



AfL Playbook: 8 - 12 years old

12 days of active fun for kids, parents, and caregivers

Ready to have fun developing movement skills? Active for Life has created a set of games and activities for you and your child to play together. Simply select your child's age range below to get started.

Some helpful tips:

1. Make a regular time to play with your child each day, or look ahead at your calendar and set aside play times.
2. Play the following 12 activities over 12 consecutive days, or play one activity every 2-3 days, or squeeze all 12 activities into 4-6 days—it's your choice.
3. Each activity only requires 10-15 minutes, but you are welcome to play longer if you want!
4. Don't criticize your child's performance, and don't coach too much. Keep it playful and fun!

Let's get started!

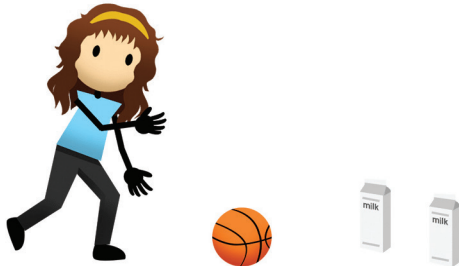
Day 1: Bowling Milk Cartons

Time: 30 minutes

Skills: Throw

Requirements:

- Large hard surface such as driveway, sidewalk, garage, or basement room
- Large round ball such as basketball or soccer ball
- Old milk cartons or plastic drink bottles
- Small amount of sand or soil



Instructions

1. Collect a few empty milk cartons or plastic drink bottles and fill the bottoms with 2 cm of garden soil, sand or gravel.
2. Set up the cartons or drink bottles as bowling targets at the top end of a driveway beside your house, inside your garage, or inside a large basement room without breakable objects.
3. Choose a place where you and your child will bowl from. You might want to let your child bowl from a shorter distance than you.
4. Show your child how to do a basic bowling action.
5. If you are bowling right-handed, your left leg should step forward as you bowl. If you are bowling left-handed, your right leg should step forward.

TIP: Your throwing hand should come from straight behind and under your shoulder, almost brushing your leg.

6. Take turns bowling and trying to knock down the cartons or plastic bottles.

VARIATIONS

- As your child's throwing improves, try making a game where you keep score - each milk carton can be worth 1-3 points

BENEFITS

This activity develops coordination of arms and torso, fine motor control, and the ability to “read” distances. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve throwing an object accurately over a perceived distance (e.g., balls, frisbees, ribbons, sticks, batons).



Day 2: Target Throwing

Time: 30 minutes

Skills: Throw

Requirements:

- Open space, preferably outdoor
- Beanbags or homemade beanbags
- Masking tape or duct tape
- Sheets of 8.5 X 11 inch letter paper

Instructions

1. If you don't have beanbags, make your own by filling round balloons with dry rice or beans and then tying them closed.
2. Tape 2 or 3 sheets of letter paper on a wall or garden fence as targets.
3. If you want, you can draw circular targets on the paper for added effect.
4. Choose a distance where you and your child will throw from.
5. Throw the beanbags at the targets.

TIP: Show your child how to do a basic overhand throw.

TIP: If you are throwing right-handed, your left leg should step forward.

TIP: If you are throwing left-handed, your right leg should step forward.

TIP: Your throwing hand should come from behind and over your shoulder

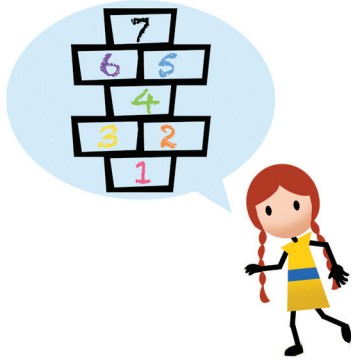
6. Take turns throwing your beanbags at the targets.

VARIATIONS

- As your child's throwing improves, try making a game where you keep score – each target might be worth 1-3 points, depending on how big it is, or how far it is from your throwing line
- As your child's throwing improves, try increasing the throwing distance
- You can also practice target throwing at a beach where there are no people swimming – throw sticks into the water about 3-5 metres from shore, and throw small rocks to try to hit them

BENEFITS

This activity develops coordination of arms and torso, fine motor control, and the ability to “read” distances. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve throwing an object accurately over a perceived distance (e.g., balls, frisbees, javelins, darts, ribbons, sticks, batons).



