

Developing Manipulative Skills

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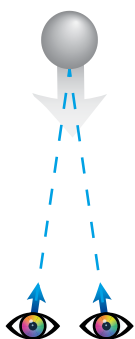
Manipulative skills are where the student is moving or using an implement – be it a ball, a bat, a frisbee or a heavy object they are lifting, pushing or pulling.

Manipulative skills are sometimes described as “sending and receiving skills” and include throwing, catching, kicking, trapping, and striking.

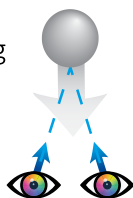
Neuromuscular Development Is Critical

Manipulative skills, perhaps more than locomotor and non-locomotor skills, require more advanced neuromuscular development.

This is particularly true of catching skills, where the eyes need to be able to “track” the ball as it approaches. The inability to track the ball can be the reason why some students either close their eyes or turn their face away when trying to catch.



As the ball approaches, the eyes have to converge (turn inwards) to keep track of the ball. The nerve and muscle development of young students may not be advanced enough to do this.



Striking and Kicking

Start a student learning to strike with a large stationary ball and a lightweight bat. Progress to striking a large lightweight ball, and as striking improves, reduce the size of the ball, and eventually strike a moving ball.

In kicking, progress students from a stationary kick to running up to the ball, planting one foot beside the ball, and kicking with the other foot.

Throwing Sequence

Advanced neuromuscular development is necessary before a student can throw with a mature throwing action. This usually happens by the end of Grade 2, but can be earlier or later.

Immature throw: A student faces the direction they are throwing and only used their elbow and wrist.

Intermediate throw: Incorporates a step, with the student stepping forward with the same foot as they throw with (left foot step, left hand throw; right hand step, right hand throw).

Mature throw: Incorporates a step, with the opposite foot to the throwing hand, and involves starting with the body sideways to the throw, and twisting the body.

Once the mature throwing pattern is established, students practice throwing for greater distance and with greater accuracy.

Catching Sequence

1. Student stands with arms making a basket and hands facing up. A large, soft ball is then tossed into the “basket”, and the student pulls the ball into their chest.
2. Same underhand catch, but the student is encouraged to use only hands and fingers to catch the ball.
3. Reduce the size of the ball until the student can catch a ball that fits into the palm of one hand.
4. Catch a small ball underhand with dominant hand.
5. Catch a small ball underhand with non-dominant hand.
6. Catch the ball one-handed when thrown from greater and greater distance.
7. Catch the ball one-handed when ball is thrown above the head.

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