

NT Health
Consumer
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Let's get Going!



HOW TO START A PARENT-LED EXERCISE GROUP for children 1-5 years

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**NORTHERN
TERRITORY**
GOVERNMENT



Who is this book for?

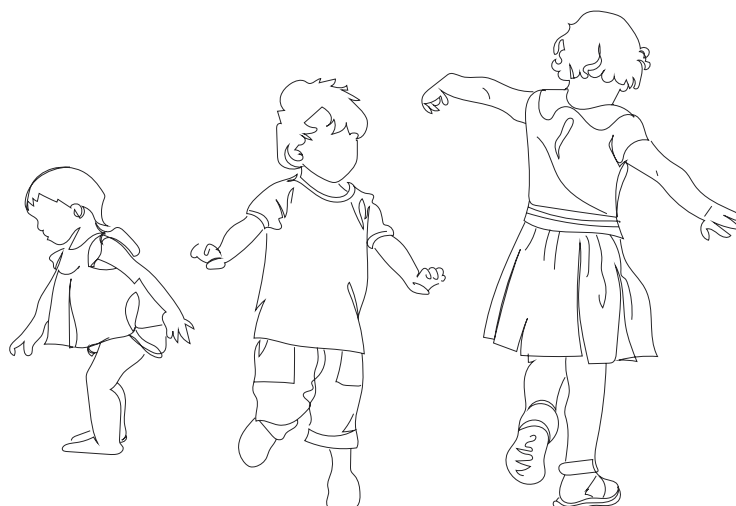
This book is for parents who would like to start an exercise group for children 1-5 years in their area.

Introduction

Getting moving has many benefits for infants and toddlers.

Like

- ✓ Better emotional regulation
- ✓ Better bone density
- ✓ Better concentration
- ✓ Better self esteem
- ✓ Better sleep
- ✓ More confidence
- ✓ Improved mood
- ✓ Keeping a healthy weight.



If kids learn how to move in all sorts of ways when they are small they can build confidence. This confidence will enable them to have a go at any sport or physical activity when they're older. It's much easier to learn these skills before they become self-conscious. Older kids are often more reluctant to try new things. Physical activity boosts kids' mood, sleep, concentration, bone density and appetite.

You might think that Australian children are very active. Actually, only 1 in 5 Australian children are meeting the physical activity guidelines.

In 2019 we surveyed parents in Darwin and Palmerston. The survey results showed that parents wanted support to form parent-led activity groups. They said that this would be the best way to promote physical activity in children 0-5 years.

We have developed this guide to help parents who would like to start a physical activity group in their area.

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Who?

You might already know a group of people you would like to invite. If not, you could try one of these ideas:

1.

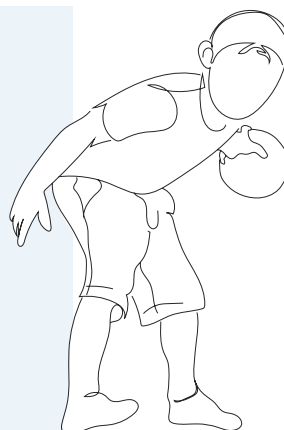
Put a message on a notice board in your local area.

You could try a notice board at:

- your local community care centre
- child's daycare
- local primary school
- library
- shopping centre

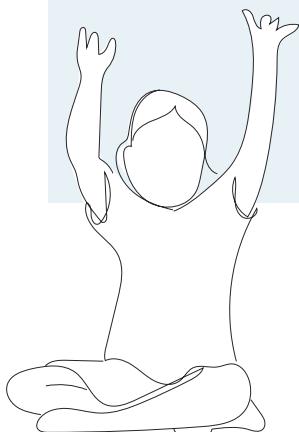
2.

Post a message on Facebook.



3.

Invite a couple of people and ask them to bring a friend



4.

Start with a very small group of one or two people and invite other people as you go along

5.

If you live in Darwin/ Palmerston and you are having trouble finding a group call:

**Healthy Living NT
08 8927 8488**

The Health promotion officer at Healthy Living NT may be able to connect you to some people directly. If not, they may offer some suggestions to help you find a group.

“Teaching children to love physical activity when they are young is a gift that will last a lifetime”.



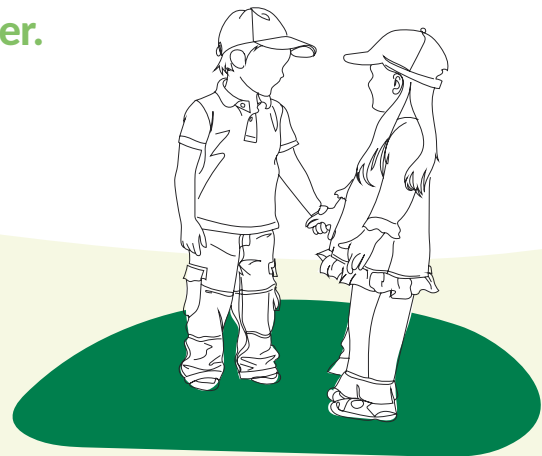
*Let's get
Going!*



When?

You may like to ask your group what time suits best or you might like to select a time that suits you as the organiser.

Early in the day is likely to be cooler.



How long?

Keep it short!

Young kids can find it hard to concentrate for long periods.

They are most active when they first arrive in an area, so be ready. The longest amount of time to aim for would be 45 minutes, but a short session can be as good as a long one.

Why not try a 15 minute exercise session for the kids, followed by a 15 minute exercise session for the parents?

The program included here is just a guide. You do not need to follow it exactly. You can see how engaged the children are and when the kids lose interest stop.

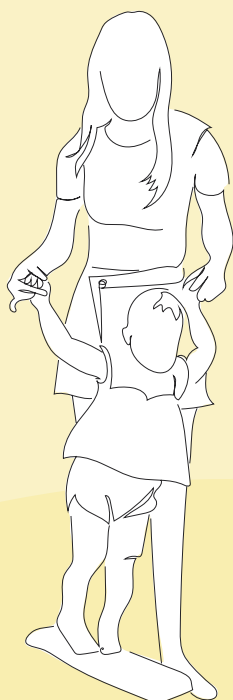
It might be time to stop or move on if the:

children are
walking away
from the
activity

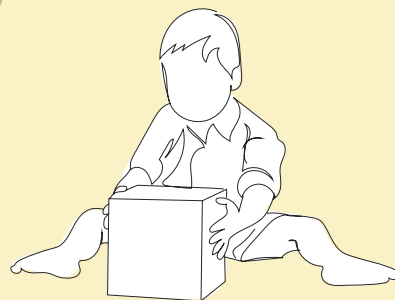


children are
fighting with
each other

children are playing
with equipment
but not the way you
intended



children
are jumping
ahead to the
next activity



Please don't feel discouraged if you can't complete all the activities.
Use as many activities as you need depending on the time you have available.



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark blue t-shirt, is smiling and looking down at a baby she is holding. The baby is wearing a pink and white patterned long-sleeved shirt and has its hand near its mouth. In the background, a young child in a light blue t-shirt with a dinosaur graphic is clapping. Another child with blonde hair is visible in the bottom left corner. The setting appears to be an indoor play area or classroom with blue walls and a glass door.

“ Start as a small group and grow as you get more confident”.

*Let's get
Going!*



Where?

Outside in a park might mean less mess to clean up. You could meet at a local park in a shady spot. Perhaps one with a coffee shop nearby. In the wet season you might need an undercover option.

At home might be cooler. You could ask each member of your group to take a turn hosting at their home.

Communicating



You will need to figure out how you can communicate with your group. For example, you may need to cancel the session if someone is sick.

At your first session make sure you have some contact details available in case you need them. It might also help to add the session into a calendar invite for example on Facebook or via email.

You might also take turns being the organiser of the event.



Snacks

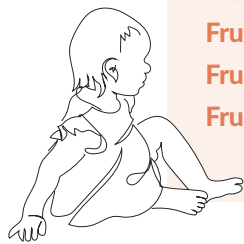
Did you know that most Australian kids do not eat enough vegetables?

Sharing and eating healthy food together is the best way for children to learn about healthy eating.

Why not ask families to bring a healthy snack?

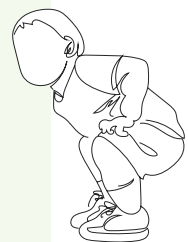
Fruits

- Fresh Fruit salad
- Fruit skewers
- Fruit pizza
- Fruit smoothie
- Fruit ice-pole
- Fruit yoghurt fondue



Vegetables

- Veggie platter
- Veggie dipping sticks
- Baked veg skewers
- Veggie dips
- Vegetable soup
- Veg quiche
- Mini Salad wraps





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Going!

What is a gross motor skill?



Gross motor means moving your body using big muscle groups. Your big muscle groups include your legs, arms and core. Examples of gross motor skills are walking, running and jumping.

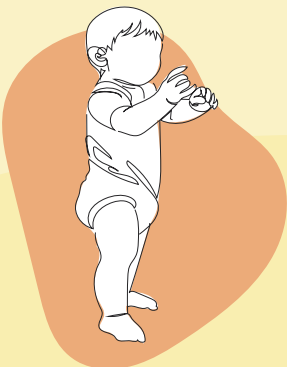
Keeping kids engaged



If kids see some interesting equipment set up they will naturally want to go and explore it. You might find it helpful to set up or pack up the activities as you go to keep them focused on the activity. You could also plan to do the activities with interesting equipment first.



Have a meeting point like a picnic mat to come back to between activities to help children regain focus.



Don't forget to stop often for drink breaks. Longer sessions might need a healthy snack break too.

All the skills in this book are much harder for kids to learn than you might imagine. Don't worry if your kids can't manage them straight away. Try to start with an easier version of the activity and move on from there, or encourage the children just for trying/ getting part of it right.

"Hey well done for trying!"

"Wow look you kicked really well then, next time you might be able to kick the ball!"

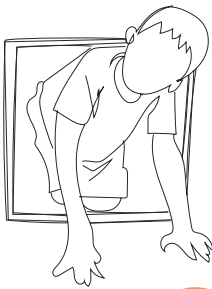
"Getting actively involved in your children's activities helps to build their confidence, and can be fun for you too."





Things to bring

You do not need a whole lot of expensive exercise gear but a few things will help.



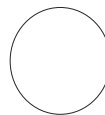
Climbing

A mat or a picnic rug can be useful as a meeting spot or something to roll on. Cushions and furniture can be used to climb on (if you check that it is not going to fall over first).



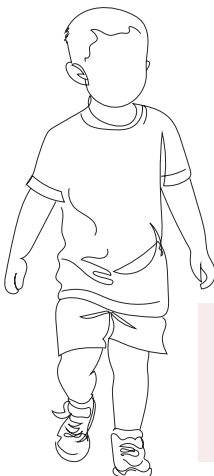
Balls

You can throw scrunched up paper, balloons, recycled boxes and even containers.



Goals

A bin or recycled plastic container can make a goal.

