

16 Fun Ways to Maximise Learning

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The following games are movement based activities that help the body and brain communicate well. This is the foundation of all learning, and these pathways need to be firmly established if children are to succeed in academics, coordination and to gain self regulation of emotion.

You can use these as you like, for however long you like, whenever you like. Make them yours and know that while you are having fun with your children - your children are learning.

1. One Leg Balancing

Encourage your kids to try balancing on one leg while standing. See if you can get up to 10 seconds on each leg! If this is super easy for them try standing on a pillow on one leg. The change in surface will help to challenge their ability to balance. You can even try timing your kids to see who can balance the longest – they might just beat you.

This simple game develops the vestibular system which supports and controls balance. Balance is the key ingredient in all learning. Our bodies, eyes and brains need it to learn.



2. Bedsheet Parachute

Parachutes are used a lot in pre-schools and you can quickly make a DIY parachute using a bedsheet. So, grab any size that you have – smaller can be more fun and challenging.

Get the kids (and even you!) to hold onto the end of the bedsheet and work together to try and shake a small stuffed animal or ball off of the parachute! You can add music and make rhythms. You can work large muscles by making big up and down movements. You can also all lift it up and try to tuck it in around you so you make a cave with you inside.

This game develops gross motor skills – which is control of our large muscle groups. It can work on hand-eye coordination, spatial awareness, rhythm, communication, and relationships. All while they have fun! They may just turn it into a friendly pillow fight.



3. Balloon Waddling Races

For this activity, you just need one balloon. To play, simply hold the balloon between your knees and waddle from one point to another without dropping the balloon. Waddle just like a penguin!

You could blow up multiple balloons if you'd like to have your kids race against each other at the same time. However, you can use just one balloon and do relay races. This can be competitive – using a stopwatch to time them, or you can let the kids (and yourself) work on their social skills by taking turns.

This game develops gross motor skills, balance, problem solving skills, social interactions and fun! Fun is a huge motivator for any child's learning.



4. Tape Jumping

For this game, all you need is some tape! Lay out six to eight strips of tape on the ground about half a metre apart, or closer if needed. This will depend on how far your child can jump. Then let them go for it. Jumping over the tape in any way they like.

You can number the pieces of tape to help keep track, or create games in patterns. As they master the jumping you can add more for difficulty, or create circuits. Over or on the tape- you choose.

This game fine tunes the brain as the child learns to jump with two feet together. It also develops balance if they are jumping on one foot. It supports gross motor control, feet-eye coordination, and precision and efficacy of movement.



5. Animal Walk Races

Think crab walks, bear walks, penguin walks, bird walks or even the wheelbarrow walk (okay, it may not be an animal but that's okay). What ever your child can imagine they can do.

This can be a quick and easy activity to help your child burn off some needed energy if they move fast while doing the movements. Perfect if they have been sitting for a period of time.

Doing this can also provide calming deep pressure to joints. Or if they have had a period of too much fast movement it can slow the body down, slow the heart beat and regulate breathing.

Animal walks and races include role play for the development of imagination and challenges the vestibular and proprioceptive systems.



6. Cardboard Box Hurdles

For this activity, all you need are a few cardboard boxes that the kids can jump over. Set up a row of boxes to hurdle over and let them jump, hop, or skip over the boxes. So inexpensive, but totally fun!

This game works on both homolateral and cross lateral movements (same side of the body and opposites sides of the body). It develops the efficient movement of individual limbs and develops motor planning abilities. This is how the brain thinks and plans our movement. If you make the hurdles large and just a little bit scary, it can also strengthen the ability to take measured risks – something essential for all children to learn.



7. Tag

The simple game of tag is a childhood favourite and one that can develop the body and the brain. You can let the children make up their own rules, or you can try freeze tag and have children simply freeze in place until they are set free by the touch of another child.

There are many variations of the game like requiring tagged children to do a number of star jumps or spins before re-joining the game. Its easy to make this one your own.

Tag teaches your child how to capture things and navigate challenges using a little healthy competition, it develops balance, gross motor skills, bi-lateral movement, and social interactions.



8. Laundry Basket Push

Simply fill a laundry basket up with toys or books or even a small toddler and have your child push it across the room. The heavier it is, obviously, the harder it is for them to push. So, if the basket is too heavy, then encourage your kids to work together to push it. Nothing like sneaking in a little social skills learning like teamwork!

