



October 2023 Newsletter

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Songs and Games to Get Kids Moving

By Jaci Wagner, CSU Family and Consumer Science Extension Specialist, Logan County

Children love interacting with music and music can have many powerful effects on a child's development. Music can help build strength, self-regulation, balance, coordination. It is also a fun way to teach keeping a beat with repetition.

Benefits of Music and Movement

- Social skills: Taking turns with instruments or being the leader
- Self-expression and regulation: Ideas and thoughts develop through music, feelings, and playing of instruments. Children can learn to calm down and relax through soothing, low-key music
- Physical skills: Hand-eye coordination, balance, and spatial awareness when dancing and playing music
- Cognitive growth: Numeracy, literacy, and vocabulary development



Fun Songs for Movement

- Here is a small list of songs that are both fun and useful to help get kids up and moving.
- Freeze Dance: This one is great for regulation...freeze and then dance, hop, skip, twirl
- Wheels on the Bus: A classic and great for motor imitation
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt: Great for making an indoor obstacle course and for sequencing movements
- Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes: Great for sequencing and motor skill speed increases
- Hokey Pokey: Great for teaching right/left discrimination and body part identification
- Simon Says: Another good song for body part identification
- If You're Happy and You Know It: Focuses on those midline and bilateral coordination skills



Fun Games for Movement

- **Fun Games:** Many classic games can be played with items found in the home and easily adapted for any age. Parents are encouraged to join along in these games with the children as well.
- **Freeze Tag/Freeze Dance:** Increases balance and patience while holding the position once you are tagged or when the music stops until it starts up again
- **Tin Can Stilts:** Make tin can stilts with empty cans and poke a string through the holes to use as handles. Walk around indoors or outdoors with your newly decorated stilts.

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- **Hide and Seek:** A classic indoor/outdoor game that can be changed up a bit by allowing children to move to a new hiding spot if the seeker does not see you
- **Cushion Hopping:** Use carpet squares throughout the room simulating small islands needed to safely hop from one island to another staying clear of the alligators swimming on the floor. This increases hopping movement and imagination of play.

Let's Talk

Encourage kids to join in music and games to stay active. Start by adding music into your daily routine to dance along with your child. Model for them the directions to hand motions and how to keep the beat. It is also important to allow time for children to express themselves independently of the 'traditional' movements.

It is important to encourage kids to decrease screen time and increase movement throughout the day. Music is a fantastic way for kids to be active while having fun and there are many health benefits to staying active. Music is one way to help children develop an exercise routine to stay active.

One of the best parts of incorporating these songs and games into daily routine is that it is a cost-effective resource. These songs and games do not have to be purchased and can be played anywhere.



Activity for Health

Balloon Blast: For these games you will need medium to large balloons (any color). Consider latex-free balloons if your child has allergies to latex. This activity can be done individually or with a group of children. If it is with a group of children, divide them into equal groups of 3 to 6 children forming a circle. Additionally, this game can be done either standing or sitting.

Using just one balloon, see how many times your child can volley the balloon without it hitting the floor or see how long they can keep it in the air (i.e., 1 minute, 2 minutes, etc.) The team that keeps the balloon up the longest wins! Or if it is individually, have the child beat their own time.

A different version of this game would be to add a second balloon to the mix and have the children try the same activity. Add music to the mix dancing and keeping a rhythm.

Modification Option-Give children the option to do this from a seated position so individuals who use a wheelchair can join in the fun, too!