

PLAY BALL!



It's hard to imagine a better toy than a ball. Your children can have endless fun—and build muscles, coordination, and stamina—while playing a variety of games with different kinds of balls. These ideas can encourage hours and hours of active play.

MONKEY IN THE CIRCLE (six or more players)

You'll need: a basketball

The object of this game is to keep the “monkey” from catching the ball.

Choose one player as the monkey. All the other players stand in a circle, arm's width apart, with the monkey in the middle. The players take turns tossing the ball to any other player across the circle. If the monkey steals the ball, the player who passed it becomes the new monkey, and play starts again.

any time while the ball is in motion, the runner can try to dash to the other base. If she makes it there before the fielder catches the ball and tags her with it, she's safe and gets to run again. If the fielder tags her with the ball before she reaches the base, the two trade roles.

HACKY SACK PASS (two or more players)

You'll need: a hacky sack or a soft sponge ball

In this game, players bat the ball back and forth using their hands, but there's a “catch.”

Each player must bat the hacky sack once with the palm of his right hand, then once with the palm of his left hand before batting it to the next player (a total of three hits). If a player drops the ball or fails to bat it with each hand, he gets a point. But in this game, you don't want to score points! The low score at the end of five rounds wins.

THE BIG BOUNCE

(two or more players)

You'll need: a playground ball

This silly contest lets players test each other's coordination.

One player starts by naming a bouncing challenge. *Examples:* Bounce the ball, and spin in a circle before catching it. Stand on one foot and dribble the ball 10 times with your left hand (or right hand, if you're left-handed).



Then, all the players take turns trying the challenge, one at a time. If successful, you score a point. Then, it's the next player's turn to issue a challenge. Play to 15 points.

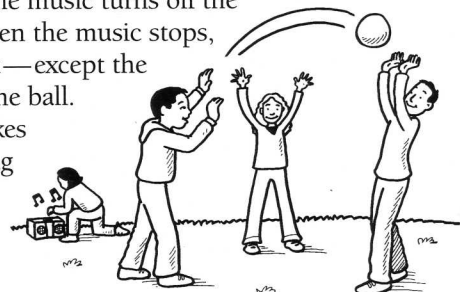
HOT POTATO VOLLEY (four or more players)

You'll need: a volleyball, a radio

The goal of this fast-paced game is to avoid being the last person to touch the ball when the music stops.

Before you begin, put one person in charge of the radio. She stands with her back to the other players and turns the radio on. While the radio is on, players keep the ball moving by quickly bumping it to any other player volleyball-style. The person in charge of the music turns off the radio at random. When the music stops, everyone gets a point—except the last player to touch the ball.

Then, that person takes over the job of playing the radio. Whoever reaches 15 points first wins the game.



BASEBALL TAG (three players)

You'll need: a baseball or softball, two baseball gloves, two rugs or other items to use as bases

In this old favorite, one player must dash from base to base without getting tagged by a player with the ball.

Set the bases about 15 feet apart. Two players are fielders, and one is the runner. The fielders each guard a different base. The runner chooses a base to stand on. Play starts when the fielders begin tossing the ball back and forth to each other. At

PLAY BALL!



GOLF RACE (two players)

You'll need: two golf balls, two large spoons

Try this race game indoors or out.

First, choose the course. It can be a straight or zigzag line, or you might design a simple obstacle course. Each player stands at the starting line and places a golf ball on a spoon. At a starting signal, players carry the balls through the course. You can't touch the ball with your other hand or use it to hold the ball in place. If a player drops the ball, she must return to the starting point and put it back on the spoon. The first player to finish wins. *Variation:* Try this as a relay race between two teams with an equal number of players.

SHOT SPOTS (two or more players)

You'll need: a basketball, sidewalk chalk, a basketball hoop
Any season is basketball season with this fun game.

Before playing, players take turns numbering "shot spots" on the court with sidewalk chalk. The first player chooses a spot and marks it "1." The next player picks a spot and marks it "2," and so on, until 10 spots have been marked. Players take turns shooting the ball, starting at "1." When a player

makes a basket, he advances to the next spot for another turn. If he misses, he tries again next turn. The first player to advance around the court making a basket from every spot wins. *Variation:* For indoor play, use a trash can and a wadded-up newspaper "ball." Mark spots with bits of masking tape.

BEACH TOWEL TOSS

(four players divided into two teams)

You'll need: two beach towels, a beach ball

Not at the beach? No problem! Here's a beach game for your backyard or a park.

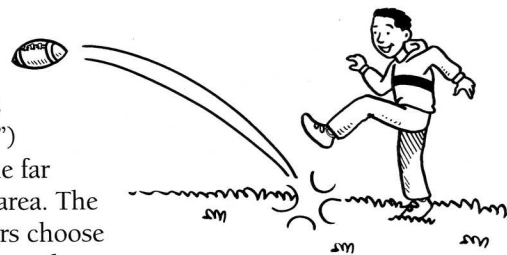
Each pair of players holds a beach towel between them like a hammock, standing close enough to each other so the towel sags a bit in the middle. One team places the beach ball in the center of their towel and launches it into the air by pulling the ends of the towel away from each other. The other team runs to catch the ball with their towel and launch it back to the other team the same way. When one team drops the ball, the other team scores a point. Eleven points wins the game.

KICK-'N'-CATCH-'EM (three or more players)

You'll need: a football

Here's a game of tag with a twist.

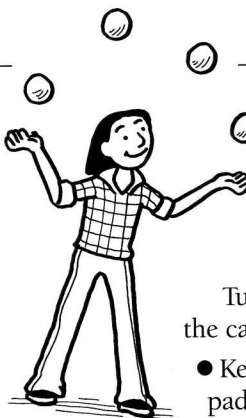
One player is the receiver ("It") and stands at the far end of the play area. The remaining players choose a kicker, who starts the game by kicking the ball to the receiver. Once the receiver has the ball, he tries to tag any other player by touching him with the ball. When a player is tagged, he becomes the new receiver, and the game starts over. *Tip:* Let a different player be the kicker for each round.



BALL GAMES FOR ONE

No friends or siblings around? Your child can still enjoy active time with these ideas:

- Hit a tennis ball against an outdoor wall with a tennis racquet.
- Juggle sponge balls (the ones used as pool toys work well). Or use a pool "noodle" to bat a sponge ball across the yard.
- Bounce a Ping-Pong ball into a row of plastic cups.



- Kick a soccer ball as far as you can, jog to where it lands, and dribble it back. Try to kick it farther each time.

- Make your own carnival game by stacking empty cans in a pyramid on the ground and throwing a softball to knock them down. *Variation:*

Turn it into a bowling game, and roll the ball to knock the cans down.

- Keep a beach ball in the air by hitting it with a Ping-Pong paddle.

Editor's Note: Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

Nutrition Nuggets™

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated ■ 128 N. Royal Avenue, Front Royal, VA 22630 ■ 540-636-4280

© 2011 Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated