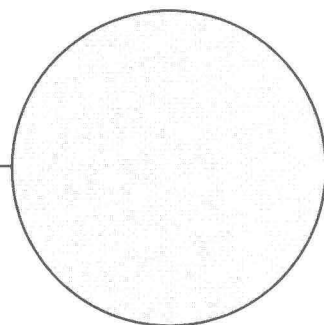


Physical Activities for Young People With Severe Disabilities

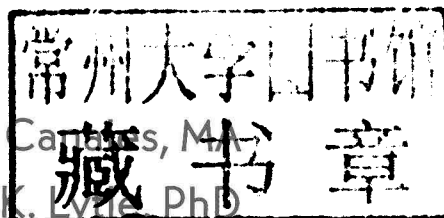


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Physical Activities for Young People With Severe Disabilities



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INTRODUCTION

Physical Activities for Young People With Severe Disabilities was written to help teachers in public school settings provide physical activities for students in grades 6 through 12 who have severe physical disabilities. Such disabilities include cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and other orthopedic impairments that inhibit overall physical functioning. These students might not be able to participate in a general physical education program with their age-level peers or might need additional services in addition to inclusive physical education.

Although written with the needs of the public school teacher in mind, this book is useful to a variety of professionals—adapted physical education specialists, special education teachers, therapeutic recreation specialists, physical education teachers, and others who plan and implement activity programs for young people with severe physical disabilities.

This book presents 50 activities that you can use immediately with your students who have disabilities. The activities make use of common equipment and are easy to prepare for and conduct. They are organized according to the physical skills developed, so it's easy to find the ones that will be most useful for your students. Rather than following a sequence or order, you can choose activities based on an individual student's area of need or to accomplish a particular academic or gross motor goal specified on the student's individualized education program (IEP).

Although the activities in this book specifically target the physical effects of exercise, all lessons are intended to increase the student's psychological well-being as well. It is anticipated that the student outcome of the activities will be increased positive behaviors, self-esteem and confidence, and an increased willingness to interact with those in the general population.

These activities are designed for children and adolescents enrolled in the public school special education system at the secondary level (grades 6 through 12, ages 11 through 17). This age range was selected to support the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), public law 108-466 (2004), which states that physical education is a required service for children and youth between the ages of 0 and 22 who qualify for special education services because of a specific disability or developmental delay.

Because physical activity programs should be based on appropriate content standards, the activities in this book relate to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) content standards. NASPE is a professional organization that sets standards and guidelines for practice in physical education and sport. Its published list of standards for students grades K-12 help define "what a student should know and be able to do as a result of a quality physical education program" (NASPE, 2004, p. 9). The six standards state that a physically educated person:

- **Standard 1:** Demonstrates competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.

- **Standard 2:** Demonstrates understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities.
- **Standard 3:** Participates regularly in physical activity.
- **Standard 4:** Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.
- **Standard 5:** Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.
- **Standard 6:** Values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction. (NASPE, 2004, p. 11)

The NASPE standards also provide guidelines for a high-quality physical education program. They stipulate that a student must have the opportunity to learn by having “instructional periods totaling a minimum of 150 minutes per week (elementary) and 225 minutes per week (middle and secondary school)” (NASPE, 2004, p. 5). Because the activities in this book are designed to be carried out in public school settings, we developed them using the NASPE guidelines and standards.

Organization of the Activities

The activities in this book are designed to increase or maintain levels of muscular strength, cardiorespiratory endurance, and flexibility. They are also intended to be positive experiences that enhance self-esteem, self-worth, confidence, and overall psychological well-being. They are grouped into chapters that address four fitness categories: balance and flexibility, muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance, eye–hand and eye–foot coordination, and moving in general space. Following are explanations of these categories.

