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ALLIGATOR PIT

Suggested by Dana DeCarlo

Crossing an alligator pit on a narrow balance beam is a thrilling challenge for children! The alligator pit is really your floor, the balance beam is a flat foam pool noodle, and the alligator is you!

GOALS FOR CHILDREN • Practice stability

EQUIPMENT

- A 'balance beam' made from two pieces of flat foam pool noodle sections, joined at ends and taped to the floor. Masking tape lines on the carpet will also work.
- Basket
- Many safe objects to carry, such as socks, beanbags, foam puzzle pieces, and pieces of foam cut from pool noodles.
- Duct tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Tape the balance beam to the floor. Place the basket at the far end of the balance beam. Have plenty of small toys and other safe objects for the children to carry at the near end of the beam. Tell the children where



alligators live and what they eat. The children's job is to walk the beam, and put things into the basket at the other end of the beam. Explain that the alligator who lives in the pit will not bother the children as long as they stay on the beam and don't drop anything that they are carrying. If they drop something, or step off the beam, the alligator will chase them until they drop everything they are carrying in the basket.

Give each child one item to carry across the beam and drop in the basket. After each child has gone once, increase what each must carry. Vary the skills. Ask children to carry beanbags balanced on their heads and shoulders. Have them jump across with foam blocks between their knees. Let them walk backwards across the beam with arms full of socks. When children drop objects into the pit, or step off the beam, chase them and move your extended arms up and down like an alligator's jaws. School-aged children might enjoy playing the part of the alligator during this activity.

Harder: Give the children more things to carry and harder ways of moving to make this activity more challenging. Tape a curved line on the floor as the balance beam to increase difficulty.

Variety: Pretend that floor spots are 'lily pads.' Arrange spots on the floor and let the children pretend they are frogs that must step, jump or hop from lily pad to lily pad across the alligator pit.



BUBBLE WRAP JUMPING

Inspired by Renée McCall



Tape some bubble wrap to the floor and every child will want to jump until all the bubbles are popped!

GOALS FOR CHILDREN • Practice jumping • Develop cardiovascular endurance

EQUIPMENT

- Bubble wrap, at least a 10 ft. length, 24 inches wide

Equipment Tip: 1/2 in. bubbles pop best. Ask adults to save wrap for this activity. Some businesses will donate wrap, if asked.

- Clear packaging tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Tape the wrap to the floor so it won't slip. Don't let children mouth or bite the bubble wrap. Instruct the children to move in only one direction when jumping the length of the wrap. No return trips with more than one child jumping at the same time! Or tape a square piece of wrap to the floor for each child if you want them to jump in place.

Show children how to bend their knees and lift with their arms when they jump. Turn on lively music with a strong 4/4 beat to encourage children to jump to the song!



Cues for Learning to Jump for Distance

Just Learning: "Bend your knees." "Land on both feet at the same time." "Start with your arms behind you." "Swing your arms forward as you jump."

More Experienced: "Reach up and out (at a 45° angle) as you jump." "Fall forward when you land." Refer to **On/Off** to learn more jumping cues.

Easier: Hold smaller children's hands for extra balance. Allow children with developmental delays to walk if they are not yet ready to jump.

Harder: Tape 2 ft. squares some distance apart and have school-aged children jump from square-to-square.

Variety: Have the children walk a 'balance beam' made from a 6 in. wide, 10 ft. long strip of bubble wrap taped to the floor.

SWAT THE FLY

When you want preschoolers to run excitedly, try **Swat the Fly**. It takes just moments to learn the rules and boundaries. Then children charge around the play area, laughing and shouting, as they enjoy this activity! While some children drag 'flies,' made from plastic Frisbees and nylon cord, others chase them, trying to 'swat' the 'flies' with foam pool noodles.

GOALS FOR CHILDREN • Develop cardiovascular endurance • Practice striking



EQUIPMENT

- Foam pool noodles, cut in half to make two swatters
- Frisbees or vinyl plastic plates
- Nylon cord for pulling each Frisbee

Equipment Tip: Drill a hole through a Frisbee or plate rim. Insert a four foot length of cord, and knot it under the rim. Make two copies of the 'fly,' for each Frisbee. Tape the image of the fly to each side of the Frisbee with clear packaging tape.

NOTE:

- Have drinking water on hand and watch children closely during this activity, especially during hot and humid weather!

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Available from drcraft@activeplaybooks.com

INSTRUCTIONS

Explain to the children that some of them will drag flies, while others chase the flies, trying to swat them with foam bats. Demonstrate dragging, swatting and moving safely within the playing area. Have all children move in the same direction to avoid collisions. Explain that children may change from dragging to swatting whenever they wish.

Give some children 'flies' to drag, and the rest foam pool noodle 'swatters,' then start the activity. If anyone objects to swatting flies, put pictures of drums on the disks instead, and have children chase the drums with their foam Pool Noodle drumsticks.

Easier: Help younger children with their movement and swatting if needed. Children who are slow runners are likely to chase flies that are dragged more slowly. Children who are fast runners are likely to chase the fast flies.

Children who use wheelchairs or mobile prone standers can swat the flies that others drag past them.

Variety: For an indoor variation, make 'flies' from balloons inside netting or pantyhose. Suspend the 'flies' from an overhead structure, leaving space for swatters to swing safely. All children become swatters to practice striking.

