

EARLY YEARS LESSON PLAN: SAFARI



Physical adaptations

- Provide mats so children can work in high kneeling, sitting or lying.
- Incorporate wheelchair skills if appropriate, replace jumping with a burst of speed forwards, replace stomping with sharp turns etc.

Sensory processing adaptations

- Offer a variety of colours, textures and sizes of balls for children to choose from, include bell balls.

Visual and hearing adaptations

- Raising the target hoop onto a table will make it more accessible and easier to see.
- Use brightly coloured hoop on a dark mat surface so it's easier to see.
- Include Makaton/BSL in the session for children with a hearing impairment.
- Name all the animals using Makaton/BSL and support descriptions of all animal movements with pictures/videos and demonstration.
- Support calls for animal movements, return to home etc with visuals such as an A4 picture held up and use clear one-word commands if possible (e.g. Home!).

Cognition and learning adaptations

- Be vigilant for misunderstanding when pretending the ball is an animal, neurodivergent children and children with intellectual disability may find this ambiguous and confusing, using balls that have animals on them may support this.

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EQUIPMENT

- Balls or beanbags
- Rackets or hitting hands
- Bucket, hoop or basket
- Spots

WARM UP: MOVE LIKE SAFARI ANIMALS

SET THE SCENE

"Welcome to the safari, today you are going to move like safari animals."

HOW TO PLAY

- Stand with the children in a circle with a bucket / hoop / basket in the middle and introduce them to the theme – tennis ball safari.
- Call out the actions and model the movements of the animals so that children can copy.
- Start with just three actions and build up if the children are ready.
 - Giraffe: reach up high (big stretch).
 - Elephant: stomp like an elephant (marching with force).
 - Hare: bounce like a safari hare (gentle jumping).
 - Rhino: Stomp on all fours (stomping).
 - Cheetah: fast feet (in a space).

Now it's time to feed the animals:

- Spread the balls out around the space – this is the animals food.
- Call out an animal and children move like that animal to collect a ball and place it in the bucket / hoop / basket.
- Repeat the activity as many times as you wish, placing all the balls out: "Oh no! The food escaped! We need to collect the food for the animals."

TEACHING POINTS

- Make the movements big and overacted.
- Gently place the ball into the bucket / hoop / basket.
- Include lots of repetition.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



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SKILL UP

- Add in more animal actions.
- Increase the space.
- Children can choose which animal action they want to try themselves.

BODY & BALL: SAFARI BALL ADVENTURE

SET THE SCENE

"Now we will wake the baby animals."

HOW TO PLAY

- Give each child one ball which is their "baby safari animal" and one spot which is their "animal home."
- Start by waking up the baby safari animals:
 - Pat the ball with their hand.
- Now the babies are awake we can take them for a walk. Call out animals and movements and children move around the space with their ball:
 - Giraffe – carry the ball high with two hands.
 - Tortoise – roll the ball slowly on the ground.
 - Hare – drop and catch (or drop and stop).
- When you use the command: "find your safari home", children move back to their spot.
- Celebrate when everyone is "home."

TEACHING POINTS

- Use simple words: roll, tap, stop.
- Demonstrate every action.
- Change animals based on energy levels.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



SKILL UP

- Add in more animal actions.

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- Children create their own animal actions with the ball.
- Bounce their ball on the ground with their hand.

RACKET & BALL: SAFARI RACKET RESCUE

SET THE SCENE

"You are safari rangers! Keep your animal stay safe and rescue them from the lion."

HOW TO PLAY

- Each child stands on a spot (animal home) with a ball (animal baby) on the ground and a racket.
- Place cones around the space.
- Children move around the space like the tortoise slowing rolling the ball with the racket, avoiding the cones.
- When you call "lion" the children move quickly, still rolling the ball, back to their spot to protect from the predators.
- Repeat, moving around the space and avoiding the cones, as different animals.
 - Monkey – small tap forward with the racket, stop the ball and then tap again.

TEACHING POINTS

- When rolling the ball keep it close to the racket.
- Point your palm / strings of the racket where you want the ball to go.
- Roll and tap the ball gently – don't hit it.
- You may want to separate the children into different groups and give them an area to work in so that they stay in that area to help with special awareness.



BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES

SKILL UP

- Hare – drop and catch the ball between the racket strings and hand (or drop and bounce with the racket).
- Create your own animal movements with the ball and racket.

GAME: SAFARI FRIENDS RALLY

SET THE SCENE

"We are going to work with our safari ranger friends to look after the animals."

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HOW TO PLAY

- Children work in pairs, starting approximately 1 metre apart (use the spots to mark where they start), and with one ball per pair.
- Children start sitting in straddle on their spots.
- Tell children to wave hello to their safari friend - this helps with connection and focus.
- Tell children to roll the ball (animal) to their safari ranger friend. One child rolls the ball to their partner. Their partner stops the ball with their hands and rolls it back.
- Repeat several times.
- Children now progress to standing and tapping the ball with their hitting hands and palm of their hand. Stop the ball with the palm of the hand and tap it back aiming for the spot.
- Repeat several times.
- Children now progress to using rackets to tap the ball.

TEACHING POINTS

- Get ready - watch the ball and face forward.
- React - move to the ball.
- Palm / strings point towards the target.
- Use cue words: "Roll it", "Stop it", "Good sharing!"
- Encourage social play without competition.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



SKILL UP

- Call out different animals to change how they send and receive the ball:
 - Tortoise – very slow rolls.
 - Elephant – stop the ball with a big stomp.
 - Hare – drop and tap the ball.

COOL DOWN

"Set the scene "It's now time to put the animals to sleep. Let's help them."

- Lie on the floor and concentrate on breathing:
 - "Inhale..."
 - "Exhale..."
- 3–5 slow breaths.