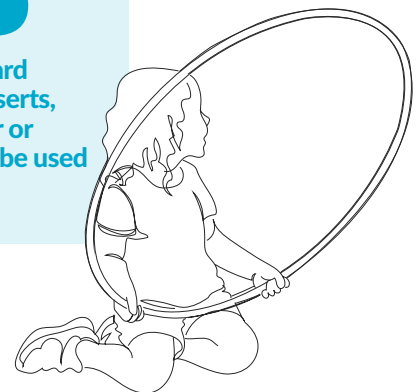


Stacking

Old cardboard boxes are great for stacking.

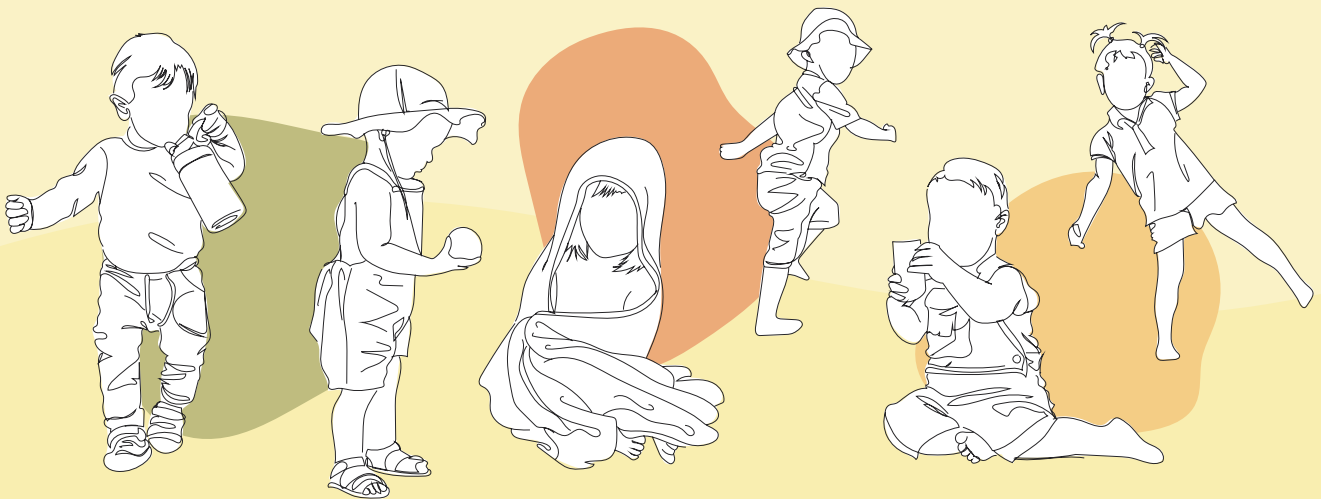
Hitting

Sticks, cardboard paper towel inserts, rolled up paper or cardboard can be used for hitting.



Other things you might need:

- Hats
- Sunscreen
- Water bottles
- Towels
- Handwash
- A speaker





Think about it

You have probably been walking and running for so long that it is automatic for you. It might be hard to imagine what it is like for a kid who has no idea how to get both feet off the floor at the same time to jump. We can tell you learning these skills takes hard work and lots of practice.

Giving your child lots of opportunities to practice is the best way to help them learn these skills.



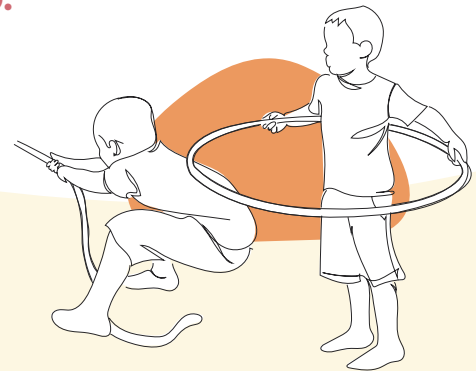


Getting Help

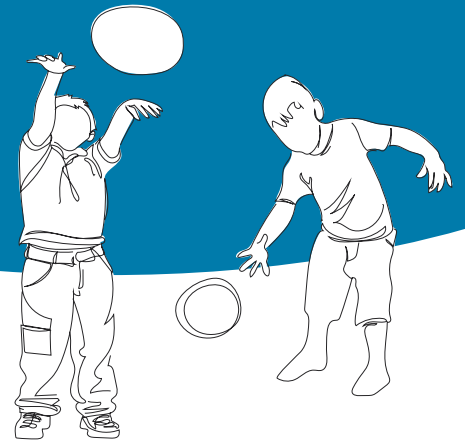
Do you live in the NT and have questions about using this guide or how to run your exercise group?

Feel free to contact Healthy Living NT on 8927 8488.

The Health Promotion Officer at Healthy Living NT will be happy to discuss your group. They may be able to offer suggestions to help you run your physical activity group.



Week 1: Throwing



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Encourage overarm and underarm throwing.

Underarm throwing is more difficult and can take more time to learn.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - THROWING

Throw to a basket

You will need: a laundry basket, hoop, large box, or bucket and some small balls, crumpled up paper or bean bags.

Children take turns throwing into the basket. To mix it up use more than one basket and different ball types. Throw the yellow ball into the white basket. Smaller baskets can be more challenging for older kids.

Throw to a person

You will need: some balls, large soft balls are easiest for small children to throw.

Children throw to their parent or support person who returns the ball. Parents can give lots of encouragement.

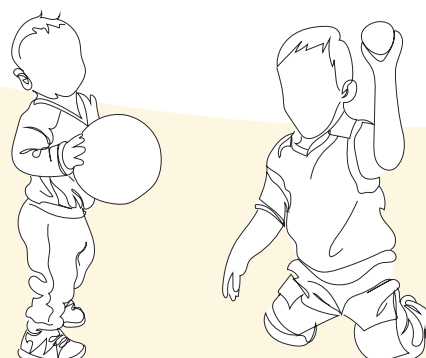
Throw at a target

You will need: a target like a tree or chair and some bouncy balls.

