

Learning to catch – A “sensory motor” activity



Learning to catch requires you to know where your whole body is in space without looking at it. This sense is called proprioception.



Learning to catch requires being able remain balanced whilst you are still and whilst you are moving. This requires good proprioception, and another sense called vestibular, which are the foundations for being able to plan motor actions or motor planning as it is sometimes called.



Learning to catch requires you to be able to visually track a moving object



Learning to catch requires hand to eye coordination.



Learning to catch is a complex activity. Learning to catch requires the integration of all these skills. How can we help develop it?

Support the child’s foundation skills in the areas of movement, balance, visual tracking and hand eye coordination.

Some children learn better by **practicing how to complete the actual activity** of catching.

Slow the activity down so that there is more time for the child to process information about their bodies, the environment and the object they are visually tracking to catch.



Bubbles are great for learning to integrate the skills needed to catch. Encourage the child to pop bubbles by clapping them. Count how many giving lots of praise and encouragement.

Chiffon scarves or balloons are a good next step forwards. Throw one high into the air near to the child and ask the child to watch and try and catch it. They can be encouraged to throw the scarf / balloon up in the air themselves and try and catch. As the child’s skills improve increase the distance.



Large balls are easier to catch when throwing between two. Keep the distance short. You might find that to start with you are almost tipping the ball into the child’s waiting outstretched hands. Encourage them to watch the ball and curl the ball into their bodies once in their outstretched hands. Increase the distance bit by bit.

Try bouncing a larger ball on the floor or rolling to catch with both hands as it returns towards the hands. This does not involve the same effort for visual tracking but works on the motor planning, balance and hand eye coordination.



Other practice ideas are:

- Throwing bean bags into a hoop on the floor or a bucket.
- Rolling a ball towards lightweight skittles

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- Throwing and catching with a bounce in the middle so the child has to judge where the ball will land.
- Kicking a ball to a target or partner and receiving