This simple gross motor activity is a great 'heavy work' activity for kids and can be calming for many kids because of the sensory input that it provides. It supports the proprioceptive system, supports contralateral muscle groups, builds muscle and problem solving skills.



9. Hopscotch

Hopscotch is a classic childhood game. Simply draw a hopscotch outline with the numbers 1 – 10 in each square on your driveway with chalk or use tape on a hard floor inside. Have the children throw a pebble or soft toy, onto the first square, and then jump over it to land in all the other squares, turn at the end and jump back. Repeat this throwing the pebble on all the numbers.

This game is great for working on balance, spatial awareness, fine motor skills and executive functioning (planning the next move). It's also great practice for number recognition!



10. Puddle Jump

Another childhood favourite – jumping in puddles can be extended to include a range of abilities. You don't even need a rainy day to do some puddle jumping. You can use a jump rope and some cups of water. In this game, two people swing an extra-long jump rope, and every other child holds two cups of water while they jump into the rope's jump space. After five jumps, they exit. After each child takes a turn in the jump rope, the one with the most water left in their cup wins. You might like to take this one outside!

If this is a bit too advanced for your young child you can swish the rope on the floor and get them to jump over it - with or without water in their hands.

Like many of the other games this one is working on all the fundamental building blocks of movement. Movement trains the brain so the coordination of jumping, holding, thinking, planning, timing, and self-regulation play into develop the sensory systems and the brain as a whole



11. What's the time Mr Fox

To play this game, the kids line up a good distance away from the player chosen to be Mr. Fox. The kids shout, "What's the time Mr. Fox?" And "Mr. Fox" answers with a time of day. The kids then get to take that number of steps toward him. When the Fox turns around all the children need to freeze. If the fox sees someone moving he then sends them back to start again. The first one to touch Mr Fox without getting caught wins, and they become Mr Fox.

You can also try implementing imagination by suggesting Mr Fox describes what kind of steps to take, such as elephant steps or mouse steps. Kids love to pretend to be animals so this will automatically pique the imagination.



12. Rolling

Rolling is so much fun and it's fantastic for the brain. Children can do this on the floor inside or out. They can do it by themselves, or for young children you can wrap them in a blanket and roll them along. They can have their arms by their side or above their head to protect it.

Rolling helps with the development of your child's brain and body coordination. Rolling horizontally helps assist in balance (vestibular system), proprioceptive system, linear movement awareness, muscle strength and understanding special awareness. Once your child has mastered rolling over on a flat surface, take it outside and try rolling down a grass hill. The first one down the hill wins!

When children create and run their own game, they are more intrinsically motivated to participate in it. This goes for all learning – and chores too! Try to give your children choice as much as possible and use this as learning experiences.



13. Tissue Dancing

Have your child start by placing a tissue/ light scarf/ or handkerchief on their heads. Play some music and encourage your child to move about the room - everyone can start dancing. But be careful; don't let the tissue fall off your head! If the tissue hits the ground, you're out, or you can just allow young children to pick it back up and place it on their heads again.

You can extend this game for older children by stopping and starting the music. The kids must freeze in a pose when the music stops.

This is a fun game that works on posture, body control, balance, and concentration.



14. Create

Kids love to create and being at home is a great way to burn energy and develop their resourcefulness. Give your children a bunch of big empty boxes, paper rolls, and felts – or pencils if you prefer, and leave them to it! If you have old sheets or towels, throw that in too. See what your child comes up with. You can always question or suggest if they get stuck, but most children come up with wildly creative contraptions.