Day 3: Hopscotch

Time: 20 minutes

Skills: Hop

Requirements:

- A hopscotch grid or chalk to draw one
- A bean bag, small stick or rock to use as a marker

Instructions

1. Line up in front of the hopscotch grid.
2. First in line tosses the marker onto square 1.
3. Hop over square 1 and hop through all the other squares on one foot.
4. At the end of the grid, turn around and hop all the way back on one foot.
5. Pause to pick up the marker from the square.
6. Finish hopping back to the start.
7. Throw the marker into square 2 and go again.
8. Repeat until you have done the hopscotch grid with the marker in every square.

NOTE: When you see two free squares side by side, you land one foot in each square at the same time before continuing on one foot.

RULE: If a player steps into the square with the marker, touches any lines, or touches the ground with any body part other than the one foot, that player starts again at square 1.

VARIATIONS

- Try different hopping actions to go through the course (alternate foot, feet together, hopping backwards, etc.)
- Make up your own hopscotch grid if chalk is available

BENEFITS

This activity develops dynamic balance, coordination, and rhythm required for activities at older ages such as running, skipping, hopping, and dancing.



Day 4: Overhand Catch

Time: 15 minutes

Skills: Catch

Requirements:

- A beanbag, soft foam ball, or sock ball (made by stuffing two socks into one another)

Instructions

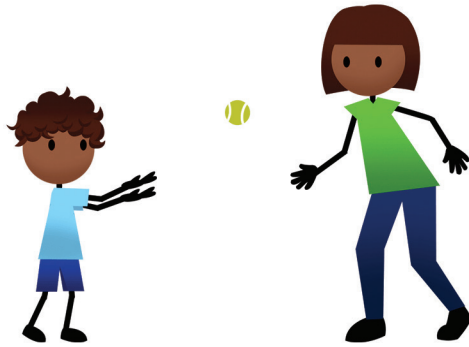
1. Show your child the overhand catching stance: hands at head height, palms forward, fingers separated and pointing upward, thumbs side-by-side and almost touching (they should nearly form a 'W' with the index fingers).
2. Stand 2-3 metres from your child and gently toss the ball into his or her hands.
3. If your child has difficulty catching the ball, move closer.
4. As your child begins to catch the ball consistently, move farther away. See how far away your child can catch the ball.
5. Keep your ball tosses at head height.

VARIATIONS

- At distances of 5-10 metres, toss the ball slightly to each side – child should move their feet to get behind and under the ball

BENEFITS

This activity develops hand-eye coordination, fine motor control, and the ability to track moving objects in the air. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve flying objects (e.g., balls, shuttlecocks, frisbees, ribbons, sticks, batons).



Day 5: Tennis Ball Bounce Catch

Time: 20 minutes

Skills: Catch

Requirements:

- Open outdoor space
- Tennis ball

Instructions

1. In a large open area with pavement, gently play catch with your child using a tennis ball.
2. Start by playing catch with simple underhand tosses from 2-4 metres.
3. As your child becomes confident in catching the tennis ball, increase distance to 5-8 metres and toss the tennis ball so it bounces 1-2 metres in front of your child.
4. Catch the tennis ball after it has bounced once.

VARIATIONS

- Increase the distance and speed of your throws as your child shows more confidence and consistency in catching
- You can also try overhand throws for more speed and distance

BENEFITS

This activity develops hand-eye coordination, fine motor control, and the ability to track moving objects in the air. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve flying objects (e.g., balls, shuttlecocks, frisbees, ribbons, sticks, batons).



Day 6: Balloon Tennis

Time: 30 minutes

Skills: Strike

Requirements:

- Open space, preferably indoor
- Balloons (round type)
- Piece of string or ribbon 3-5 metres
- Scotch tape or masking tape and duct tape
- Paper plates
- Paint stir sticks

