

Tuneful Chatter Resource: Movement

Age Group: 3 - 5 years

Early years activities for movement and developing gross motor skills.

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Warm ups

Action Rhyme

Say this simple follow-along nursery rhyme with actions to match.

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, jump up high.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the sky.

Teddy bear, teddy bear, wiggle your nose,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch your toes,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn off the light,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, say goodnight...

All together say - 1, 2, 3 then jump back up!

Adaptation

Try this warm up in different ways to keep it exciting and creative. You could try it small with a quiet voice and really tiny movements. You could try it big with a loud voice and expansive movements. Or, to adapt it to different themes, you might try it like a fairy, an alien, or a monster! Once the children become familiar with this warmup, ask how they would like to do it, as they might have their own ideas.

Access

If any of your children have physical barriers or coordination issues, feel free to make a new version of any movement. For example, 'touch the ground' could mean touch your thighs.

"I Can Be Anything"

This warm up uses fundamental movements but explores them in creative ways to keep little ones engaged. It also acts as a cardio heart-racer to prepare you physically for a movement session.

Start by putting on upbeat music and tell the children that they can be anything.

Call out - "Let's be..."

Windmills - circle arms backwards like a windmill. Repeat forwards. You could even try one arm backwards and one forwards for an extra challenge!

After a few repetitions and shoulders feel mobilised, call out "Let's be..." and move onto the next move.

Jelly - pretend to eat some jelly, it makes different body parts shake. Start with arms, then legs, then your whole body!

"Let's be..." (repeat until you have warmed up a variety of body parts.)

A hula hoop - pretend to pick up a hula hoop and move it around your waist with big hip circles. Try both directions.

Some more examples:

A Jack in the box – start in a small crouch with gentle bounces, then burst up like a Jack in the box and do a big jump, fading into small jumps. Repeat a few times.

A roundabout – hold your steering wheel and pretend to drive a car in a small circle. Don't forget to go round your roundabout both ways!

A flamingo – arms out to the side, try and balance on one leg like a flamingo.

You might see a child do something that you haven't included – it's great to incorporate their ideas to encourage and build on their creativity.

Themes

This warm up can be easily adapted to different themes. Why not try and make up your own movements to match your chosen theme? For example, if your theme was Under The Sea, you could call arm circles 'Swimming' instead and try out balancing like a star fish.

You can also make this warm up work to any theme by choosing music that fits with your adventure.

Access

You may need to support a child to offer an alternative movement for any physical barriers or coordination difficulty. Remember that any movement can easily be changed to something else.

Examples of swaps:

Arm circles = wrist circles

Body shake = wiggle fingers

Hip circles = Arm or head circles

Jumps = bounces sitting or standing

Listening Wake Up

Use this fun and playful activity to develop key motor skills like jumping, along with listening and spatial awareness. Let's get little ones active and ready to move!

You will need two contrasting pieces of recorded music. One relaxing, and one lively. You will also need a sound to resemble an alarm clock.

Children start in a space curled up on the floor in a sleeping position. Start by playing the relaxing music. Children stay on the floor until they hear the alarm sound. The alarm signals to wake up and jump up. Next, play the lively track and jump around the room, using all the space. Next, play the relaxing track again and model yawning and lying back down in the sleeping position. Repeat this sequence until the children are warmed up.

Themes

- The choice of music will make this activity relate to a theme. Choose music that fits your adventure!
- Keep it playful by changing the alarm sound, for example if the theme is farm, the alarm might be a cockerel sound effect. If the theme is Fantasy Land, the alarm might be a twinkle sound effect

of the fairy's wand waking you up! If the theme is jungle, the alarm might be an elephant's trunk sound.

- Alternatively, you might find it easier to make an alarm sound yourself. Or, you could use an instrument such as a tambourine.

Adaptations

Make this activity more or less challenging by using different travelling steps to the fast music. For example, you might say that next time you hear the alarm we will skip around the room.

Examples of travelling steps

- Hopping on one leg
- Jumping (remember to bend your knees when you land)
- Skipping
- Walking backwards (remember to move slowly and look over your shoulder!)
- Side gallops



Main activities

Movement Expedition - What can you see?

This activity takes you on an adventure through movement and imagination and is easily adaptable to any theme for you to make your own.

Start by introducing your imaginary theme. Perhaps you are in a jungle, at the beach, or maybe you have just stepped off your rocket into space. Backing music really supports this activity and our imagination. Try searching online for space soundscape or jungle soundscape to really set the scene.

Tell the children that you are all going to explore where you are and begin marching around the room.

When you say FREEZE, everyone stands still while you tell the group what you can see. The whole group then travels around the room moving as that thing. It might be an animal, a plant, or an object.

For example, if we were in the jungle, you might see a tiger! "Let's all crawl around the room like tigers." If you see a bird, you might fly like a bird. If you see a frog, you might crouch and jump like a frog.

After a short time exploring that thing, continue to march around the room and repeat. You will find that once the children understand the activity, which usually happens quickly, they will begin suggesting things that they see which we can all move like. I encourage you to incorporate their ideas to keep this activity fun and engaging.

Themes

Beach

- I can see a **starfish...** let's stretch out like a big star and try to balance on one leg.
- I can see a **shark...** let's travel around clapping hands together like a shark.
- I can see **seaweed...**, let's sway side to side like swishing seaweed.
- I can see a **crab...** let's travel sideways and pinch hands.
- I can see **waves...** let's move hands up and down like waves.

Space

- I can see an **astronaut...** let's try some big slow strides as if walking on the moon.
- I can see a **shooting star...** let's leap around the room.
- I can see the **Milky Way...** let's twirl around as if inside the Milky Way.
- I can see **planets...** let's hop across the planets from one leg to the other.

Access

Some children may not tell you what they see, but you can still incorporate their ideas to build their confidence and boost self-esteem. For example, a child might be sitting on the floor. You could pretend that an asteroid is coming towards you, and you all need to sit down and hide for shelter. Over time, this will encourage more children to share their ideas, overall boosting communication development.

If working with any physical barriers, feel free to take out the marching and travelling. This whole activity can be done seated by looking through binoculars and making movement for what you see.

Adaptations

Why not practice some key movements from this activity and improve little ones' agility by creating an obstacle course!

Use cushions and a blanket to practice big slow astronaut strides over the cushions and rolling underneath the space tunnel blanket!

Moving Scarves

Using simple juggling scarves or any other prop you might have (feathers work well too!) Let's explore different music and how it makes us move. This activity develops musicality, body awareness and manipulative motor skills.

Children will start in a space with one prop each. When they hear the music, encourage them to make their scarf dance, responding to the sound. Does it make your scarf move slow and fluid? Or fast and bouncy? Your scarf might move in circles, sharp lines, high up and low down, or it might travel around the space. Use music with different speeds and feeling to have fun exploring different ways of moving.

Look out for children doing any interesting movements or gestures and encourage others to copy.

Themes

This activity works really well to explore different themes such as feelings, animals, dinosaurs, or even to dance your favourite characters such as Goldilocks and The Three Bears.

Feelings

To explore feelings, choose two contrasting pieces of recorded music. One that is fast and happy, and one slow and sad. It's helpful to listen to the music first and discuss with the children whether it sounds happy or sad, along with offering them suggestions. It can be tricky to identify the feeling of music, so using two tracks that really contrast is a great starting point.

Animals

To explore animals, it can be helpful for children's understanding to print out photos of some different animals. Start by showing the photo, then use music that matches the animal to support movement quality. For example, if you show a picture of a lion, you might use dramatic drums. If you show a picture of a bird, you might use exciting piano music that resembles flying.

'Carnival of the Animals' by Saint-Saëns offers lots of great music tracks to get you started.

Story

You could also use this activity to explore characters from a storybook. Start by either reading the story or showing pictures of the characters. Next, choose music that matches each character. For example, in *The Three Little Pigs*, you could have one track for the wolf and one for the pigs.

Search for music soundtracks from stories to support this. The soundtrack to 'Peter and the Wolf' offers some great choices.

Access

This activity invites children to move freely, so remember there is no right or wrong to how they choose to move.



Cool Downs

Action Rhyme

This rhyme soothes children as they stretch out their bodies and calm down their heart rate. Perfect for the end of a busy movement session.

To the tune of Frère Jacques

Stretch up high, stretch up high,
Stretch out wide, stretch out wide.
Curl up very small, curl up very small,
Wave goodbye, wave goodbye.

Sing this song with big stretchy action movements to improve children's mobility. You can repeat 2-3 times, getting slower and slower.

Access

You can do this warm up standing up, sitting down, or lying on your back. If there are any physical barriers, this action rhyme could be done in an isolated body part such as a hand.

Cosy cool down

It's time to wind down and settle after a busy movement session. Dim the lights and ask the children to find a place to lie down. If you have any fabric or juggling scarves to hand, use them to tuck in the children to signal winding down.

Calm background music can really help busy children find quiet time and this is a great opportunity to explore different genres of music. You might choose the sound of rolling waves or perhaps try out some calm classical music.

Session highlights - once the room is settled, in a calm voice you can talk through the highlights of your session together. This is a nice way to close what you have been doing, along with recounting lots of new information for children.

For example, if your session theme was Outer Space, you might say well done to everyone for being so brave in today's adventure. You walked like astronauts, crawled through the Space Tunnel and moved to different space music.

Access

It can be challenging for some children to be quiet or still. The main purpose of this activity is to offer space for calm, but remember that calm looks different in every child.