Children take turns throwing at the target. Older children might try to aim at a specific spot.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 2: Kicking



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Kids can lose their balance when they lift their leg off the ground. It can take some time to learn this skill.

Shorter distances are easier, so put goals closer when they are first learning and further away as their skills develop.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - KICKING

Kick to a goal

You will need: a goal like a laundry basket, large box or bucket. Some balls that roll well, larger soft balls are easier to kick.

Children take turns kicking to a goal.

Dribbling

You will need: some balls that roll well, larger soft balls are easier to kick. If you can, have enough balls for 1 per child. Some markers like pillows, stuffed toys, even sticks or leaves.

Set up markers on the floor. Children dribble around the markers. For example they might dribble around in a square.

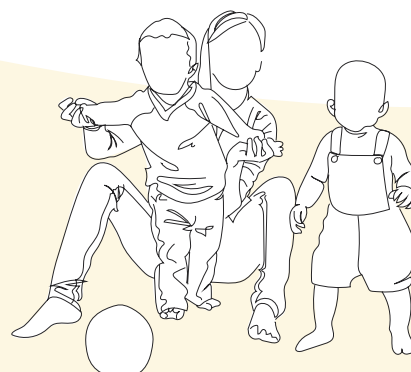
Kick to a person

You will need: some balls that roll well, larger soft balls are easier to kick. If you can have enough balls for 1 per child.

Children kick to their parent or support person who returns the ball. If the child can manage this easily count each kick or see how many you can do in a certain amount of time.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 3: Jumping



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Jumping isn't easy!
Start learning about jumping on the floor. From there you can progress to jumping over a line and after that jumping over an object.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - JUMPING

Jumping race

You will need: a large space to jump and a marker to put at the end of the race.

Children and parents line up, someone calls out, "ready, set, go" to an end point or around a marker and back.

Different types of jumping

You will need: some space, you could do this with or without music.

The organiser calls out a type of jumping (star jumps, jump forward, jump back, jump to the side, jump around in a circle) and everyone copies.

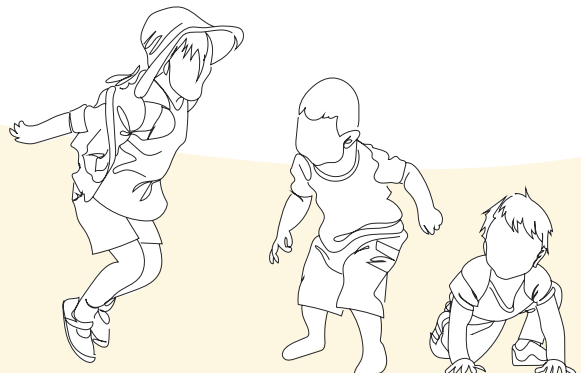
Pillow case jumping

You will need: a large pillow case or similar sized bag, either 1 per child or the children can take turns.

Children put their feet in the pillow case and hold the pillow case and jump. This activity also works well as a race.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 4: Running



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Not all kids are going to be the same speed. If you have some runners that are much faster than others set up a course with laps. This can help to encourage the slower runners.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - RUNNING

Running to something

You will need: some space and some markers to run to. Or you can run to objects like a tree or a gate.

Organiser calls out "run to..." and chooses something for the children and parents to run to and then back to the group.

Run in different directions

You will need: some space and some markers to run to.

Children and parents line up and the organizer calls out "run forward" everyone starts running forward. Also call out "run on the spot", "run to the side", "run backwards", "run in a circle".

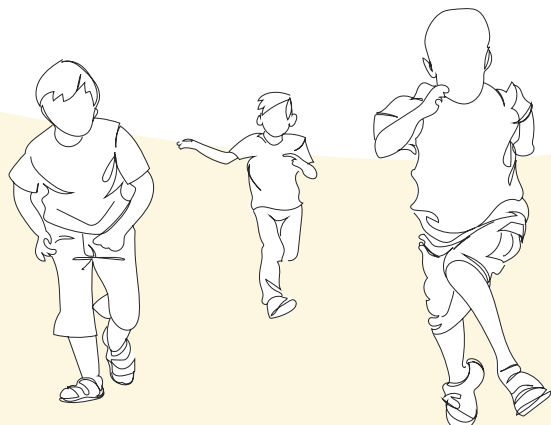
Running race

You will need: a large space to run and a marker to put at the end of the race.

Children and parents line up, someone calls out, "ready, set, go" to an end point or around a marker and back.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 5: Balancing



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Early on kids might like to hold on to a wall, a fence, a parent or something that is not moving. As they improve they can try balancing without holding on.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - BALANCING

Balance on one leg

You will need: just yourself!

Ask children and parents to balance on one leg. To make it harder ask them to move their hands as well or time how long they can stay, then swap to the other leg.

Balance on tiptoes

You will need: just yourself.

Ask children to start with their body as small as possible like a seed. Then they grow and grow until they are a beautiful flower. The flower reaches up high to the sun (on their tiptoes) then repeat.

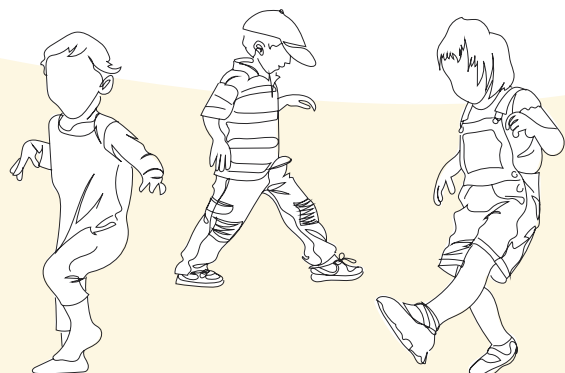
Musical statues

You will need: Something to make music.

