



## AfL Playbook: 3 - 5 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: Tightrope

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Skills:** Balance

**Requirements:**

- A rope, ribbon, or any line on the ground

### Instructions

1. Find a straight line on the ground, or make one with rope, ribbon, or chalk line 5-6 metres long.
2. A long pavement crack or concrete joint can also work.
3. Show your child how to walk along the line heel-to-toe.
4. Show how to extend arms for balance.
5. Try walking along the line from start to finish without stepping off the line. If you do, you've "fallen."
6. Introduce imaginary scenarios for fun. Example: Pretend you are circus tightrope walkers.

### VARIATIONS

- Try walking along the line backwards, sidestepping, or crawling on all hands and feet
- Create a tightrope obstacle course using several ropes, ribbons or lines on the ground – use a different walk on each length (forward, backward, sidestep, etc.) – you can designate “safe zones” between parts of the course to give your child a rest

### BENEFITS

This activity develops coordination and balance as kids try to walk a straight line on a rope lying on the ground.



## Day 2a: Mirror Mirror

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Skills:** Balance, Run, Skip, Hop, Jump, Agility

**Requirements:**

- Open space and two partners

### Instructions

1. In Mirror Mirror, two partners face each other. One person is the “mirror master” and makes body movements. The other person must copy or “mirror” the movements.
2. For the first try, stand facing your child with a small space between you.
3. As you wave your arms, jump, step, wiggle, bend or otherwise move, your child must try to “mirror” your movement.
4. After your child has imitated you for a few minutes, let your child be the mirror master.
5. Try different fundamental movements such as hopping, jumping, spinning, skipping, and running on the spot.

### VARIATIONS

- Try different movement themes – the mirror master can imagine he or she is a hockey player, a firefighter, James Bond, or anyone else who does a lot of moving.

### BENEFITS

This activity develops coordination and balance as kids try to imitate the movements of their parent or play partner.



## Day 2b: Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Skills:** Lift and lower object

**Requirements:**

- Small indoor or outdoor space free of obstacles

### Instructions

1. Teach your child the song “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes”:

*Head and shoulders, knees and toes  
Knees and toes, knees and toes  
Head and shoulders, knees and toes  
Eyes, ears, mouth and nose*

2. Show your child the movements that go with each of the words.
3. Touch each body part named in the song with the fingertips of both hands.
4. Make sure your child bends their knees deeply when they go down to touch their knees and toes.

### VARIATIONS

- After your child has learned the song and the movements, try remaining silent for one body part each time you sing the verse – for example, “Head and [silence], knees and toes”
- Try singing the song and doing the movements at fast speeds and slow speeds

### BENEFITS

This activity develops coordination of legs, arms and torso, plus dynamic balance. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve dynamic balance and coordination for lifting and lowering objects (e.g., weightlifting as a sport, and all daily lifting activities in general, plus combative sports such as wrestling and judo).



## Day 3: Underhand 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 underhand catching stance: hands at waist height in front of stomach, palms facing upward, and pinky fingers almost touching.
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 (as little as 30 cm for small children).
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 waist height.

### VARIATIONS

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

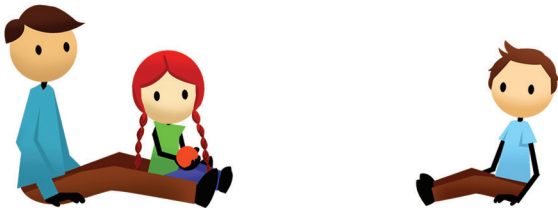
## Day 4a: Toddler Ball Rolling

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Skills:** Catch

**Requirements:**

- Soft plastic ball 10-20 cm in diameter
- Clean indoor floor area
- Preferably carpet for comfort



### Instructions

1. Sit on the floor with your toddler sitting between your legs.
2. Both you and your toddler face another adult or older child sitting on the floor.
3. With your legs spread apart, gently roll the ball back and forth between your toddler and the other adult or older child.
4. Encourage your toddler to “catch” the ball by receiving it with both hands.

### BENEFITS

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

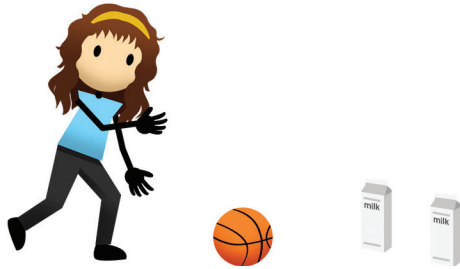
## Day 4b: Bowling Milk Cartons

**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.

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.

5. 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).

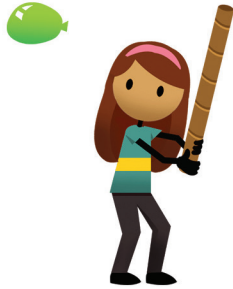
## Day 5: Balloon Batting

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Skills:** Strike

**Requirements:**

- Indoor space free of obstacles and valuable breakables such as lamps, pictures and plants
- Large round balloon
- Empty cardboard tube from wrapping paper



### Instructions

1. Inflate the balloon until it is relatively hard.
2. Show your toddler how to hit the balloon around the room with the cardboard tube.

