Toddler Games

Lost sneaker Race

Materials
• sneakers

Everyone takes off his or her sneakers (including the moms and dads) and places them in a big pile at the far end of a long room or yard. The gang lines up (shoeless) at the other end, runs to the pile of shoes, digs for their own pair, puts them on, fastens laces (for safety), and runs back to the start. Let the little ones wear velcro shoes or easy slip-ons... or how about giving them a head start? All ages can participate in this race.

Recycled "Micro-Golf"

You've heard of miniature golf? Well this is miniature golf on an even smaller scale, so let's call it "micro-golf," Micro describes things that are very small - in some cases microscopic! This is a great way to recycle clean trash from your recycling bin.

Materials
• old sneaker or shoe
• long cardboard tube or dryer venting tube
• cloth or electrical tape
• large square of aluminum foil
• objects to create golf "green," such as coffee cans, cardboard tubes and boxes, or chairs

Begin by making a golf putter from an old sneaker or shoe. Place the tube in the sneaker and tape it securely in place with strong cloth tape. Use as much tape as you need. More is better than less! Make a golf ball from crumpled-up foil. Next, work on the golf "green" (this is equivalent to a playing field in other sports). You can use any number of items to create this. Try coffee cans (with no top or bottom lid), paper towel or toilet paper tubes, shoe or cereal boxes, video or CD covers, juice boxes, or kitchen or lawn chairs (for big obstacles). Add your own ideas to this list! Help the kids cut holes out of the objects and create blind spots or ricochet shots. Add water hazards and sand traps if you are doing this outdoors. How about going uphill on a train-set ramp or under a building-block garage? Your kids will enjoy zigzagging around, through, and under these objects. Place some pinwheels, stuffed animals, and flags in the grass for added decorations. What will really keep them busy is changing around and adding to the "green." I think they'll wow you with their ideas!

Paper Stepping-Stones

Materials
• 10 to 12 large brown grocery bags
• 12-inch stack of newspapers or magazines
• stapler
• marker

Dig into the recycling bin for this project. Add some creativity and the kids will enjoy moving from one "stone" to the next contorting, leaping, and squirming along the pathway. You can create stepping-stones out of large brown paper bags filled with small (one-inch) stacks of newspaper or magazines. Staple the bags closed. On the flat side of each bag, draw either two feet, one foot, two hands, one hand, or all four (hands and feet). Next lay out the bags in random order - two to three feet apart. Each person tries to go from one bag to the other, placing only the illustrated "body part" on the bag (i.e., you cannot put both feet on a bag that shows two hands!). Sometimes this is very tricky. If you get stuck or lose your balance, you're out, and the next person in line takes his turn. Rearrange the bags as often as you like.

Remember you might have to stretch or jump to reach the next bag!
Hula Hoopla

 Materials
• 1 hula hoop per participant
  (try to match the size to the person)
• 50’s music
• cassette or CD player

 Making hip circles with a hula hoop works a very important group of muscles in your stomach called the obliques. The oblique muscles lie in an X shape on the sides of your abdomen. You need these muscles to twist and turn. . . and what is a better way of strengthening them than hula hooping! Here we go. Feet apart, hold the hoop at hip height, bring it way back to one side as a wind up, and let it go and rotate your hips in a circle. See how many circles you can do. Do it on the other side so that you don't walk around lopsided! Who in the family can hula hoop the longest? The fastest? The fanciest? Can this be done with two hoops? Put on some '50s music and videotape the sock-hop event!

“Tae Balloon" Kickboxing

 Materials
• large balloon
• long string (as needed)

 Kids love to kick and punch - here's a way for them channel their energy safely! Hang a large balloon on a string either from the ceiling or from a tree limb! Make sure you are not near breakable objects or innocent bystanders. The balloon should hang down to eye level. Begin by standing in the “ready position” – one foot slightly in front of the other, feet shoulder-width apart, fists guarding the face, and elbow out wide. Here are some exercises you can do for the upper and lower body. Make sure you use both your left and right sides to increase strength and agility. "Tae balloon" kickboxing is sports training, not self-defense!

 Straight Punch
 From the ready position punch straight forward and immediately return to the starting position. This punch is simple, quick, and efficient.

 Snap Kick
 You may want to lower the balloon to do this one. Hold the arms up in the ready position while you quickly lift the knee and extend the leg out (this is the "snap") and then return it to the bent-knee position. Lower your leg to keep your balance. Make this a quick, smooth, and all in-one movement.

 Side Kick
 Face sideways to the (lowered) balloon. Keep your arms in the ready position through this whole kick. Tilt to the far side (away from the balloon). Bring your knee up toward your chest then extend that same leg out to kick the balloon. After you make contact with the balloon, bring the leg back in toward the chest before the leg returns to the floor. This is done quickly in one movement.
Wiggle Slide

Materials
• large plastic sheet, 12 feet or longer (can use cut plastic garbage bag)
• hose with a sprinkler
• Grass to put plastic sheet on

Put the plastic sheet outside on the grass and turn on the hose or sprinkler. Get your bathing suit on and join baby for a wet wiggling experience. Once babies can crawl they will love this wet, slippery, sliding experience. Older toddlers will run and slide on the plastic, so make sure that baby is out of the way. Hold on to baby and pull him toward you on his stomach, lie on your back and squirm, make like an angel in the snow and move your arms up and down. On hot day nothing beats sprinkler fun!

Wit & Wisdom: When my two year old started slamming doors, I would jump out of my chair in fright. Another mother suggested I put towels over the top of the doors. Now I don't worry about little fingers, or noise.
   -Lizza R., Chesterland, OH

Water Bottle Bowling

Materials
• 6 one-quart plastic water bottles (these should be filled partway) with covers
• tennis or small soft ball
• removable tape or chalk

Quick and easy - This is a fun, last-minute activity at a party or with any gathering of friends. Check and make sure the covers of the water bottles are on very tight so there will be no spills. Place the bottles in the following pattern: one at the front, two staggered behind the first bottle, and then three staggered behind the second row. From the top you will see a triangle. Make a line with "easy to remove" tape or use chalk or a stick when outside. There should be 10 to 15 feet between the line and the bottles. Use a tennis or other soft ball as the "bowling ball." Try to strike down all the pins by rolling the ball along the ground. Each player takes three turns. The name of the game is to knock all the pins down (not destroy the furniture) in as few tries as possible. This game can be played inside or out.

Slipper Kick

Materials
• pair of soft slippers
• crash bin or basket

Your kids probably do this when you're not looking. Surprise them and try it too! Find a pair of soft slippers - they don't have to be an exact fit - and place them on the bed. Set up an empty trash bin or basket several feet away from the bed. Remove from harm's way any valuable or special items in the "line of fire." Sit on the edge of the bed with your feet dangling down. Put both slippers on partway so they hang off your toes. Cock one leg back by bending at the knee and kick forward so the slipper flies off your foot - and hopefully into the trash bin. Now kick off the other slipper. Let each player cry. Did anyone land a slipper in the basket? Who was the closest - adult or child? Probably whoever has logged the most practice time!

Funding for this project was provided by the UW School of Medicine and Public Health from the Wisconsin Partnership Program

fit families