Children and parents dance when the music is on and freeze like a statue when the organiser stops the music. Repeat. Depending on the age of your children people who are still moving when you stop the music might be out.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 6: Hitting



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Kids often decide to hit each other in hitting activities. To avoid this:

Before you start, explain “the sticks are for hitting balls. Don’t hit anything else with the sticks”

Repeat this comment often throughout the activity.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - HITTING

Hit a balloon

You will need: 1 balloon per child and something to hit with per child. e.g. paper towel roll holder.

Children hit the balloon around the room as they like or, for older children, towards a marker and back.

Hit a hanging target

You will need: a target (which could be a ball, a stuffed toy or a piece of recycling). Attach the target with a string to something high like a clothes line or tree. You will also need something to hit with (like a stick).

Hang the target so it hangs down where the children can reach when they stretch up high. Children take turns hitting the target.

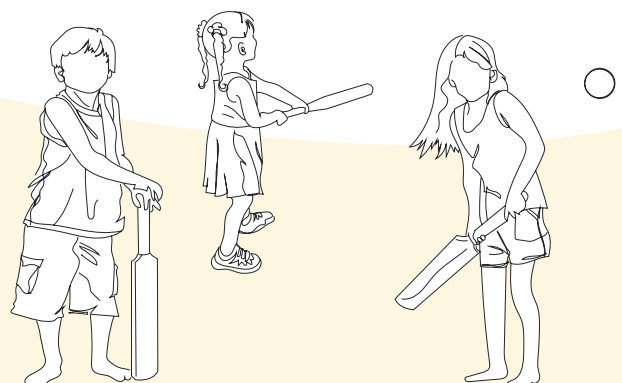
Hit to a person

You will need: a ball per child and something to hit with per child.

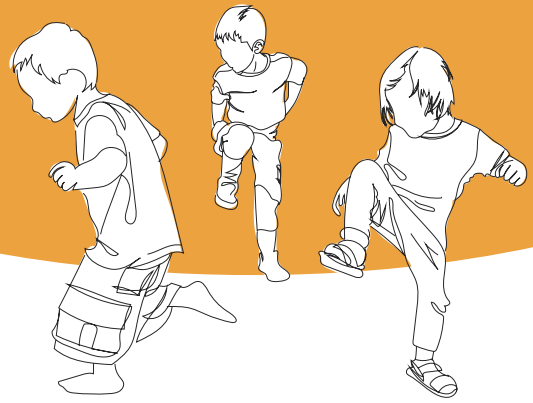
Children hit their ball to their parent who returns it. Young children can hit along the ground older children can try in the air.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 7: Hopping



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Hopping is late skill to develop so don't worry if your child cannot hop yet. Focus on jumping and balancing and work up to hopping when they are confident.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - HOPPING

Hop to something

You will need: some space and some markers to hop to. Or you can run to objects like a tree or a gate.

Organizer calls out "hop to..." and chooses something for the children and parents to run to and then back to the group.

Hop in different directions

You will need: some space and some markers to hop to.

The children and parents line up and the organizer calls out "hop forward." Everyone starts hopping forward. Also call out "hop on the spot", "hop to the side", hop backwards, hop in a circle, change legs.

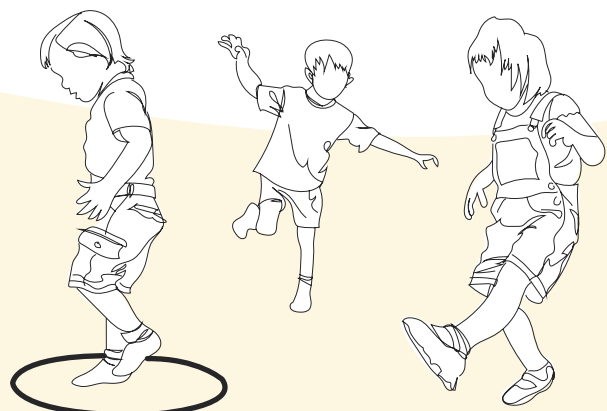
Hopping race

You will need: a large space to hop in and a marker to put at the end of the race.

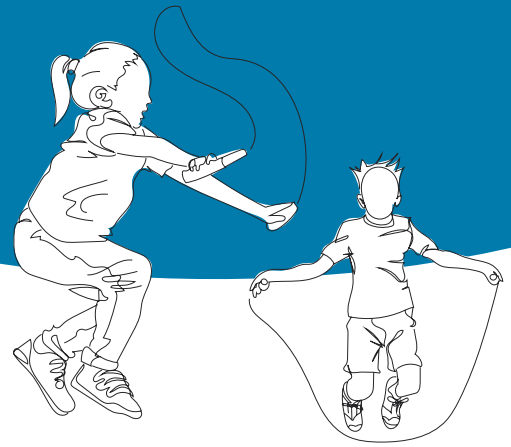
Children and parents line up, someone calls out, "ready, set, go" to an end point or around a marker and back.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 8: Skipping



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

You can use a pretend skipping rope to make this activity easier.

Or use hula hoops if you have them.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - SKIPPING

Skip to something

You will need: some space and some markers to skip to. Or you can run to objects like a tree or a gate.

Organizer calls out “skip to...”. The organizer then chooses something for the children and parents to skip to and then back to the group.

Skip with a rope

You will need: one large skipping rope or several small ones

Take turns skipping or if there are enough ropes everyone skip following the leader.

