

EARLY YEARS LESSON PLAN: CIRCUS



Physical adaptations

- Use different sized balls so pupils can grab a ball that suits their grasp.
- Use slightly deflated balls that are easier to grasp.
- Use little pickers or dog ball flingers so children can the floor more easily from sitting or if they find bending down difficult.
- Use large balls and a ball tee for the Easy Hitting Station.
- For Circus Roll Group children can work seated at either end of a class table instead of working on the floor.

Sensory processing adaptations

- Use different textures and colours of balls, some children may find the texture of a tennis ball difficult to hold.
- Set up a second easy hitting station and circus roll group away from the main group for children who may wish to work in a quieter environment.

Visual and hearing adaptations

- Use brightly colour tennis balls that contrast with the floor.
- Use hand-under-hand support, with consent, to teach the movements needed for the various circus activities, to support children who cannot access visual input such as video and demonstrations.
- Mark the lines of the court with clear bright, contrasting throw down markers that can be easily seen and tracked with a cane.

Cognition and learning adaptations

- Demonstrate each of the Pop the Popcorn activities and give children chance to practise and master each one before playing the game.
- Define the different actions when giving instructions “Pop it up, throw the ball into the air-gently.”
- Support instruction for the activities in ‘Circus Performers’ with a basic storyboard that can be left up for reference.
- Use concrete language as some children may find the role play names for activities confusing.

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EQUIPMENT

- Beanbags
- Scarves or Balls
- Spots
- Lines
- Rackets or hitting hands
- Cones
- Traffic cones
- Net or rope

WARM UP: POP THE POPCORN

SET THE SCENE

"Welcome to the circus! Let's pop the popcorn!"

HOW TO PLAY

- Scatter beanbags (popcorn kernels) around the space.
- Children move around the space.
- On the command "pop" the children pick up a beanbag and hold it up high.
- Hold for a few seconds then drop the kernel and continue moving around the space.
- Repeat several times to encourage children stopping and starting.
- Add in different actions:
 - Pop it up - throw the beanbag gently in the air and let it drop to the floor.
 - Pop and drop - throw the beanbag gently in the air and let it drop to the floor.
 - Pop and catch - throw the beanbag gently in the air and catch it (or throw up, allow to drop and grab).
 - Pop and spin - throw the beanbag gently in the air, spin around and freeze.

TEACHING POINTS

- Encourage moving in different directions.
- Encourage spinning actions for vestibular stimulus.
- Gentle throw up to about eye level.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



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SKILL UP

- Change from a beanbag to throwing different objects.

BODY & BALL: CIRCUS PERFORMERS

SET THE SCENE

"Let's practise our circus skills."

HOW TO PLAY

Create a course that has stations for the children to complete.

- Each child stands on a spot "circus ring" holding a scarf or ball.
- Juggling practice:
 - Practice throwing and catching scarves.
 - Repeat several times.
- Tightrope Walk:
 - Place lines along the floor or use court lines.
 - Children walk around the lines on the floor.
 - Hold arms out to the side, with the ball in one hand like they're balancing on a tightrope.

TEACHING POINTS

- Juggling practice:
 - Send the scarf upwards.
 - Two hands to catch.
- Tightrope walk:
 - Move slowly to keep balance.
 - Hands out to the side to balance.



SKILL UP

- Children create their own circus trick.

RACKET & BALL: LION ROLL

SET THE SCENE

"Let's roll the balls around our circus track. Be careful of the lions."

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HOW TO PLAY

- Create a track with cones or spots.
- Children stand at one end of the track with a racket and ball.
- Children roll the ball using the racket along the track.

TEACHING POINTS

- Point the palm and strings forward along the track.
- Move slowly.
- Keep the ball in contact with the racket.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



SKILL UP

- Change the course of the track to make it harder.
- Children can tap the ball instead of rolling it.

GAME: CIRCUS CURTAIN

SET THE SCENE

"It's time for the circus curtain."

HOW TO PLAY

- Circus stations could be set up and children rotate around, or perform one station at a time as a group.
- Circus roll:
 - Children work in pairs with a racket each and one ball per pair.
 - Children stand approximately 2 metres apart with a line (circus curtain) in between them.
 - Place the ball on the ground and gently roll it with the racket over the circus curtain to partner.
 - Partner stops the ball with the racket then rolls it back.
 - Repeat several times.
 - Children can then progress to using the net and attempting to tap or hit the ball over the net (curtain).

TEACHING POINTS

- Stand to the side of the ball.
- Point the palm and racket strings to your partner.
- Watch the ball.
- Move to the ball.
- Splat the ball to stop it with control.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



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SKILL UP

- Keep the ball moving continuously without stopping it.
- Instead of stopping the ball the partner taps the ball back directly.

COOL DOWN

- For the grand finale all children balance a ball on the racket, take 5 deep inhales and exhales and walk to the centre of the space, and take a big circus bow!