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# **Gross Motor Activities**

for

Young  
Children

with



Special Needs

**GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITIES:  
FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH  
SPECIAL NEEDS**

by  
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**A supplement to:  
Auxter/Pyfer/Huettig  
Principles and Methods of  
Adapted Physical Education and Recreation  
7th Edition**

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## **PREFACE**

This handbook of more than 200 activities and suggested songs has been developed to provide a resource for the many early childhood and elementary teachers who are serving children with a variety of special needs in inclusive and more restrictive settings. Children of all ability levels will enjoy these activities, but most importantly, children with developmental delays will derive the greatest benefit from them. Each activity has been carefully selected to promote specific types of development in areas where many children are deficient.

### **Equilibrium**

The development of equilibrium is critical to maintaining one's balance while rolling, crawling, creeping, walking, running, jumping, hopping, and skipping. Anytime a child moves his/her center of gravity beyond the base of support equilibrium reactions cause automatic posture adjustments so the child does not fall over. The activities included in this section have been selected to ensure that children develop these critical reactions in a fun way.

### **Sensory Stimulation/Sensory Discrimination**

For children to learn to discriminate among different types of touch, body movements, sounds, and sights, it is necessary for them to experience a variety of these sensations. For activities included in this section are designed to stimulate the tactile, proprioceptive, auditory, and visual systems.

### **Body Image**

A well-developed body image helps children to understand their movement capabilities. The activities in this section help children identify their individual body parts, develop a whole body concept, and practice using their body in a variety of ways.

## **Basic Locomotor Skills**

Mastery of basic locomotor patterns is required before a child can participate successfully in leisure, recreation, and sport activities. An efficient mover has learned to vary his/her locomotor patterns according to the demands of the environment. The activities in this section provide children the opportunity to practice modifying the force and flow of their movements through space.

## **Cross-lateral Integration**

Cross-lateral integration is the ability to coordinate the two sides of the body during movement. Until this type of integration develops, children tend to use each side of the body independently and have problems with any activities requiring the use of their limbs at or across the midline (center) of the body. The activities in this section require the child to continually move beyond the midline.

## **Aerobic Fitness**

Cardiovascular endurance is a critical component of a healthy lifestyle. The activities included in this section focus on aerobic exercises that will enhance cardiovascular endurance. The activities are particularly useful for in-seat, in-circle activities.

Use music whenever possible to enhance the experience. if possible, allow the children to choose the music, their contemporary, cultural-based music.

## **Animal Actions**

Animal actions are fun ways to help children identify with a variety of animals, as well as develop their equilibrium, flexibility, strength/fitness and body image.

## Cooperative Games

Cooperative games are included to enable children with a variety of abilities to work together to achieve a common goal. Participation in these types of activities help children to understand that every person has something to contribute to the success of a group.

We hope this handbook proves to be a useful tool which you will often refer to and utilize. We encourage you to contact us or our publisher, Mosby-Year Book, with any comments or suggestions for improvement. We also welcome your input concerning our text *Principles and Methods of Adapted Physical Education and Recreation, seventh edition*, for which this resource is a companion.

Carol Huettig  
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## **EQUILIBRIUM**

### **Supine Equilibrium**

#### **#1**

#### **Turtle Stuck on Back**

Ask the child to lie on his/her back and pretend to struggle to roll over, alternately flexing/extending arms and legs. Throughout, the head should be tucked to chest. When the child "struggles" hard enough, the teacher can help roll the turtle onto his/her stomach. Read a story about a turtle or, better still, let them watch a turtle who is stuck on his back.

### **Supine Equilibrium**

#### **#2**

#### **Protect the Pearl**

Place a bean bag or "koosch" ball on the child's tummy. Ask the child to lie on his/her back until the "robber" tries to steal the "pearl." To keep from losing the pearl, the child should "tuck" according to ability. For example, one child may just tuck the chin to protect the pearl, while another is asked to tuck into a ball.

### **Supine Equilibrium**

#### **#3**

#### **Balloon Bobble**

While lying on his/her back, with head tucked to chest, ask the child to keep a balloon up in the air, using hands, feet, elbows, knees, etc. A punchball may be used if the child is unable to make contact with the balloon. It may be necessary for the teacher to bounce the balloon off the child's body. The intent is to get the child to tuck chin and, if possible, lift shoulders off the ground.

## **Equilibrium**

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### **Supine Equilibrium**

**#4**

#### **Group Balloon/Beachball Bobble**

Ask a group of children to lie on their backs, putting feet into the center of the circle. The children, as a group, keep the balloon/beachball up in the air using hands and elbows. Then, modify the activity and ask the child to use feet and knees to keep the balloon/beachball in the air.

