action

Prompts:

- Step forward with leading leg
- Back leg meets heel of leading leg
- Continuous movement
- Click tongue to make horse sound
- Bend knees to absorb impact
- Arms swing forward and backwards to assist gallop

Help if child is:

- Lacking rhythm
- Crossing back foot in front of lead foot
- Exaggerating vertical movements
- Continuously leading with same foot

Hopping

Children need to:

- Straighten leg to push off ball of foot
- Take off and land on the same foot
- Bend leg when landing
- Ensure swinging leg moves in rhythm with supporting leg
- Encourage hopping on both legs

Prompts:

- Flex ankle, knee and hip
- Extend support leg strongly
- Heel off the ground
- Drive swing leg forward in rhythm and support leg
- Maintain balance

Help if child is:

- Landing with a stiff ankle, knee or hip
- Landing flat footed
- Arms aren't moving to assist the action
- Not looking out ahead

Jumping for Distance

Children need to:

- Bend ankles, knees and hips
- Look forward
- Swing arms behind the body
- Straighten legs when pushing off
- Swing arms forwards and up
- Ensure both feet land on the ground at the same time
- Bend ankles, knees and hips to absorb impact

Prompts:

- Ready position
- Look forward
- Bend and swing
- Reach up towards the sky

Help if child is:

- Not moving arms behind the body
- Taking off on one foot
- Jumping up rather than out
- Not flexing the ankles, knees and hips

Jumping for Height

Children need to:

- Bend ankles, knees and hips
- Reach out arms and swing behind the body ready to jump
- Keep head up and upper body straight
- Forcefully extend legs from crouched position
- Swing arms forward and up in time with the leg action
- Bend ankles, knees and hips to absorb impact

Prompts:

- Weight on balls of the feet
- Both hands reaching behind
- Chest pushed forward and out
- Eyes focused upwards
- Spring up and shoot high

Help if child is:

- Jumping with straight legs
- Not getting height in the jump
- Keeping head low to the ground
- Not flexing the ankles, knees and hips

Kicking

Children need to:

- Focus their eye on the ball
- Hold the ball at hip height
- Step forward using the non-kicking foot
- Connect the ball with front of foot/laces
- Lean backwards
- Impact with ball

Prompts:

- Glance at target then focus on ball
- Drop the ball to your foot
- Step onto non kicking foot
- Ensure kicking leg is aiming at target

Help if child is:

- Not focusing on the ball
- Not connecting front of foot/laces with the ball

Skipping

Children need to:

- Perform on the balls of the feet
- Keep head stable, eyes focused forward
- Be rhythmical and relaxed
- Move arms in opposite direction to legs

Prompts:

- Step forward and hop, step hop, step hop etc.
- Push off with balls of feet, keeping knees bent
- Straight upper body
- Swing opposite arms to legs moving forward

Help if child is:

- lacking rhythm
- Not moving arms to assist movement
- Landing flat footed
- Looking downwards

Sprinting

Children need to:

- Keep head and body stable
- Drive arms vigorously forward and backward
- Keep eyes focus ahead
- Lift knees high
- Plant balls of the feet
- Take big steps, alternate legs and run very fast

Prompts:

- Look straight ahead
- Lift the knees and take big steps
- Run very fast

Help if child is:

- Showing too much body rotation
- Swinging arms across the body
- Running with flat feet
- Running with low knee, resulting in short stride

Underarm Throw

Children need to:

- Step forward with opposite foot to throwing hand
- Keep arm straight and close to body
- Follow through with straight arm
- Release ball in front of the body
- Keep eyes on the target

Prompts:

- Face target you are throwing at
- Step, swing and follow through

Help if child is:

- Getting the timing wrong
- Not following through
- Not facing the target