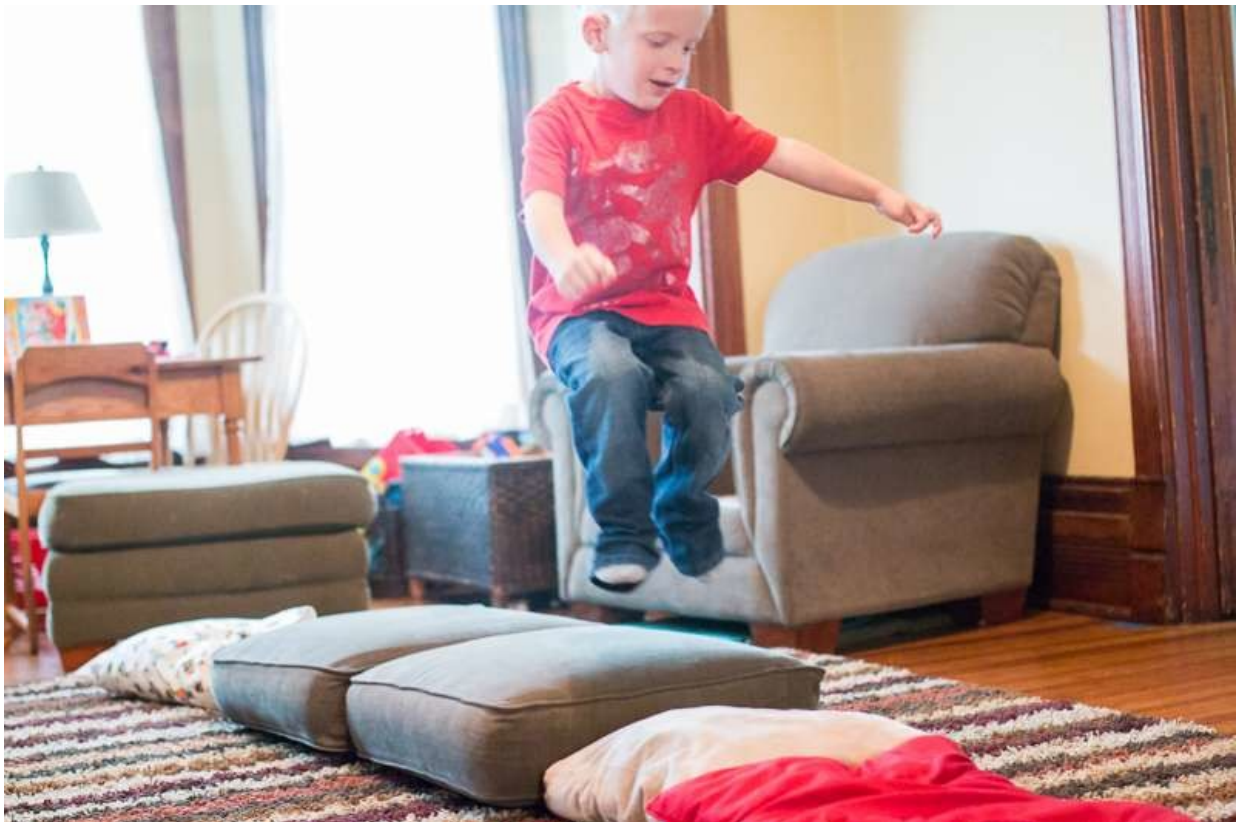
This activity develops their problem-solving and planning skills. It develops hand-eye coordination, executive function, imagination, and physical manipulation. It strengthens both fine and gross muscle control and if done with other children develops communication and collaboration. Plus, they will love explaining to you every little detail of their course.



15. Pillow Jumping

Pull out all of your couch or bed pillows for an easy jumping party! A popular game by children of all age is 'the floor is lava'. The children can use this to set up a path of cushions and pillows on the floor. Because the floor is now lava they are not able to touch it. They will have to jump from cushion to cushion without falling into the lava! (Ensure any hard furniture or safety hazards are moved away).

This game is fantastic for gross motor coordination. The ability to plan, execute, control, and evaluate their movement. Plus its something you can get your big kids into as well if you have them.



16. Soft Toy Throw

Grab a laundry basket - or a large bucket or cardboard box can be used if you don't have one and get your children to choose their favourite soft toys. Then have them throw their loved teddies into the basket. You can keep score if you want, or challenge them to see how many times they can do it in a row.

You can extend this game by getting them to take a step back each time they successfully get the teddy in the basket.

This game works on hand-eye coordination. The ability of the brain to see an object and then judge how high/low, hard/soft, fast/slow to throw the object. This is a foundational skill for writing.



HAVE FUN!

I hope you have been encouraged and inspired by the ideas in this ebook. Your children will absolutely love playing them with you. The more we play, move, communicate and interact with our children the better their physical, social, and emotional development.

If you would like to share the pictures of your family using these ideas you can join the facebook page [The Natural Childhood Movement](#) and upload them there.

(There is a link in the footer of this page.

Let's encourage each other on our parenting journey, and never forget to move, move, move.

All the best,
Leanne