

EARLY YEARS LESSON PLAN: ZOO



Physical adaptations

- Offer mats to provide access for crawling, knee-walking and rolling.
- Support children to steady themselves with flat hand on the wall or hold stable equipment when standing on one leg.
- Support alternate sitting, some children will struggle to be stable in cross-legged sitting.
- Offer mats for kneeling, for some children kneeling on the ground will be painful.
- Offer chairs or benches to sit on, not all children will be stable and secure when kneeling.
- If children are wobbly on one leg encourage them to stand with one hand on the wall.
- Use an alternative to a net such as a two handled colander, that's easier to hold.

Sensory processing adaptations

- Don't insist on success with the seated catch before children can progress to standing, if they are finding it difficult, they will become anxious and less likely to succeed if they are "the only one still sitting."
- Use larger balls on the hitting tees.

Visual and hearing adaptations

- Support commands with visuals such as A4 Picture cards.
- Use noisy balls, like bell balls.
- Use large bright hoops/targets on a dark matt background.
- Make sure that the balls contrast in colour to the wall so they can be easily seen.

Cognition and learning adaptations

- Demonstrate the different movements and ask whole group to copy to check for understanding.
- Explain the movement calls initially (e.g. "Giraffes - on your toes!")
- Adapt language to be more concrete, some children will struggle with "eyes on fish!" and will need the ball to be called a ball.
- Focus on beating personal best with the counted catches.
- Some children will need direction on technique improvement as they may access learning by trial and error.

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EQUIPMENT

- Cones
- Spots
- Access to wall or a bench turned on its side
- Balls
- Racket or hitting hands
- Traffic cones

WARM UP: ZOO MOVERS

SET THE SCENE

"Today we are at the zoo! Stay inside the zoo. No animals can escape!"

HOW TO PLAY

- Place cones around the outside of a space – this is the boundary of the zoo - stay inside so they don't get lost!
- Children will move around the zoo as different animals. Demonstrate each animal, starting with just three actions and build up if the children are ready.
 - Penguins – waddle with very small steps.
 - Giraffes – walk tall on toes and arms stretched up.
 - Kangaroos – two-foot jumps, soft landing with knees bent.
 - Cheetahs – run fast (can be on the spot or across the space ensuring to keep head up and watching others).
 - Rhino – walk on all fours with strong stomps.
- Add in the call of "Zookeeper!" – children freeze on one leg and hold balance for 3 seconds.
- Repeat several times, encouraging a quick transition from moving to freezing in balance.

TEACHING POINTS

- Make the movements big and overacted.
- Eyes forward.
- Hold the balance - look at a fixed object and squeeze muscles tightly.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



SKILL UP

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- Increase the number of animals and actions.
- Allow children to select own animal and create action.

BODY & BALL: SEALION BOUNCE

SET THE SCENE

"We are heading over to the sealion pool to see them perform their tricks."

HOW TO PLAY

- Children begin by sitting or kneeling on a spot with a ball.
- Roll the ball around the body, crossing at the midline.
- The sealions also try to catch the fish! Children to hold ball at chest height; drop the ball and catch it after one bounce with two hands. They may wish to change to straddle position to help them if they want to.

TEACHING POINTS

- Watch the ball.
- Hands ready low.
- Make a bucket with your hands to catch with palms facing the sky.



SKILL UP

- Progress to kneeling then to standing.
- Add a clap between the bounce and the catch i.e. bounce, clap, catch.
- Count how many catches in a row they can make.

RACKET & BALL: FLAMINGO TAP

SET THE SCENE

"Now we're heading to the flamingos."

HOW TO PLAY

- Children start kneeling on a spot approximately 1 metre away from a wall or bench turned on its side.

TEACHING POINTS

- Watch the ball.



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- Each child has a racket and ball.
- Children place the ball on the floor and to the side of their body, and use their racket to send the ball to the wall and then receive it back by stopping the ball.
- Replace the ball back to starting position and repeat several times, reacting to the rebound off the wall each time.
- Tap / push the ball in front and to the side of the body.
- Point the palm and strings towards the target.
- Move to the ball.



SKILL UP

- Increase the distance between the spot and wall / bench.
- Children can start further away from each other.

GAME: ZOOKEEPER PASS

SET THE SCENE

"Let's be zookeepers."

HOW TO PLAY

- Working in pairs, children start standing on a spot opposite their partner approximately 2 metres apart.
- One child has a racket and ball.
- The child with the racket and ball starts by holding the ball against their racket strings. They then swing the arms forwards together sending the ball to their partner. Their partner stops the ball and rolls it back.
- Repeat several times and then swap roles.

TEACHING POINTS

- Hold the racket and ball out to the side.
- Tap with palm and strings pointing towards partner.
- Watch the ball.
- Move to the ball.
- Cup hands to catch.

BRAIN FOCUS ACTIVITIES



SKILL UP

- Use a traffic cone or hitting tee. Place the ball on the traffic cone or tee and gently tap the ball to their partner. Partner allows the ball to bounce and then catches the ball and sends it back to the hitter (either roll or throw).

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COOL DOWN

Set the scene "Sleeping lions."

- Children lie on the floor and concentrate on breathing:
 - "Inhale...big belly."
 - "Exhale...quiet lion."
- 3–5 slow breaths.