

A parent's guide to ball skills (2 of 3)



Throwing

A child throws:

1. Overarm with no particular stance, and no accuracy. Their release is erratic and the ball does not travel far.
2. Overarm using either arm and with very limited accuracy. Their release is still erratic, but the ball travels about 1m.
3. Underarm, using either arm, with some accuracy. **They tend to lean forwards with one leg advanced**, and both the deliberate release of the ball and the distance increases.
4. Using a preferred hand. They lean forwards with one leg advanced and their trunk moves with the throw. The release of the ball is controlled, the throw is

fairly accurate and the ball travels a fair distance.

5. Using a controlled movement, with their body arching back, then moving forwards when throwing. Time, stance and accuracy are all good and the ball travels far.

Catching

A child:

1. **Looks at the thrower, not the ball.** They show little reaction apart from surprise when the ball is thrown. No success!



2. Looks at the ball in the thrower's hands, with arms out ready. They trap the ball against their chest, with a 50 per cent success rate.

3. Looks at the oncoming ball, but also at their own hands.

Their arms are ready and their hands cupped in anticipation. They catch the ball most of the time.

4. Watches to see how the ball is moving. Their arms and hands move in anticipation. They catch a direct throw easily and can even manage some throws to the side.

5. Movements are more confident and co-ordinated. They are mostly successful in catching even when they have to move.



Kicking

A child:

1. Kicks the ball by walking into it.
2. Stands next to the ball and kicks it gently using their whole leg, but their knee is not flexed.

3. Stands next to the stationary ball and kicks it with some force by bending their knee.

4. Kicks a moving ball.

STARTING OUT

You can start playing ball games with your child very early on.

A good starting point with babies is to roll a ball across the floor to them when they are first sitting up. They may at first hold onto the ball, but will learn to push it back.

With toddlers, throwing comes fairly naturally, and providing 'safe' balls and beanbags can help with this stage. Toddlers also tend to enjoy kicking a ball, although it usually has to be stationary and they tend to just walk into it rather than kick it.

From about two years, you may find that your child enjoys learning to catch. At first this might be just passing a ball from hand to hand before gradually increasing the distance. **Most children will be ready to try out a bat and ball from about three years,** but they will need a large light bat and also a very sympathetic thrower.

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