- **Balance and flexibility.** The 10 activities in chapter 1, Balance and Flexibility Activities, focus on increasing or maintaining balance and flexibility. These activities involve extending the upper and lower extremities to reach for an object, maintaining a stretch position or body stance for an extended period of time, or manipulating an object by balancing it appropriately on a specific body part.
- **Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance.** The 10 activities in chapter 2, Muscular Strength and Cardiorespiratory Endurance Activities, focus on overall body strength and cardiorespiratory endurance. These activities involve constant body movement such as walking, running, propelling a wheelchair, and continuously moving the upper or lower extremities. Resistance training activities using equipment such as therapy bands and one’s own body weight, as well as activities in which the objective is to maintain movement for a period of time, are all designed to maintain or increase muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance.
- **Eye–hand and eye–foot coordination.** The 18 activities in chapter 3, Eye–Hand and Eye–Foot Coordination Activities, involve coordination of the eye to hand as well as the eye to foot. These activities address tracking an

object with the eye in order to contact it with the hand or foot appropriately. Skills that demonstrate eye–hand and eye–foot coordination include striking an object using an implement (e.g., bat, paddle, hockey stick), kicking a ball, and throwing a ball toward a target. When performing these types of skills toward a target, students need to demonstrate appropriate aim, force, and accuracy. In many cases, students who are unable to use their hands in an activity may use their feet. For example, a child with cerebral palsy may be able to move a foot better than a hand to propel an object. For this reason many activities in this chapter can be modified to use the hand or the foot depending on the needs of the student and the goals of the lesson.

- **Moving in general space.** The 12 activities in chapter 4, *Moving in General Space Activities*, address moving within specified boundaries safely, without bumping into others. Many activities that involve moving in general space allow a student to move around freely while following specific movement cues or prepositions (e.g., *stop, go, under, around, up*). Other skills recognized within this category include chasing, fleeing, and dodging. These movement skills are often seen in cooperative tag games, in which a person must either tag or avoid being tagged by another player.

Each activity in the book is broken down into the following sections:

- **Title.** The title is intended to be a fun and creative name for the activity. It is not intended to describe the goal or purpose of the activity.
- **Primary concept(s).** This section identifies the category of physical fitness the activity addresses. As mentioned, the activities are divided into four fitness categories (balance and flexibility, muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance, eye–hand and eye–foot coordination, and moving in general space).
- **Secondary concept(s).** Many of the activities cover multiple skills or movement concepts. This section identifies the secondary skills or movement concepts specifically. Skills include striking, kicking, throwing, catching, rolling, chasing, fleeing, and dodging. The movement concepts include using creative movement patterns; understanding prepositions; and using appropriate aim, force, and accuracy when performing a skill.
- **Activity goal.** This section gives an overview of the general goal of the activity, describing what will be accomplished during the activity, and what the students will have learned by the end of it.
- **Equipment.** The materials needed for conducting the activity are listed in this section. A particular quantity of equipment might not be specified because it may vary depending on the number of students, their skill level, and the space your students will be working in. Because maximizing student participation is so important, you should try to have at least one piece of equipment per student unless students will be working in pairs or small groups. It is also important to provide a variety of equipment options to offer various levels of difficulty, thus maximizing student success (e.g., balls, beach balls, and beanbags for catching). Your role is to determine the most appropriate equipment based on individual student abilities.

- **Setup.** This section addresses what you need to do prior to the lesson, such as setting up the space or facility or organizing the activity.
- **Procedure.** This section describes how to implement the lesson from beginning to end. Included are the exact directions and instructional cues to use to lead the activity.
- **Low variations.** Any activity, as described in the step-by-step procedure section, may not be appropriate for all students. This section offers suggestions for adapting the activity for students who are extremely low functioning and may need modifications to achieve a level of success.
- **High variations.** Some of the activities, as described in the step-by-step procedure section, may be too simple for particular students. This section offers suggestions for adapting the activity for students who are higher functioning and may need modifications to make the activity more challenging.
- **Informal assessment questions.** Assessment is an important tool for ensuring that your students are successful and that they are reaching a level of understanding when performing an activity. In general, assessment should take place before, during, and after the implementation of a physical activity program. It should help you answer important questions pertaining to the student's success. Following are examples of questions you may need to answer:
 - What are the student's current abilities?
 - What types of activities are appropriate for this student?
 - What skills and abilities should be assessed for this student?
 - How effective is the program in meeting the needs of this student?
 - Is the student benefiting from participation in this program?
 - Can instruction be enhanced for this student?
 - What skills and abilities has the student learned through participating in this program?
 - How has the student's quality of life been improved? (Kasser & Lytle, 2005, pp. 74-75)

