

Ball handling

Skill Focus: Ball familiarisation Age: 6+

Practise phase:

- Roll ball up body using both or 1 hand.
- Hold ball in 1 hand (palm up) with outstretched arm, move hand around body keeping ball balanced on hand.
- Bounce ball continuously using both/1/alternate hands, varying height.
- Pass ball from hand to hand, increasing width of arms gradually.
- Pick up a rolling ball. Roll ball, run after in and pick it up.

Main activity:

- In pairs – one moves ball around on hand, other tries to knock it off.
- In pairs – rolling ball to each other – try to receive ball first with 2 hands then with one. Roll back.

What to look out for and encourage:

- Shape of hand should be relaxed and slightly curved, ball should relax into cup of palm.
- As ball arrives arm should relax and 'give' into the direction of the ball.
- Knees should bend when retrieving rolled ball.
- Both hands should be practised with to develop competent ball handling.

Progress to Basic catching skills when confident:

Skill Focus: Basic catching – 2 handed Age: 6+

Practises phase:

- Throw ball up in the air, varying direction – catch with 2 hands, pulling ball into body.
- Throw ball against wall and jump to catch it, varying speed, and angle of throw.
- Throw ball over shoulder, turn to catch.

Main activity:

- Consecutive throwing in pairs – aim for 10 throws without stopping, then increase goal.
- In pairs – A works, B static. A throws ball high to B who jumps to catch, lands safely and returns. Swop positions.
- In pairs – throw ball to each other, both varying height and direction of ball.
- In pairs, start 2-3m after 10 consecutive passes increase distance and repeat.
- In pairs – aim to catch ball as silently as possible.

What to look out for:

- Cupped relaxed hands, fingers pointing upwards to signal for ball.
- Feet position – 1 in front of other, balanced position.
- Hands at side of ball thumbs behind (near body) about ½ way down ball.
- Receiving ball as early as possible – elevation to reach high ball.

- Bringing ball into body – the ‘snatch’.

Progress to Improved catching skills and throwing skills when confident.

Skill focus: Improved catching – 2 handed Age: approx. 8+

Practises:

- 2’s – throwing to each other, increasing the speed and strength of the throw.
- 2’s throwing and catching – increase width/height of throw.
- 2’s – ‘blind’ B stands with back to A (2m away). A calls ‘right’ and passes all to right side of B, who pivots to catch. (A must be sympathetic with throw) – alter calls to include left, high, and low.

Main activity:

- 2’s – ‘meet in the middle’ challenge – start at opposite sides of netball court – how many passes do you have to make to end up face to face (i.e., Go to ball while it is in air and jump forward to catch)
- Pressure throwing in 3’s – A, B & C stand in triangle with 2 netballs – A passes to B who returns to A then pivots to receive ball from C, returns to C, pivots again & so on... B & C see how fast they can send ball without A dropping it. Vary passes and progress by A & C gradually moving forward so they are in line with A.

What to look out for and encourage:

- All normal catching points.
- Receiver watches for ‘cues’ which indicate when ball will be released and where it will go (watch sender’s hands, eyes, feet, and flight of ball once it is released).
- Receiver should meet ball rather than waiting for ball to arrive at their hands.
- Quick reactions to ball when receiving ‘blind’.
- Ability to catch ball in an increasing wide variety of situations.

Skill focus: One handed catching (ambidexterity) Age: 10+

Practises:

- 2’s – stand opposite partner – use underarm passes to throw ball to partner who must catch with 1 hand only. Alternate hands. Add high and low passes.
- 2’s - stretch and signal to right and receive a pass with right hand, pulling it into body. Same to left. Continue throwing and catching in 2’s – 1 hand only. Add challenging passes, alternating hands, moving to catch etc.

Main activity:

- Challenge children – how many passes and catches can they make using 1 hand only. Vary challenges – no. of passes in 1 min., who can make the most before dropping etc.
- Game of 3 v 1 (3 on outside – attackers, 1 in middle – defender.)
Rules: attackers can use 1 hand only to catch and throw. Defender must try to intercept ball using 1 or 2 hands. If an attacker drops ball, they become the defender. If defender catches ball the attacker who threw the ball becomes the defender. If players are not swopping regularly add rule of 10 passes – person who makes 10th pass becomes the defender if the players haven’t changed.

What to look out for and encourage:

- If jumping for ball – when catching with left hand should land on left foot and vice versa with right hand.
- Players should try to receive ball as early as possible, using hand to stretch out. Bring body into body to secure.

- Player should understand that the ability to catch one handed means their comfortable catching zone is greatly extended.

Skill focus: Catching / Defending Age: 10+

Practises:

- 3's – A and B stand opposite each other (2-3m) and pass between themselves continuously; C watches and tries to intercept ball as it passes.
- 3's – A starts with ball. C marks B only 'relaxes' marking slightly by moving to side. When ball is thrown C tries to intercept. Progression – allow B to move to catch ball.
- 4's – A, B, C in triangle. A passes alternately to B (who returns to A) then C. Player D stands in middle and tries to intercept ball as it passes out from A. Progress so A can decide who to throw to rather than alternating, making it harder for D. B and C should start about 2 m from each other and increase/decrease distance appropriately.

Main activity:

- 3 V 1 game. Like 'piggy in middle' only with 3 players on outside.
Rules – If person in middle touches ball they swap with person who threw it. If no-one has swapped after 10 consecutive passes, then person who made 10th pass goes into middle.

What to look out for:

- During first practise (3's) encourage A and B to pass continuously without pause. C mark only one player and stick with this player rather than swapping. C should move as soon as unmarked player throws ball.
- Intercepting player must watch for cues (feet direction of player, eyes, early hand movements etc.)
- Encourage early movement to intercept.
- Encourage 'relaxing' close marking.

Skill focus: Catch release Age: 11+

NB. This is a difficult skill and should only be attempted when you feel players are ready. They must have good catching skills and balance is essential.

Practises:

- 2's A sends ball to B who catch-releases to back to A. Focus on redirection rather than stopping ball.
- Progress to 3's so B receives from A but redirects to C.

Main activity:

- In triangle A sends to B who catch-releases to C who catch-releases back to A and so on. Alter so direction changes each time a full cycle is complete. Alter direction randomly.

What to look out for:

- Fingers spread, catch ball with hands in a position ready for release without altering position.
- Wrists and elbows 'give' on receiving ball.
- If ball is caught with one hand due to stretched receiving position ball should be re-directed with same hand.