

Learning on Your Feet

Ready, set, play! These games let kids be kids—by running, jumping, leaping, and playing ball. And while your youngster is busy being active, he'll also practice spelling, math, listening, and more.



Bottle bowling

This fast-paced bowling game will get hearts pumping and stretch math muscles. Gather these items: five plastic bottles (weighted down with water or sand), a soccer ball or basketball, and a permanent marker.

Number the bottles 1–5. Mark a start line, and stand up the bottles several feet away.

Players alternate being the bowler and the defender. The bowler gets one attempt to knock down the bottles by rolling the ball, while the defender tries to block the ball with his feet.

After each roll, the bowler adds the numbers on the bottles he knocked down to calculate his score. *Example:* A bowler who knocks down bottles 1, 2, and 4 would score 7, because $1 + 2 + 4 = 7$. The defender gets his score by adding the numbers on the bottles left standing. So if 3 and 5 didn't topple

over, he'd score 8 points, since $3 + 5 = 8$. Stand the bottles back up, and it's the next player's turn to roll. The player with the highest score after 10 rounds wins.

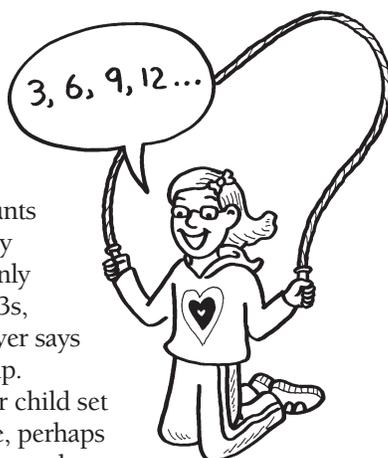


Number jumping

Turn an ordinary game of jump rope into a fun way for your youngster to skip-count.

Players take turns jumping rope. On the first round, each jumper counts aloud by 1s. On the next round, they count by 2s, calling out a number only on every other jump (2, 4, 6), then 3s, and so on. A turn ends when a player says the wrong number or misses a jump.

For an added challenge, let your child set a goal for each round. For instance, perhaps she'll decide that players must jump and count by 3s to 33 or count by 11s to 132.



Safety word tag

This twist on traditional Tag encourages your youngster to think about parts of speech.

Have players pick a part of speech, such as nouns, verbs, or adjectives. Pick a player to be "It." This person chases the others and tries to tag them. When a player is about to be tagged, he can call out a "safety" word that is the part of speech chosen. *Example:* For nouns (people, places, or things), he might say *mouse*, *library*, or *Rumpelstiltskin*. When a safety word is called, "It" has to stand still and count to five before trying to tag anyone.

Each safety word can be used only once. A player who is tagged becomes "It" and must name a new part of speech to be the category of safety words.

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Tightrope twist

Balance and coordination get a workout with this reading game. Have these items on hand: paper, pencil, a book of tongue twisters, and sidewalk chalk.

Let your child use chalk to draw a “tightrope” on the sidewalk. On each turn, one player reads aloud quickly from the book of tongue twisters while the other player walks the tightrope forward and backward one time, as fast as she can.

If the reader makes a mistake, she has to reread the tongue twister from the beginning. And if the walker steps off the rope, she must go back to the beginning of the rope and start over while the reader keeps going. Then, the reader and the walker swap roles. The player who reads the most tongue twisters wins.

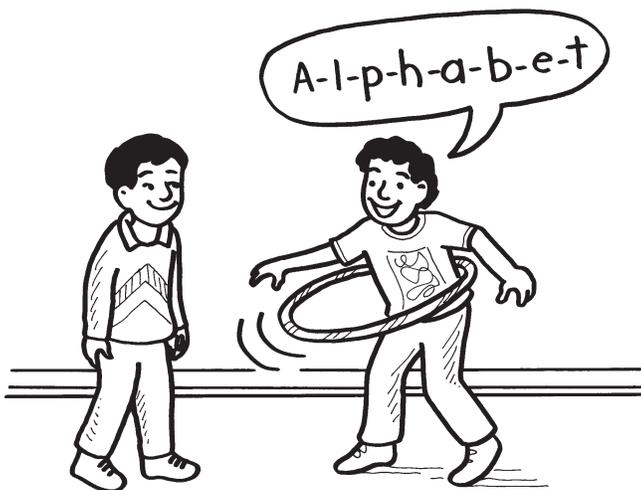


Double-dog dare

Use this game to help your youngster practice just about any skill. He’ll need assorted outdoor toys (basketball, hula hoop).

Players take turns making up dares involving an action and a word-related activity or math problem. *Examples:* “I double-dog dare you to dribble a basketball with your eyes closed while naming 10 fractions that are equivalent to $\frac{1}{2}$.” “I double-dog dare you to hula-hoop while you spell *alphabet*.”

If the player completes the task, he gets a point. If not, the person who gave the challenge can try it himself and earn the point if he’s successful. The player with the most points at the end of five rounds wins.



Leaping listening

Your youngster will need to be a good listener to win at this game for four or more players.

Choose one person to be the caller. Have all other players line up 10 feet away, facing the caller. When she shouts a word related to land, such as *hill*, *dirt*, or *grass*, players jump forward.

But if the caller shouts a word that’s related to a body of water (*sea*, *puddle*, *creek*), they have to jump backward. A player who jumps the wrong way is out and sits down. The last person standing wins. Play enough rounds so that everyone gets a turn to be the caller.

Variation: Try other pairs of categories like jungle animals and polar animals or fruits and vegetables. For a math version, use odd and even numbers instead of land and water words. Players jump forward for odd numbers and backward for even numbers.



The widest river

Here’s a jumping game that will give your child a way to use his measuring skills.

Have your youngster lay two jump ropes parallel to each other and measure to make sure they’re exactly 12 inches apart. The space between the ropes is the “river.”

To play, one person jumps over the river. If he makes it, the other player (the “measurer”) moves the ropes and measures the river to be 16 inches wide, and then the jumper tries again. The measurer should keep moving the ropes apart, 4 inches at a time, until the jumper can’t make it across the river. Now the players trade roles. The winner is the player who jumps across the widest river.