Allow your toddler to have fun hitting the balloon around the room in any manner they like.

**TIP:** You don't need to "coach" any batting or hitting technique.

### VARIATIONS

- If you have two cardboard tubes, try to take turns hitting the balloon to each other while keeping the balloon in the air.

### BENEFITS

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



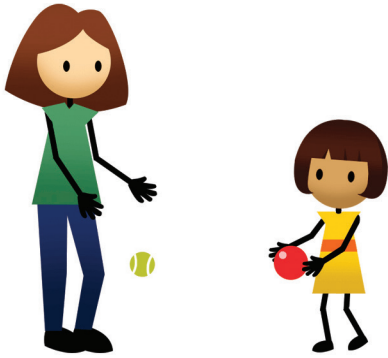
## Day 6: Bounce and Catch

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Skills:** Catch

**Requirements:**

- 2-3 different bouncy balls (e.g. large inflated bouncy ball, tennis ball, solid rubber ball)



### Instructions

1. Show your child how to drop a ball, let it bounce once, and then catch.
2. Encourage your child to drop and catch the ball many times in a row.
3. Let your child try different sizes of balls, and start with balls that are easier to catch (e.g. larger balls).

### VARIATIONS

- If it helps, children with physical disabilities can sit down while bouncing and catching, so their hands are free to catch.

### BENEFITS

This activity develops hand-eye coordination, as well as fine motor control of the hands and fingers.



## Day 7: Toddler Jumping

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Skills:** Jump

**Requirements:**

- Outdoor space with natural and man-made obstacles
- Playground equipment may be suitable
- Sidewalks, benches and low garden walls are good

### Instructions

1. When walking outside with your toddler, find simple structures such as park benches and low garden walls 30-50cm high.
2. Encourage your toddler to climb onto these low structures and jump down.
3. Hold your toddler's hands at all times.

### VARIATIONS

- Show your toddler how to jump over cracks in the sidewalk, garden hoses on the ground, etc.

### BENEFITS

This activity develops dynamic balance and coordination required for any and all sports and activities that involve jumping and landing (e.g., basketball, baseball, soccer, volleyball, track and field, gymnastics).



## Day 8: 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 9: Follow the Leader

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Skills:** Agility

**Requirements:**

- Ideally, more than one child

### Instructions

1. Either indoors or outdoors, have your child “lead” you around, over, under and through obstacles.
2. If indoors, your child can lead around, over or under furniture (with your supervision and permission).
3. If outdoors, your child can lead around, over, under and through playground equipment, trees, and shrubs.
4. Encourage leaders to vary movements with walking, running, changing direction, stopping, and starting.
5. Ensure you are playing in a safe place. Do not play around cars or mechanical equipment.

### VARIATIONS

- Have children take turns being the leader
- If you join the game as an adult, make sure the children take turns leading most of the time

### BENEFITS

This activity develops leg coordination, dynamic balance, and speed. These skills transfer to sports and activities that involve dynamic balance and speed (e.g., soccer, basketball, hockey, volleyball, racquet sports, martial arts, dance).

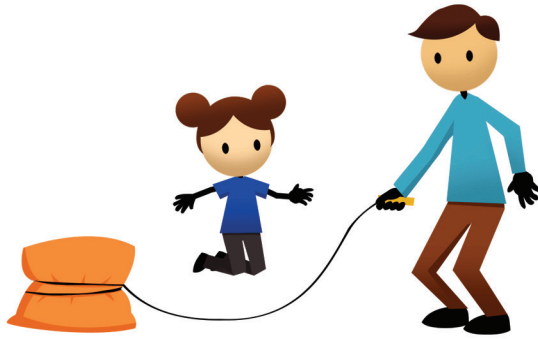
## Day 10: Jump Rope Simplified

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Skills:** Jump

**Requirements:**

- Jump rope or thick string with a beanbag or stuffed animal tied to one end.
- Outdoor space or large indoor space free of obstacles.



### Instructions

1. Hold the rope at one end, or the string at the opposite end from the beanbag.
2. Crouch down and turn the rope around you like a helicopter blade (you must change hands constantly).
3. Keep the rope low to the ground.
4. Encourage your child to jump over the rope each time it comes around.

### VARIATIONS

- If this is too difficult for your child, try laying the rope on the ground and wiggling it side to side like a snake. Ask your child to “jump over the snake!”

### BENEFITS

This activity develops rhythm, timing, and spatial perception.

## 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 Toddlers

**Time:** 20 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 game of one-against-one hockey with your toddler.
3. Allow your child to score goals for encouragement.

### VARIATIONS

- Show your child how to “stickhandle” the ball with small touches that change the ball direction
- Create a big goal and act as goalkeeper so your child can attempt to score on 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.