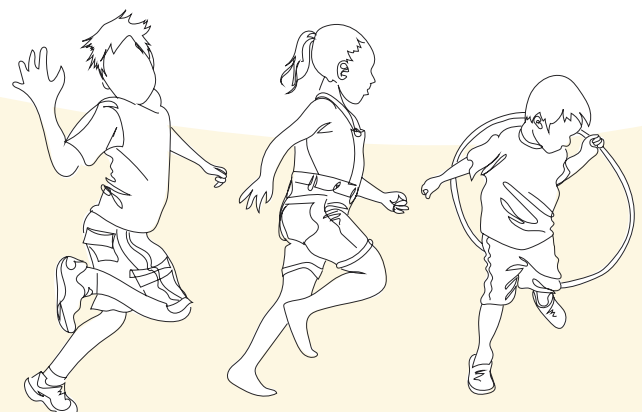
Skipping race

You will need: a large space to skip in and a marker.

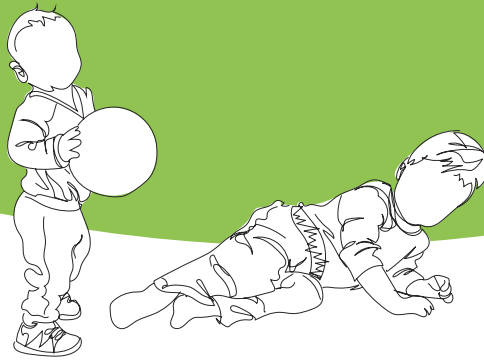
Children and parents line up, someone calls out, “ready, set, go” to an end point or around a marker and back.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 9: Rolling



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Roll to your left and to your right if you are trying the roll your body activity.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - ROLLING

Roll to a person

You will need: balls of any shape or size.

Children roll a ball to their parent or support person who returns it. Parents can give lots of encouragement.

Roll with a stick

You will need: some balls, something to hit with like a stick.

Children use a bat, stick, or rolled up piece of paper to hit a ball around the room. They can hit the ball to different locations identified by the organizer.

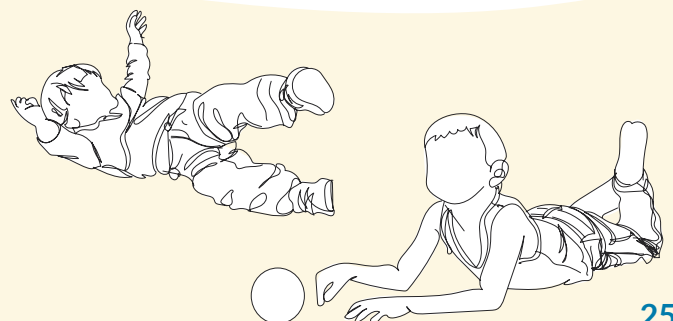
Roll your body

You will need: a mat.

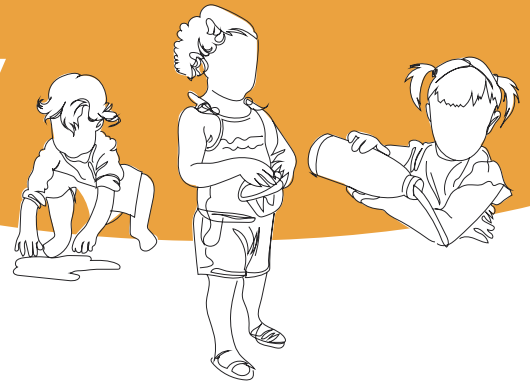
Children lie down flat on a mat with arms up and roll along the mat. NOTE: do not try forward rolls as these are more dangerous without expert supervision.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33



Week 10: Water Play



Start

- Welcome song For details see page 33
- Simon says For details see page 28
- Obstacle course For details see page 29
- Hokey pokey For details see page 30

Never leave young children unsupervised with water. Even small buckets of water can be a risk to young children.

Skill

Basic movement skill activities - WATER PLAY

Finding things

You will need: a large tub or bucket and things to put inside like plastic toys, rocks or sticks.

Children put their hands in the water to grab and move around items. Children could also mix the water using spoons or use cups and jugs to make a tea party. You could also add food colouring to the water to add to the fun.

Pouring things

You will need: some used plastic milk bottles or containers, string, something to pour with like a jug or cups, a bucket of water.

Put lots of little holes in the bottom of the milk bottles and tie them up between two trees or chairs. The children can carry water in a jug to the milk cartons, pour the water in and watch a shower result below.

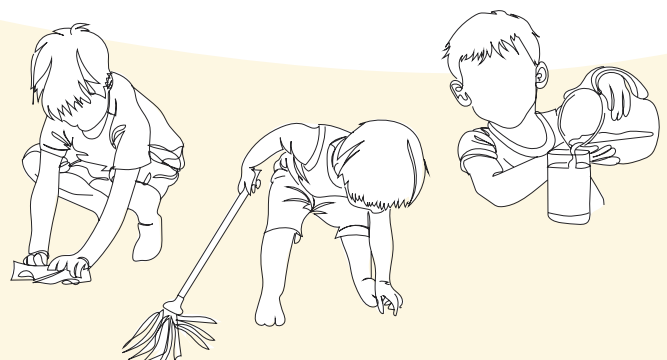
Cleaning

You will need: a mop or paint brushes or a sponge and a hard surface to clean.

Children use water to pretend they are cleaning or painting a hard surface. You could include bubbles if you like.