There are many strategies and tools for assessing students both formally and informally. Formal assessment tools are generally standardized tests with very specific instructions. Informal assessments are much less specific and may include observations, rating scales, student questionnaires, or even reflection questions that check for student understanding. Alternative assessments such as these, which note progress on a daily basis, are more ideal than formal assessments when working with students with severe disabilities.

The assessment questions in this book constitute brief evaluations to help you ensure that your students are meeting the goal or objective of the activity. They are not intended to be overall evaluations of students' performances. A more comprehensive assessment by an adapted physical education specialist is recommended to provide a complete understanding of students' overall gross motor abilities.

Ensuring Safety

People with disabilities typically have unique health and safety issues. Many times students with physical disabilities lack overall strength and endurance in comparison to their age-level peers, which can lead to overexertion and overuse of the body's systems. They may also be more prone to infection or secondary conditions because of their disability or because of particular medications they may be taking.

Because of these medical factors and concerns, you need to take extra precautions when planning for students with disabilities in a physical education setting. Being aware of the environment in terms of safety is crucial. Choosing equipment that you can adapt to meet the needs of your students in regard to texture, size, and weight may be necessary. Also, staying current on training in CPR and knowing the protocol for responding to seizure episodes are important.

You must also understand the individual needs of your students. Looking at their confidential files, which address very specific concerns, is critical in providing a safe learning environment. Consulting with the special education nurse is another way to get important information on the health of individual students. The nurse will have information on the side effects of medications a student is taking, whether the student is allergic to anything, or whether the student has diabetes, a seizure disorder, or asthma. If you have any concerns regarding specific medical alerts as they relate to physical activity, ask for a physician's release for the student to participate in physical activity, and follow your school district's protocols.

Educating students with disabilities about safety and exercise precautions will help them be aware of their personal environment and tolerance for exercise. Until students are able to fully understand the health and safety concerns within a physical education setting, however, they must be closely monitored by professionals who are educated on the necessary precautions and able to supervise their participation in physical activity. For example, a student with latex allergies may not be aware of the types of equipment that may contain latex; thus, you need to be on alert. Specific safety concerns related to the activities in this book are presented throughout. However, trained and qualified personnel must attend to the individual safety considerations for specific students.

Teaching Strategies and Tips

To ensure optimal performance in your exercise intervention programs, you must apply effective teaching strategies. Teaching children and adolescents both functional skills and generalization is very important for increasing their independence and ability to participate in activities of daily living (Brown et al., 2001).

Additional strategies for engaging a student in learning include giving choices and using positive reinforcers (Wolery & Schuster, 1997). More specifically, research shows that using short verbal and physical cues, increasing the time a student is engaged in the skill, and individualizing (differentiating) instruction (DePauw, 1996) create a positive learning environment in physical education.

Increasing opportunities for children and adolescents to participate in physical activities during the school day is beneficial. Teaching physical education as part of the classroom curriculum is mandated for children and adolescents with a disability under IDEA (2004) and is supported by both international and national organizations that have set out recommended guidelines for physical activity. Ultimately, the goal is to increase overall functioning and quality of life for all people, including those with severe physical disabilities.

Educating and assessing students with severe disabilities in a school setting can be very difficult (Kauffman & Krouse, 1981; Kleinert & Kearns, 1999; Meyer, Eichinger, & Park-Lee, 1987). In many situations, students that make up this population are not able to grasp concepts or reach the same level of knowledge as their age-level peers (Brown et al., 2001). For this reason, alternative approaches to teaching are necessary to ensure that students with disabilities gain knowledge at their optimal levels. Educators also need to consider what is important to teach students who may not have the physical or mental ability to demonstrate complete knowledge and understanding of the core subject areas of math, English, science, and history. Much research in special education concludes that teaching low-functioning students functional skills and generalization may be the most appropriate form of public education (Brown et al., 2001).

