

AGE-APPROPRIATE MOVEMENT



The following pages highlight types of physical activity that are developmentally appropriate for kids at different ages. This resource offers a quick reference to help you create fun, inclusive activities that support physical literacy and a love of movement. These age ranges should be seen as general guidance, not fixed categories – every child is unique and grows and develops at their own pace. Children vary not only by age, but also by ability, experience level, and developmental needs. Whether a child is disabled or non-disabled, adapting activities to support all athletes is key to building confidence and competence. Source adapted from: Designed to Move, 2012. Looking for more guidance after this course?

Visit **USOPC.org** and check out the **Youth Hub** for more resources and guidance.

AGES 3-5

Objective: Learn fundamental movements and link them together.

- Encourage the child to run, **not just in a straight line**, but with stops and starts and changes in direction. Tag and chasing games are excellent.
- Play **games making body shapes** upside down and right-side up. Slither like a snake, roll on the floor like a rolling pin or roll down a small grassy slope.
- Play **throwing games** and start with soft objects that the child can hold easily in his or her hand. Try to get the child to throw at a target, and sometimes to throw as hard as they can. Get them to use both their left and right hand when they throw.
- For quiet times, or when in small spaces, **play balancing games**. Stand on one foot and then try the other. Try balancing on different body parts, and try walking along any painted lines on the ground.
- **Jump**, make shapes in the air and jump to see how high the child can go, or how far. Make an imaginary river and get the child to jump from one bank to the other. Try jumping from one foot, or from both. Make sure the children bend at the knees when they land.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BY AGE:

Can the child...

- Throw a ball?
- Stand on one leg?
- Hop?
- Skip?

Does the child...

- Smile and appear to enjoy activities?
- Appear to be enthusiastic about learning new things?

AGE-APPROPRIATE MOVEMENT



AGES 6-8

Objective: Learn all fundamental movements and build overall motor skills.

- **Strength, endurance & flexibility** need to be developed, but through games and fun activities rather than a training regimen.
- Continue to play catching, throwing, hitting, running and other physically demanding games with both boys and girls. If possible, involve children in programs that offer a wide variety of different activities (multi-sport programs). **Try as many different activities as possible.**
- **Hand and foot speed** can be developed especially well by boys and girls during this stage. If this window of opportunity to develop speed is missed, body speed later in life may be compromised.
- Children at this age have a strong sense of fairness and should be introduced to the **simple rules and ethics** of sport and play.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BY AGE:

Can the child...

- Run, stop. And change direction without stumbling?
- Kick a ball 6 meters?
- Skip on alternating legs?

Does the child...

- Smile and appear to enjoy activities?
- Appear to be enthusiastic about learning new things?

AGES 9-12

Objective: Learn overall sport skills.

- Develop endurance through **games and challenges**.
- Keep children working on **flexibility, speed, endurance & strength**. For strength activities, they should use their own body weight, Swiss balls or medicine balls-not heavy weights.
- Develop movement skills into sport skills. Ensure a **progression of skills** from basic to complex. For example, kicking progresses from kicking a ball, to kicking a ball farther, to kicking a ball while moving, to kicking with accuracy.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BY AGE:

Can the child...

- Focus long enough to learn what is being taught?

Does the child...

- Appear to move with more control?
- Appear to move with confidence?
- Smile and appear to enjoy activities?
- Appear to be enthusiastic about learning new things?