

Name/Title: Balloon Toss

Purpose of Event: This activity will give children the opportunity to practice the skills of throwing or tossing a balloon straight up into the air and then catching the balloon.

Activity cues: At this age children should focus on keeping their eyes on the ball (balloon) so they will have a better opportunity to be successful in catching.

Suggested Grade Level: Pre-K

Materials Needed: A Punch Ball Balloon for each child (Punch ball balloons are made of a thick rubber or latex material making them very durable. The balloons move slowly through the air so children have a better opportunity to learn to throw and catch. Balloons should be inflated to a diameter of about 14-16 inches. The large rubber band that sometimes comes with these balloons should be discarded. Balloons should not be used with children under the age of three.).

Description of Idea

Conduct this activity in a large indoor space with marked boundaries so that children know where they can and cannot move. It will be difficult for children to catch the balloon if they are not able to throw it straight up into the air. In order to throw the balloon straight into the air children should follow these simple directions:

- Hold the balloon out in front of you with one hand on each side of the balloon.
- Lower the balloon below your waist so that the balloon almost touches your knees.
- Raise both hands into the air and let go of the balloon as it passes your nose.

Timing the release of the balloon is important. If the balloon is released too soon it may travel far out in front of the child where it is hard to catch. If the balloon is released too late it will travel behind the child and be impossible to catch. Initially, teachers should encourage children to throw the balloon only a few feet into the air. As they develop skill children will learn to toss the balloon higher.

In order for young children to catch the balloon they must learn to focus their eyes on the object as it travels through the air. It is difficult to catch an object if you are not looking at it. Children should focus on looking at the balloon and then wrapping their hands around the balloon when it comes back down close to their body. Directions from the teacher might include:

- Throw the balloon straight up into the air.
- Watch the balloon as it begins to come down.
- When the balloon floats down in front of you wrap both hands around the balloon and catch it.

Variations:

Variations for this activity might include:

- Drop the balloon, let it bounce, and then catch it.
- Throw the balloon very high into the air let bounce, and then catch it.
- Throw the balloon into the air and catch it before it hits the ground.
- Throw the balloon high into the air and catch it before it hits the ground.
- Throw the balloon into the air and see how many times you can clap your hands before you catch it.
- Throw the balloon high against a wall and catch it.

Assessment Ideas:

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 1995) has developed benchmarks in this area that suggest that by the time a child completes kindergarten he/she should be able to toss a ball and catch it before it bounces two times, and be able to throw a variety of objects, demonstrating both accuracy and force. Participating in activities such as the "Balloon toss" will provide children with opportunities for throwing and catching skill practice. Teachers can use this time to observe children's throwing and catching skills and record their progression toward reaching benchmarks in this area.

Adaptations for Students with Disabilities:

This is a great activity for special needs students as the balloon travels slowly through the air providing the opportunity for children at all skill levels to be successful. Children in wheelchairs can be successful tossing the balloon and catching it, but may need some assistance retrieving a dropped balloon.

Submitted by **Steve Sanders** in Tampa, FL. Thanks for contributing to PE Central! **Posted on PEC: 11/12/2008**

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