Instructions

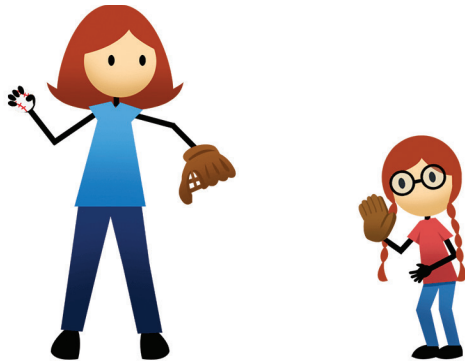
1. Blow up a balloon of the “round” type.
2. Inflate to medium or medium-low pressure, so the balloon “floats” a little bit but not too much.
3. Create simple “tennis racquets” by taping a paint stir stick to the back of each paper plate.
4. Hang the string or ribbon horizontally about one metre above the floor between two chairs, or between bookshelves or countertops. This is your “net”.
5. Using your racquets, hit the balloon back and forth across the net with your child or children.
6. If someone allows the balloon to touch the floor on their side, the person on the other side of the net scores a point.
7. Play first person to 5 points, and then start again.
8. Your racquets are not allowed to cross over the top of the net.
9. You are allowed to touch the balloon more than once on your side if necessary.

VARIATIONS

- If you have more than one child, or more than one adult, try playing a fun family tournament where family members take turns playing each other

BENEFITS

This activity develops hand-eye coordination and timing while using a simple racquet (i.e., striking tool). These skills also transfer to striking with a bat or stick.



Day 7: Baseball Throwing

Time: 30 minutes

Skills: Throw

Requirements:

- Open outdoor space
- Regulation baseball or children's softball (10 inch and 11 inch)
- Standard leather baseball gloves

Instructions

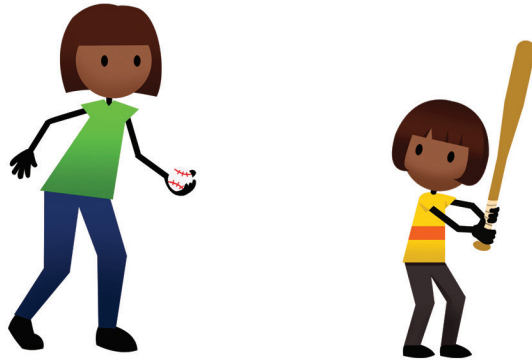
1. In an open area without obstructions, throw gently overhand and play catch with your child.
2. Start with short distances such as 3-5 metres apart.
3. Increase to longer distances of 8-10 metres as your child's catching improves.
4. Show your child how to stand ready, with glove in the air, feet slightly apart, and ready to move side-to-side to catch.

VARIATIONS

- Increase the speed and force of your throws only as your child gains confidence and consistency in catching
- Try using an object as a "home plate" (e.g. jacket, sweater, piece of cardboard or wood) - stand behind it and encourage your child to "pitch" accurately to you from 10-12 metres away

BENEFITS

This activity develops coordination of arms and torso, fine motor control, and the ability to "read" distances. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve throwing an object accurately over a perceived distance (e.g., balls, frisbees, ribbons, sticks, batons).



Day 8: Baseball Batting

Time: 10 minutes

Skills: Strike

Requirements:

- Open and flat outdoor space at least 25m by 40m
- Store-bought plastic baseball bat and ball

Instructions

1. Purchase a lightweight plastic baseball bat and ball from a toy store.
2. Find a large, open outdoor space free of trees and obstacles.

Toss the ball softly underhand to your child so they can practice hitting.

TIP: Make sure your child stands sideways. One foot should be closer to you than the other.

TIP: If your child is right-handed, they should have their left foot closer to you and left hand on the bottom of their grip.

TIP: If your child is left-handed, they should have their right foot closer to you and right hand on the bottom of their grip.

TIP: Toss the ball between their waist and their shoulders.

TIP: The ball should pass between 40-60 cm away from your child

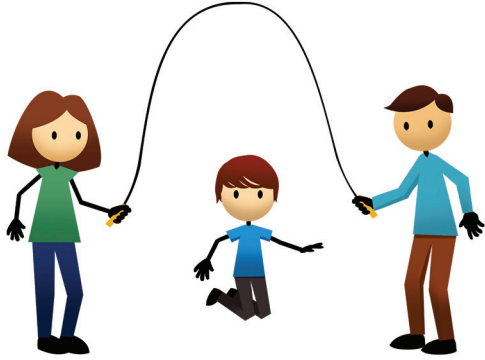
TIP: They should stand ready with the bat held behind them at shoulder height.

VARIATIONS

- As your child's batting improves, increase the speed of your toss.