End

- Bear hunt For details see page 31
- Dance party For details see page 32
- Goodbye song For details see page 33

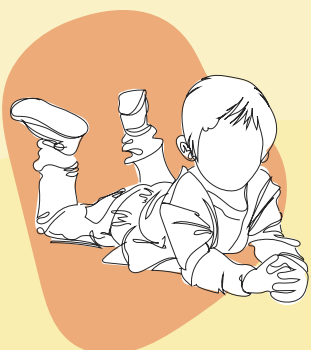


Play enjoyment



Children need lots of structured and unstructured play. This program is an example of structured play where the parents are leading the action. You can encourage unstructured play (where your children are the leaders) by:

- turning off screens
- having a “loose bits kit” - a container with safe items children can use for imaginative play. For example; shells, recycled materials, fabric and buttons
- allowing children to spend time outdoors
- visiting different parks in your neighbourhood
- providing children with bath toys and time to play in the bath after they are clean.





Simon says...

The leader calls out “*Simon says put your hands on your heads*” and everyone puts their hands on their heads. If they call out “Put your hands on your heads” then no one does it because, Simon didn’t say.



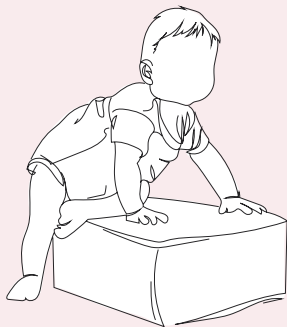
Repeat with hands on shoulders, knees, elbows, toes, eyes, ears, turn around, reach up high, jump, hop, slap, wriggle, make a noise like a duck, dog, snake, cow, act like a fish, cat, bird, yell as loud as you can, bow, smile, freeze.



Obstacle course

Use practically anything you can find around the house to make a path children can follow. They can...

Over



Under



Through



Go over: climb over a small table or pile of pillows, balance along a hose or plank of wood, jump over small toys or sticks.

Go under: crawl under a chair or fence. Climb under streamers you have taped between two pieces of furniture.

Go through: walk through a large bucket of water. Climb through a hula hoop. Step from one tire to the next. Step from one chalk square to the next. Crawl through a box.

Go around: run around a tree, run around markers on the floor like pillows or stuffed animals, run around a table.

Go up or down: Climb some steps. Make steps out of furniture (make sure it is stable first). Make a ramp out of a piece of wood or some pillows. Climb up the downwards part of a slide.

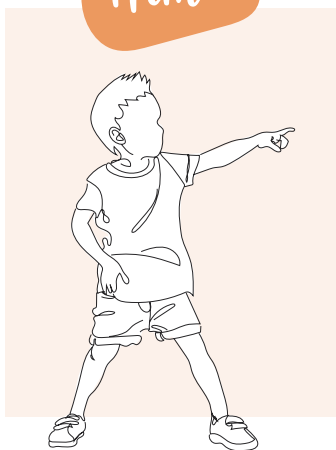
Go outside: you could use an existing playground but explain a path you want the children to follow. You could also time older children or race the clock.



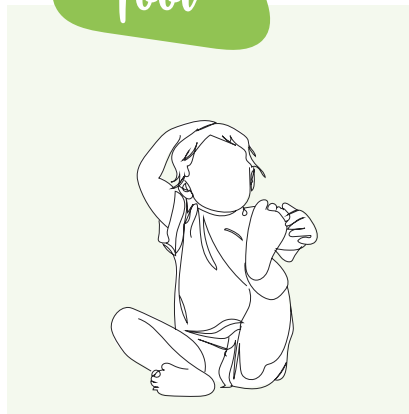
Hokey pokey!

Stand in a circle. Everybody sings, “You put your one foot in, your one foot out, your one foot in and you shake it all about. You do the hokey pokey and you turn around, and that’s what it’s all about!”

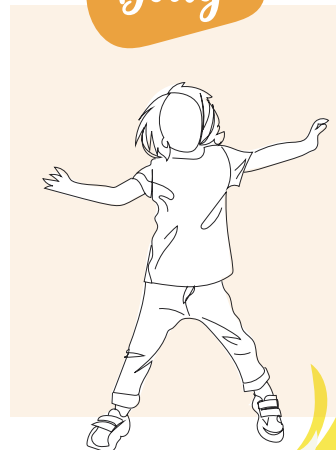
Arm



Foot



Body



Repeat with: other foot (or left foot/right foot), one arm, other arm, and whole body. If you don't like singing you can probably find a recorded version of this song to play while everyone does the actions.





Bear hunt

Before you start the session leader puts stuffed animals or toys around in a loop. Toys do not need to be very well hidden especially for younger children. All walk together and follow the loop, let different children find the toys as you go. **“We are going on a bear hunt...”**



You could sing, “We are going on a bear hunt (repeat) I’m not scared (repeat) we’re going to catch a big one.” You could also substitute the word bear for the toy you are finding like, “We are going on a crocodile hunt...”



Dance party

Turn some music on and everybody **DANCE!**

Make sure the parents are dancing too! You could use popular children's music or music the parents enjoy. You may like to take turns choosing music each week. There is also some great music available from the **NSW Health Munch and Move Program**.





Welcome/Goodbye song

Starting and ending your session in the same way every time helps the children know what to expect.

Sing



Clap



Watch

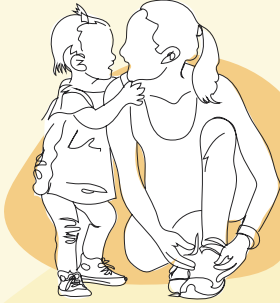


You can use a simple song like “twinkle, twinkle little star” or “old McDonald had a farm” where everyone probably already knows the words.

You could find a special welcome or goodbye song. If you do this you might like to bring along a written copy of the words for the parents to follow along with. Otherwise you might be able to play the music on your phone or stereo.