Following are some strategies that research has shown to be effective when teaching students with disabilities:

- Keep the student engaged in a task for a significant period of time.
- Present the material in a clear and organized manner.
- Present the information verbally.
- Present the information using physical cues such as demonstrations.
- Keep both verbal and physical cues short and simple to help keep the student focused on the task, and to avoid overwhelming him or her.
- Provide the student with quality feedback.
- Use strategies to increase motivation, such as giving the student choices, organizing the delivery in a way that interests the student, and using positive reinforcers consistently.
- Allow for functional outcomes that are important in both present and future environments.
- Have the student perform in multiple settings to generalize the learning.

Each activity presented in this book can be altered to fit the needs of your students as well as the environment and equipment that you have access to. Use the following teacher-tested tips as you incorporate the activities into your own classes:

- **Vary the equipment.** Varying the equipment (e.g., changing the size, weight, or texture) can increase the success rate of your students without changing the goal or objective of the activity. Changing the amount of equipment can speed up (more equipment) or slow down (less equipment) the pace of the activity. Homemade equipment can be very cheap and simple to make. Yarn balls, nylon Frisbees, water bottles, aluminum

cans, and coffee creamer containers are all examples of homemade equipment that can be used in the activities in this book.

- **Adapt to your environment.** Most of the activities in this book can be conducted in multiple environments with minor changes. If you are carrying out an activity in a confined space, you can use fewer rules, take away some of the equipment, or change the equipment to something lighter that will move more slowly (e.g., a balloon). If you are in a large area, break up the students so that multiple activities are occurring at a time (i.e., a circuit) or so that all students are performing the desired activity at one time. This keeps students active and avoids having some standing or sitting around while waiting for a turn.
- **Use location indicators.** Using an object or a marker to indicate the location you would like students to sit at, stand on, or move to is very helpful. Poly spots, which are pliable circles, can be very useful in helping students follow directions and keeping them focused on the task. You may also use lines on the ground, masking tape to create a design, sidewalk chalk, or laminated construction paper cut into shapes to designate a desired location (e.g., if you would like students to sit in a circle, place the location indicators on the ground in the shape of a circle; then ask the students to move to the circle area, find a spot, and sit down).
- **Use verbal and visual cues.** A cue is a word, phrase, picture, or demonstration that helps describe the skill you are teaching. Using cues that are short and simple (one word or one motion) helps students focus on the task and avoids overwhelming them with instruction. For example, if you are teaching an overhand throw, focus on having students place the ball or beanbag by their ear before releasing it. Once they are able to do that consistently, move on to the next overhand throwing cue: stepping with the opposite foot forward.
- **Be flexible about time.** The duration of a lesson may vary based on the level of the students and their overall success rate. It is important to keep in mind that repetition is good for students with disabilities and that they may require multiple attempts to reach a level of understanding. Never give up on your first try!
- **Keep the activity at eye level.** Many activities are more successful for students with severe physical disabilities when they occur at eye level. Performing activities at a table or using targets on a wall may help students have a more visual understanding of the activity and may encourage them to get more involved. This strategy may also allow students to manipulate an object more successfully. For example, a student who uses a wheelchair, crutches, or a walker for the majority of the school day may have difficulty participating in activities such as bowling that require manipulating an object with two hands. Bringing the bowling activity to a table where the student can better manipulate the object may increase the student's success rate.
- **Use music.** Music and musical instruments have many uses when teaching physical activities. Movement music that verbalizes specific tasks may get students involved and encourage them to follow directions. Finding

music with a simple beat that students can follow by waving a ribbon stick in the air or tapping sticks can be very effective as well. You can also play music as a start and stop signal or use music with different beats as students move in space (slow, medium, fast).