BENEFITS

This activity develops hand-eye coordination and timing while using a bat (i.e., striking tool). These skills also transfer to striking with a racquet or stick.



Day 9: Jump Rope

Time: 15 minutes

Skills: Jump

Requirements:

- Open outdoor space
- Jump rope or 4 metre standard nylon rope 6-12 mm diameter
- Two people to turn the rope for the child
- Or something to tie the rope to, and one person to turn the rope

Instructions

1. If there is one adult present, tie one end of the rope to a fence or piece of playground equipment.
2. If there are two adults present, each holds one end of the rope.
3. Swing the rope over the child's head in a circular motion.
4. Each time the rope touches the ground, your child must jump over it.
5. The rope should be rotating steadily and consistently.
6. Rotate the rope slowly for beginners.

VARIATIONS

- Increase the speed of the rope rotation as the child masters the slower speeds
- Jump rope with only one foot, alternating feet with each rope rotation
- Turn 180 degrees with every jump

BENEFITS

This activity develops dynamic balance, coordination, and rhythm required for sports and activities such as volleyball, tennis, badminton, and dance.



Day 10: Basketball Dribble

Time: 15 minutes

Skills: Dribble

Requirements:

- Open space with hard pavement (concrete or asphalt)
- A basketball or large bouncy ball (appropriately sized for your child)

Instructions

1. Dribbling means bouncing a ball continuously with the palm and fingers of the hand.
2. Show your child how to do a two-handed dribble (both hands contact the ball at the same time).
3. Show your child how to do right- and left-handed dribble. One hand will be more difficult depending on whether your child is left-handed or right-handed.
4. Practice all three dribbles.
5. Play a mirror game: when you dribble with your left hand, so must your child. Vary the dribbles, speed, height and other factors to make the game fun.

VARIATIONS

- Try the mirror game with your child leading

BENEFITS

This activity develops hand-eye coordination, balance, and rhythmical movement.

Day 11: Kick Side Foot

Time: 15 minutes

Skills: Kick

Requirements:

- Open and flat outdoor space at least 5m by 10m
- Soccer ball
- 2 empty milk cartons, large yoghurt containers or other objects for goal posts



Instructions

1. In a flat, open outdoor space, place your 2 goalposts on the ground 1 metre apart.
2. Parent stands 2-4 metres away from goal, and child stands 2-4 metres on other side facing.
3. Show your child how to kick with the side of your foot.
4. Start behind the ball and step forward to plant your standing foot 10-15cm away to one side of the ball.

TIP: Make sure the toes of your standing foot are pointed at the goal.

5. Follow by swinging your kicking foot, and contact the ball with the inner side of your foot.

TIP: Shape your kicking leg like a hockey stick (foot turned outwards).

TIP: Bend the knee of your standing leg a little, and also bend the knee of your kicking leg.

TIP: Plant your standing leg beside the ball, 10-15cm away, with toes pointed at the goal.

6. Pass the ball back and forth through the goal.

TIP: Each time you receive a pass, stop the ball with the side of your foot. Raise your foot a bit off the ground.

7. Try to pass through the goal each time. Shorten the distance if necessary for success.

VARIATIONS

- As your child's kicking improves, try keeping score as a team – count how many consecutive successful passes you can make together through the goal – if one of you misses, start a new count and try to improve your score.
- Try to play one-touch passing – pass very softly from close distance, and each of you has to pass back without first stopping the ball (like tennis) – count how many consecutive passes you can make like this

BENEFITS

This activity develops leg coordination, strength and fine motor control in the lower body. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve kicking an object (e.g., soccer, football, martial arts).



Day 12: Ball Hockey for Children

Time: 30 minutes

Skills: Strike

Requirements:

- Small hockey sticks (wooden or plastic)
- Plastic ball 8-10 cm diameter (e.g. street hockey ball)

Instructions

1. Create two small goals in your driveway, patio, or hard surface at a local park.
2. Play a simple hockey game with two or three children per team.
3. Adult can play as a passing player who models good team play.

VARIATIONS

- Show children how to “stick handle” the ball with small touches that change the ball direction
- Create a big goal and act as goalkeeper for your children to take turns shooting at you

BENEFITS

This activity develops hand-eye coordination and timing while using a hockey stick (i.e., striking tool). These skills also transfer to striking with a bat or racquet.