Catching 3.4: Gopher ball
8 - 12 year olds

Introduction (1 - 2 minutes)
Call the children into a circle or into designated lines and greet them.
Explain any special safety rules and remind the children to stop, look, and listen whenever you signal.
Explain in 20-30 seconds what you will be doing today.
Today we will practice catching a ball that is bounced to you.
Why will it be important to get your body behind the ball today?
**Warm-up: Back to back (5 - 8 minutes)**

- This game is similar to musical chairs, except the chairs are replaced by partners “sitting” back-to-back.
- When the music starts, children must move around the activity space.
- Leader specifies different locomotor movement each time (e.g. walk, run, hop, gallop, skip).
- When the music stops, children must find a partner, stand back-to-back, and then both pretend to “sit” as if they have chairs.
- The child who fails to find a partner, or the last set of partners to make a “chair,” must do 10 jumping jacks and then rejoin the group.
- Play several rounds. Be sure to mix partners by naming new conditions each round. For example: :
  - Girls with boys.
  - Different partner than last time.
  - Someone wearing the same colour as you.

**Demonstration: Catching a bounced ball (1 - 2 minutes)**

- Leader demonstrates how to catch a ball that is bounced to you.
- Leader and child stand about 5 metres apart.
- Child bounces a ball to the leader and the leader catches it.
- Leader then bounces a ball against the wall and catches it. Repeat by bouncing the ball at various heights.
- While demonstrating, leader reminds the children:
  - Keep your eyes on the ball until it arrives in your hands.
  - Get your body behind the ball (i.e. in front of its flight path).
  - If you see the ball passing to one side, move your whole body to the side. Don’t just reach your arms to the side.
  - If the ball is arriving above your belly button, your palms face forward and your fingers point up, and your two thumbs point toward each other (triangle).
  - If the ball is arriving below your belly button, your palms face forward and your fingers point down, and your two pinky fingers are close together (bowl).
As you receive the ball with your hands, you should bend your arms and bring the ball in towards your body.

Practice: Bounce pass (5 - 8 minutes)
- Leader divides children into pairs and each pair has one ball.
- Partners stand facing each other along two designated lines so balls are bounced in the same direction.
- Leader explains: We are going to practice bouncing and catching the ball.
- With your partner, I want you to try and catch the ball 10 times in a row.
- When you have caught the ball 10 times, take one step backwards.
- Leader asks pairs to find a spot against the wall.
- With your partner, one of you must bounce the ball against the wall and the other must catch it.
- Try bouncing the ball at different heights against the wall.
- Try to catch the ball 10 times in a row.

Game: Gopher ball (8 - 10 minutes)
- Leader divides children into groups of 4.
- 3 of the children are “gophers” lying on their stomachs beside each other.
- Gophers are numbered 1 to 3.
- The fourth child stands facing them.
- The person standing will bounce the ball and then call out a number, “1, 2 or 3”.
- If your number is called, you must get up and catch the ball before it bounces a second time.
- You score one point with every catch, and the first person with 5 points wins.
- Winners become the new throwers and the game starts again.

Wrap-up (2 minutes)
Call the children back into a circle and review what they learned today.

Can you think of sports or games where you have to catch a bouncing ball?