- **Emphasize cause and effect.** Activities and equipment that demonstrate cause and effect can be very rewarding for students with severe physical disabilities. They enjoy, for example, watching bowling pins or water bottles fall over when contacted. Switches are also popular with this population (e.g., when they hit the switch, a light turns on). Incorporating cause and effect may maintain students' interest in the activity and can help them understand the goal they are working toward.
- **Establish and maintain routines.** Establishing a routine is very valuable for classroom management. Having a regular warm-up routine, a location students always go to, or an icon they follow every time they begin an activity can help keep them focused and on task. Closing with the same routine is useful as well. Conducting a regular cool-down routine, having students place the equipment in a routine location, or closing with questions that check for understanding are effective ways to transition them to the next task in their school day.
- **Focus on or change movement patterns.** Movement patterns are the skills required to perform an activity or take part in a sport. For example, in the game of basketball, players must be able to dribble, pass, catch, shoot, run, slide, and change direction quickly. Changing the movement patterns within an activity, or focusing on only one or two movements, can increase students' success when participating in modified games or activities. For example, in basketball, perhaps students do not have to dribble, only pass and catch to move the ball, or walk rather than run. Use easier or fewer skills to make a task easier and use more complete movements and increase the number of skills to perform to make a task more difficult.

Conclusion

Finding appropriate physical activities for students with severe physical disabilities can be challenging for any teacher. As a result, such students often end up in passive roles during physical education. The intention of this book is to provide a host of activities that can be connected to both appropriate grade-level standards and IEP goals and objectives. Increased engagement in physical activity will result in enhanced fitness, enjoyment, and quality of life for your students with disabilities.

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In loving memory of Jesse Kohen, whose energy and enthusiasm touched the lives of many children.

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ACTIVITY FINDER

Activity name	Primary concepts	Secondary concepts	Equipment	Page number
Air Hockey Knockdown	Eye—hand coordination	Aim, force, accuracy	Beanbags, water bottles, table	46
Ball Attack	Eye—hand coordination	Striking, cardiorespiratory endurance	Large therapy ball, pool noodles, tape	48
Balloon Rockets	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Creative movement, locomotor skills, moving in general space	Rocket balloon pump, rocket balloons	24
Balloon Strike	Eye—hand coordination	Striking, visual tracking	Large balloon, string	50
Beach Ball Golf	Eye—hand coordination	Striking; aim, force, accuracy	Pool noodles, beach balls, hula hoops	52
Beanbag Challenge	Balance and flexibility	Prepositional concepts, body part identification	Beanbags	2
Beanbag Shuffleboard	Eye—hand coordination	Aim, force, accuracy	Beanbags, table, tape	54
Body Bowling	Balance and flexibility	Striking	Bowling pins,* mat	4
Body Bubbles	Balance and flexibility	Body part identification, eye—hand coordination	Bubbles, bubble machine (optional)	6
Bubble Dodging	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Chasing, fleeing, dodging; moving in general space; visual tracking	Bubbles, bubble machine (optional)	26
Bubble Wrap Stomp	Moving in general space	Creative movement, rhythm and beat	Bubble wrap, music or drum	84
Circle Bowling	Eye—hand coordination	Rolling; aim, force, accuracy	Bowling pins,* large ball	56
Circle Soccer	Eye—foot coordination	Kicking; aim, force, accuracy	Large ball, chairs	58

*Indicates that alternative equipment options are described in the activity lesson plan.

(continued)

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Activity name	Primary concepts	Secondary concepts	Equipment	Page number
Climbing Wall	Balance and flexibility	Eye-hand coordination	Various colors of construction paper cut into a variety of shapes, sizes, and textures; tape	8
Cooperative Marble Pass	Eye-hand coordination	Teamwork	Cardboard mailing tubes, marbles*	60
Crazy Cones	Moving in general space	Chasing, fleeing, dodging; movement pathways	Cones,* pool noodles	86
Fill the Basket	Moving in general space	Grasp and release	Yarn balls,* large cones,* hula hoops	88
Follow the Leader Obstacle Course	Moving in general space	Movement pathways, prepositional concepts	Chalk or tape,* cones*	90
Foxtail Golf	Eye-hand coordination	Throwing; aim, force, accuracy	Foxtail,* buckets,* cones	62
Hit the Can	Eye-hand coordination	Throwing; rolling; aim, force, accuracy	Beanbags,* empty cans or bottles	64
Knock It Out	Eye-hand coordination	Rolling; aim, force, accuracy	Beach balls, tape, small balls, bowling ramp (optional)	66
Laser Maze	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Head control, visual tracking	Laser pointer, headband, colored tape, blank wall	28
Mini Baseball	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Eye-hand coordination, striking, moving in general space	Large cone,* large Wiffle ball, hula hoop, poly spot, paddle*	30
Modified Bocce Ball	Eye-hand coordination	Grasp and release; aim, force, accuracy	Marble,* medium-size ball,* cardboard mailing tube	68
Noodle Tag	Moving in general space	Chasing, fleeing, dodging; cardiorespiratory endurance	Pool noodles	92