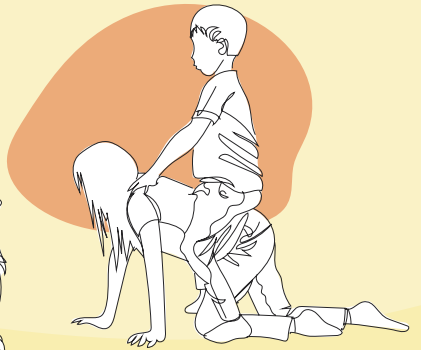
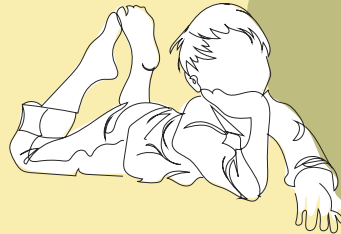
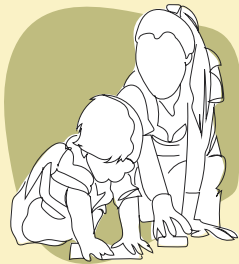


Learn and play



Exercising with your kids is a great way to encourage them to be active by:

- giving gifts that encourage physical activity for example a kite, skipping rope, ball or bike
- involving kids in chores like gardening
- being a role model for your kids, let them see the ways that you enjoy being active.



Resources

For more information about getting active for 0-5 years take a look at:

[Being active matters](#)

[Bush Scavenger hunt](#)

[Blue earth tip sheets for active play](#)

[24 hour movement guidelines](#)

[Territory sports voucher](#)

[List of NT sports providers](#)

[NSW Health Munch and Move Music](#)

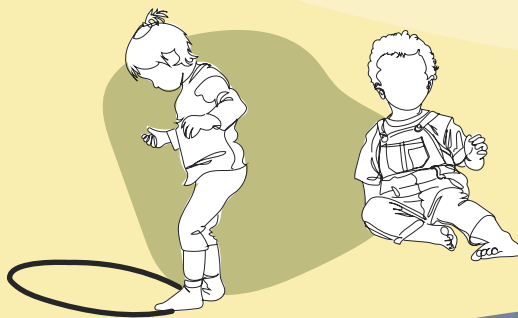
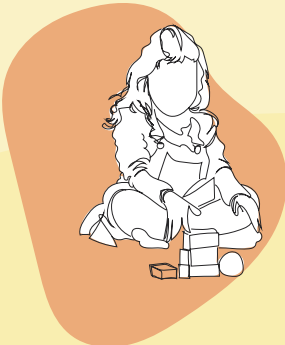
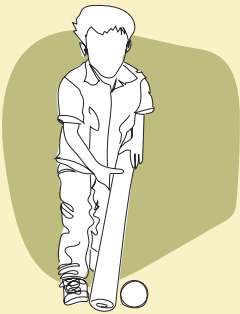
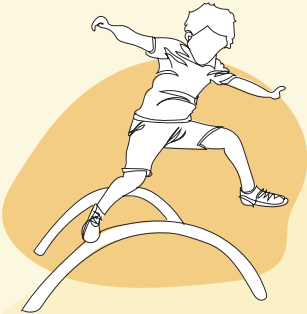
[Gross motor development chart](#)

Resources for healthy eating 0-5 years

[Start them right](#)

[Australian dietary guidelines](#)

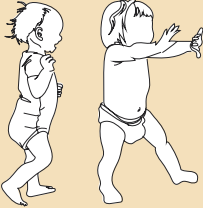
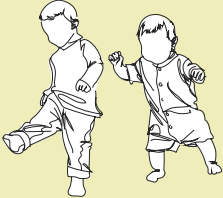
[Risk in play & child development | Raising Children](#)



24 Hour Movement Guidelines

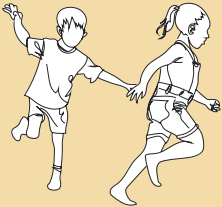
1-2 years Toddlers love to run around, and that is great! The more active play toddlers take part in, the better.

Toddlers should get at least 3 hours of various physical activities each day, including energetic play.
This could be:

 	 	 	 
Running playing tips, ball games or races at the park	Jumping & Twirling at the park or by creating fun obstacle courses at home	Dancing with or without music, clapping or sing-a-long	Skipping follow leader or through hoops

3-5 years The more active play preschoolers take part in, the better. They should be active for at least 3 hours each day.

This should include 1 hour of energetic play, like:

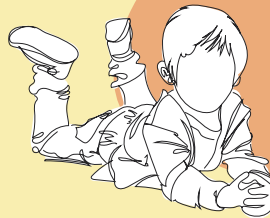
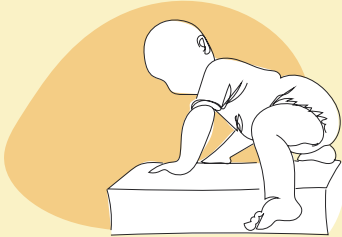
 	 	 	 
Running playing tips, ball games or races at the park	Jumping, Throwing & Kicking at the park or by creating fun obstacle courses at home	Dancing with or without music, clapping or sing-a-long	Skipping follow leader or through hoops

All Children



Activities should take place throughout the day, not all at once.

- Physical activity for young children should be fun and encourage exploration and discovery.
- Limit the time they spend sitting or lying down, except when sleeping.
- Avoid sedentary screen-based activities.
- Spend quiet time with them reading, storytelling, doing puzzles or doing other activities that support their development.
- No screen time for children under 2 years, and no more than 1 hour per day for those aged 2 to 5 years.



We would love to hear from you. If you have time please scan the QR code to provide feedback.



GIVE YOUR FEEDBACK



With the vision to, 'get the most out of life', **Healthy Living NT** supports a range of programs. If you would like more information about the programs that HLNT offer please contact hpm@healthylivingnt.org.au



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