### **Supine Equilibrium**

**#5**

#### **Supine Scooter Play**

Any supine scooter activity should be done with the chin tucked. Note: at first, if possible, use a scooter which supports most of the child's body; as the child develops more muscle tonus, the size of the scooter can be reduced.

#### **Puppy on a Leash**

Ask the child to lie on his/her back on a scooterboard, holding one end of a rope. Pull the child about the room.

### **Supine Equilibrium**

**#6**

#### **Pull Over the River**

Suspend a rope over the child 2' from the ground. Ask the child to pull him/herself the length of the rope, head first, while lying on his/her back on the scooterboard.



## **Prone Equilibrium**

#7

### **Superboy/Supergirl**

Ask the child to lie on his/her stomach on a scooterboard and, holding arms and head up in air, glide down an incline or glide after 'blast-off'—the teacher's push.

## **Prone Equilibrium**

#8

### **Peeking Turtle**

The child lies prone, chin tucked to neck, with head covered by a "shell" (blanket, small mat, big bean bag) and then peeks out from under the mat or blanket, by lifting head. Reverse action, then, by having the child pretend s/he saw something scary, and tuck head to return to position "in shell."

## **Prone Equilibrium**

#9

### **Alligator Pit**

Ask the children to lie on their stomachs within a defined area. Ask one child to be the "hungry" alligator. On cue, the "hungry" alligator tries to "bite" the others (using hands/arms extended and clapping together to simulate biting action); each "bitten" alligator then becomes a "hungry" alligator, too, until all have been "bitten." Note: This activity can be done on scooters, as well.

## **Equilibrium**

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### **Prone Equilibrium**

**#10**

#### **Sneaky Snake**

Ask the children to lie on the floor (or scooter) at one end of the playing area. Call the child's name and then repeat the poem—

Here comes a snake,  
Crawling up on me.  
A long, thin wiggly,  
----- snake I see!  
(Child's name)

### **Prone Equilibrium**

**#11**

#### **Creepy, Crawly Worms**

Sing "Creepy Crawly Worms" to the tune of "Ten Little Indians." Ask the child to crawl on stomach on floor, or on scooter.

Little worms are crawling, crawling,  
Little worms are crawling, crawling,  
Little worms are crawling, crawling,  
crawling all around.

Little worms are playing, playing,  
Little worms are playing, playing,  
Little worms are playing, playing,  
playing all around.

**Prone Equilibrium**

#12

**"Peter Pan" Crocodile Clock**

Read the story of "Peter Pan." Then, recite the following poem while the children crawl on the floor.

Crocodile, crocodile, tick, tick, tock,  
Crocodile, crocodile, swallowed a clock,  
Crocodile, crocodile, crawls around,  
Crocodile, crocodile, down on the ground.

**Prone Equilibrium**

#13

**Clapping Seal**

The child pulls his lower body along the floor, while supporting his/her body in a push-up position. Occasional stops to rock and "clap fins" and make a seal "honk" make this a great deal more fun. If the child is unable to support self in this position, the child's chest could be supported by a bolster or pillow.

**Prone Equilibrium**

#14

**Wheelbarrel Walk**

Supporting part of the child's body weight on a bolster or rolled mat, ask the child to walk on his/her hands while the teacher holds the child just above the knees.

**Sitting Equilibrium**

#15

**Sitting Tug of War**

Ask two children to sit on the floor, facing each other, and play "tug of war" with a ball or heavy-duty balloon. Modify the activity by asking the children to sit on a rolled mat or on pillows while playing "tug of war."

## **Equilibrium**

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### **Sitting Equilibrium**

**#16**

#### **Sitting Bounce**

Ask a child to sit on a mini-trampoline, mat-covered tire, or a large ball while holding teacher's hands. The teacher should move his/her hands so that the child is forced into "disequilibrium" and must regain upright, sitting position.

### **Sitting Equilibrium**

**#17**

#### **Sitting Scooter Activities**

Involve the child in any scooter activity which requires the child to sit on the scooter when moving.

### **Hands and Knees Equilibrium**

**#18**

#### **Robin Hood**

Ask a child to assume an all-fours position next to another child, each facing the opposite direction. Shifting weight, each child should attempt to push the other child off balance.

### **Hands and Knees Equilibrium**

**#19**

#### **Ball Straddle**

Ask the child to lie over the top of a big playground ball, keeping hands and knees in contact with the ground. Ask the child to lift hands and knees, individually at first and then two at a time, off the ground. The goal is to lie over the ball with no contact with the ground.

## **Hands and Knees Equilibrium**

**#20**

### **Angry Cat**

The child assumes an all-fours position on the floor. Then, hissing loudly, the child presses his/her back up to form an arch. Ask the child to hold the position for several seconds, while hissing. Then, ask the child to relax. This can be turned into a game by having one child be a "mean do" and alternately move close to and far away from the "cats."