Activity name	Primary concepts	Secondary concepts	Equipment	Page number
Not in My Backyard!	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Eye–hand coordination; throwing (aim, force, accuracy); striking	Yarn balls,* masking tape* or chalk	32
Parachute Fun	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Prepositional concepts, teamwork	Parachute, yarn balls*	34
Pathway Control	Balance and flexibility	Eye–foot coordination, accuracy	Sidewalk chalk*	14
Ping-Pong Hockey	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Visual tracking	Ping-Pong ball, straws (optional), cardboard,* table	36
Plate Aerobics	Balance and flexibility	Muscular strength, cardiorespiratory endurance	Paper plates	12
Poly Spot Obstacle Course	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Moving in general space	Poly spots, timer (optional)	38
Power Chair Joust	Eye–hand coordination	Striking, moving in general space	Pool noodles, cones, medium-size balls	70
Power Soccer	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Eye–foot coordination, moving in general space	Large therapy ball, cones or nets	40
Rhythm Sticks and Musical Instruments	Moving in general space	Creative movement, rhythm and beat, prepositional concepts	Rhythm sticks,* musical instruments, music, music player	94
Scarves and Ribbon Sticks	Moving in general space	Creative movement, rhythm and beat	Scarves, ribbon sticks,* music, music player	96
Shoot the Tube	Balance and flexibility	Eye–hand and eye–foot coordination	Large therapy ball	16
Sit and Pull	Balance and flexibility	Muscular strength, cardiorespiratory endurance	20-foot (6 m) rope, hook, scooter board (optional)	18

(continued)

(continued)

Activity name	Primary concepts	Secondary concepts	Equipment	Page number
Sit Down Volleyball	Balance and flexibility	Eye-hand coordination, striking	Beach ball,* approximately 12-foot (3.5 m) rope, two chairs, poly spots	20
Spray Down	Eye-hand coordination	Grasp and release; aim, force, accuracy	Spray bottle, Ping-Pong ball, water bottle*	76
Steal the Chicken	Moving in general space	Chasing, fleeing, dodging; cardio-respiratory endurance	Rubber chicken,* poly spots*	98
Stop and Go!	Moving in general space	Cardiorespiratory endurance, prepositional concepts	Stop and go signal*	100
String Ball	Eye-hand coordination	Crossing the midline	Wiffle ball, string	78
Swing Bowling	Eye-hand coordination	Aim, force, accuracy	20-foot (6 m) rope, playground-size ball, pillow-case, bowling pins,* hook	80
Tail Tag	Moving in general space	Chasing, fleeing, dodging; cardio-respiratory endurance	Ribbon*	102
Team Basketball	Moving in general space	Passing, teamwork, cardiorespiratory endurance	Basketball,* hula hoops,* cones*	104
Tent Pole Jump Rope	Balance and flexibility	Coordination, muscular strength	Collapsible tent pole	10
Therapy Band Resistance Activities	Muscular strength and cardiorespiratory endurance	Flexibility	Therapy bands or tubing	42
Three in a Row!	Eye-hand coordination	Throwing; aim, force, accuracy	Beanbags, hula hoops	72
Throw It; Then Roll It!	Eye-hand coordination	Throwing; rolling; aim, force, accuracy	Yarn balls, beanbags	74
Traffic	Moving in general space	Cardiorespiratory endurance, movement concepts	Visual signs for fast, medium, slow, and stop;* music*	106