

## Get Moving!

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With curriculums emphasizing computer-based learning and assessments and standards becoming more rigorous for lower grade levels, students are losing opportunities to get up and move their bodies during the school day. Developmentally, movement is crucial for learning because it helps the brain create pathways to gain new information. Movement throughout the day has been shown to increase focus, improve test scores, and promote appropriate behavior. More specifically, gross motor movement has been shown to:

- reduce the stress of school.
- combat childhood obesity.
- expel “busy” energy.
- motivate the child to learn.

With a little creativity, SLPs, educators, and parents can use the spaces and resources already available in schools and the community to mix movement with learning. Here are some game suggestions to get students on their feet:

- **Simon Says** – This game is a speech therapy classic! Great for locations with limited space, Simon Says targets following directions and executive functioning skills, such as focus and impulse control. Complex directions (“If you are wearing a green shirt, then spin around”) and large movements can be incorporated into the game.
- **Parachute Games** – Many physical education teachers have parachutes. Target spatial directions by having students run under the parachute, sit on the parachute, hover their legs over the red triangle, sit on a triangle next to a blue triangle, etc.
- **Hide and Seek** – This game can be used to target letter recognition, sight words, phonemic awareness, auditory memory, and more. Place cards around the room slightly out of sight, such as under a table, over doors, behind chairs, etc. Give the student clues about what they need to find (“Find something that is brown and yellow, has a long neck, and eats leaves,”) or have students find cards and practice the target word on each.
- **Obstacle Course** – Physical educators are a great resource for everything needed for an obstacle course, such as tunnels, scooter boards, hula hoops, cones, crash pads, etc. Obstacle courses can also be made on playgrounds. Be creative! Take turns between physical activities and eliciting targets. For example, after the student goes through the tunnel, he/she must say the target word 10 times before moving on to the slide.
- **Lily Pads** – Arrange hula hoops on the floor with targets taped in the middle. Have students hop from lily pad to lily pad and practice the target in each one.
- **Bowling** – Bowling pins can be bought, found in a gymnasium, or made using liter soda bottles. Tape cards with targets to the side or the bottom of the bowling pins. Have the student knock down the bowling pins and practice the targets on each pin.
- **Charades** – When teaching vocabulary, charades is a great way to make new words memorable. Students can use their bodies to mimic the movements of a tornado or demonstrate the meaning of “oscillate.”



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- **Sorting** – Place empty buckets around an open space and spread out cards along the floor. Label each bucket with a category (e.g. animals, seasons, transportation, etc.) Students work together to sort cards by placing them into the category buckets as quickly as they can.
- **I Spy** – Give each of your students a different color stack of sticky notes and remind them of their target sound. Have them explore the room and put the sticky notes on objects that have their target sound in their name (e.g. If the student is working on the /f/ sound, he/she can put a note on a phone, the fan, and a friend). When the students have finished placing their sticky notes, visit each item in the room and have the students practice their sounds.
- **Hop Scotch** – Create a hop scotch board using chalk (outside) or blue painter's tape (inside). Place cards with target words in each square of the hop scotch board. Have the student throw a bean bag onto the board and practices the target in the square before taking his/her turn.



Make sure that students have plenty of room to move safely. Clear furniture and objects out of the way, and establish in-bounds and out-of-bounds places with the students before starting the activity. There are many open spaces within a school where multiple students can move freely, like a gymnasium, an empty cafeteria, or a playground. Gymnasiums can be used when scheduled around physical education classes; cafeterias can be used when scheduled around lunch time; playgrounds can be used when scheduled around recess. Collaborate with your building administrator to find safe places for students to move. Parents can use many private and public places, such as parks and playgrounds, backyards, and even the living room.

Resource:

Kamenetz, Anya. "5 Proven Benefits Of Play." NPR. August 31, 2018. Accessed September 28, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/08/31/642567651/5-proven-benefits-of-play>

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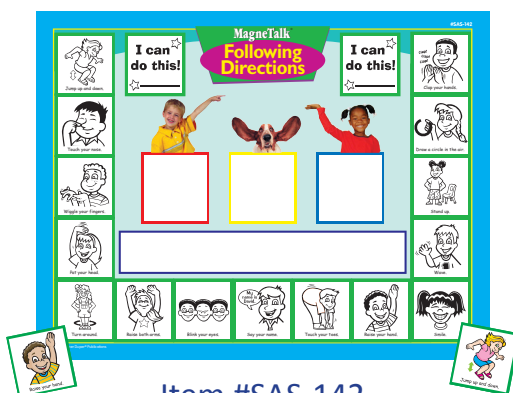
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