## **Hands and Knees Equilibrium**

**#21**

### **Dinosaur Walk**

The child moves on all-fours, using opposite sides of the body alternately. The child moves the right hand and left knee forward together and then the left hand and left leg forward together (homolateral movement). Sing a poem to the tune of "Frere Jacques."

Brontosaurus, brontosaurus, Big and strong,  
Big and strong.

Hold your head up high, Hold your head up high,  
Move along, move along.

## **Hands and Knees Equilibrium**

**#22**

### **Smart Dog**

The child moves on all-fours, contralaterally. The child moves the right hand and left knee forward together; then the child moves the left hand and the right knee forward together (contralateral movement).

## Equilibrium

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### Hands and Knees Equilibrium

#23

#### Creepy Crawly Spider

Ask the children to creep about the room, while you sing (and they sing) the Creepy Spider poem to the tune "Eensy Weensy Spider."

The creepy, crawly spider is crawling cross the floor,

Creeping, creeping, crawling—crawling more and more.

Spider, spider, spider... where'd you go today?

Spider, spider, spider crawling all the way.

### Hands and Knees Equilibrium

#24

#### Puppy with a Sore Paw

The child starts on all fours and then moves using both hands and one foot or one hand and both feet.

Encourage the child to experiment with redistribution of weight necessary to make movement adjustments.

Encourage the child to move forward, backward, and sideways.

### Kneeling Equilibrium

#25

#### Mirror

Ask two children to face each other, while kneeling on a mat or carpet. Have one child move while the other mirrors the motion—the child who initiates the motion tries to "fake out" the partner and cause him/her to lose balance. There should be no physical contact between the children. At first, the teacher may have to be each child's partner in turn.

## **Kneeling Equilibrium**

**#26**

### **Mirror with Contact**

Ask two children to face each other and place hands together so that palms are touching. Using pressure on the palms, ask children to try to "push" over the other. Encourage the children to fake and move away from the upright position.

## **Kneeling Equilibrium**

**#27**

### **Pillow "Fight"**

Ask two children to kneel on mat and using pillows, try to push each other off balance. As the children get better at the above activities, repeat, but have the child kneel on one knee throughout.

## **Standing Equilibrium**

**#28**

### **Standing Balances**

Ask the child to stand on one foot with support/no support.

Ask the child to stand on one foot with hands on hips.

Ask the child to stand on one foot with hands above the head.

Ask the child to stand on one foot holding a ball over the head.

Ask the child to stand on a surface that "gives."

## **Equilibrium**

### **Standing Equilibrium**

**#29**

#### **Ostrich**

Ask the child to stand on one foot while you recite the following poem. Ask the child to alternate feet.

Silly bird, silly bird,  
One foot down.  
Silly bird, silly bird,  
Don't fall down!

### **General Equilibrium Activity**

**#30**

#### **Magic Carpet Ride**

Ask the child to assume one of the following positions—supine, prone, sitting, hands and knees, or knee stand—on a mat, blanket, or quilt. Grasp the edge of the mat and "pull" the child about as if on a magic carpet ride. Change the dynamics of the activity by changing the site of the grasp. This activity can be incorporated beautifully into "classroom" activities that involve "travel."

### **General Equilibrium Activity**

**#31**

#### **Crazy Sidewalk**

Place objects under a series of mats, so that the surface of the mat is lumpy, uneven and variable (bean bag chairs are great). Ask the child to perform locomotor activities on this surface—roll, crawl, creep, knee walk, walk, run, and each of the above "backwards."



### **SENSORY STIMULATION AND DISCRIMINATION**

#### **Tactile Activities**

##### **#32**

##### **Partner Massage**

Teach children to give each other a massage as part of your stress reduction program. Introduce light touch and then deep pressure along the long bones of the body. When applying deep pressure, the child should use the fleshy part of the thumbs to stroke the length of the major muscle groups.

#### **Tactile Activities**

##### **#33**

##### **Texture Rub**

Rub the child with materials that have different textures: silk feathers, sponges, brushes, animal fur (fake), flannel, cotton, wool, etc. At first provide significant contrast for the child—introduce something very rough and then something very smooth. As the child becomes able to tolerate that stimulation, introduce textures which are not so obviously contrasting.

#### **Tactile Activities**

##### **#34**

##### **Sandwich or Tostado**

Play "sandwich" or "tostado." Ask a child to lie on a mat or comforter and to "be" the bread. Then ask another child to be a favorite "filling" and to lie on the bread. For example, the child can pretend to be "ham," another can pretend to be "cheese." Then use bean bags, koosch balls, or pillows to be the extras—pickles, jalapeno peppers, etc.