

Obstacle Course Ideas

Setting up an obstacle course is a wonderful child physical activity. Children get lots of exercise while having fun. An obstacle course can be set up with items you may already have. Usually an obstacle course is set up outdoors, but can be a wonderful indoor activity when the weather is bad.

To set up an obstacle course, think of terms such as jump, hop, crawl under, climb over, walk along, go right or go left. A child physical activity includes practicing gross motor skills, balance and coordination. Plan out the course by listing the skills you want the children to practice. Eight to ten stations is a good number for school age children.

- Use a ladder flat on the ground to run through
- Crawl under a table or broom hung between 2 chairs
- Hop through hula hoops set on the ground
- Step over an obstacle such as yardstick between 2 chairs at knee height
- Walk across balance beam (4"x4" board)
- Weave in and out of poles made with PVC pipe inserted in sand buckets
- Squeeze through 2 objects placed close so child walks sideways
- Throw ball into wastebasket
- Carry an object on a spoon (water balloon outdoors, small ball indoors)
- Jump or skip 5 times with jump rope
- Bounce or dribble ball to next station (at least 5 times)
- Crawl under or over a row of chairs.
- Throw a beanbag into a laundry basket.
- Run while balancing a beanbag on your head.
- Do a ring toss.
- Play one hole of Newspaper Golf.
- Ride a tricycle along a predetermined route.
- Somersault from one point to another.
- Do a handstand.
- Skip in place while reciting a jump rope rhyme.
- Do ten jumping jacks.

You can adjust this child physical activity to fit the ages, abilities and number of children in your group. Make the obstacle course simple at first and gradually increase the difficulty of each station.

If you want, time the kids to see how fast they can complete the course. Record their individual times and see if they can practice to improve their own times. Make certificates of accomplishment and completion of this child physical activity; the obstacle course.

BALLOON MAN

Draw as many stick men as you can using a felt marker on your balloon. The difficulty: you must hold the blown up balloon in one hand (don't put a knot in it) and draw the men with the other hand. Time allowed: 60 to 150 seconds.

BALLOON SQUAT

This can be done with regular balloons filled with air or with water balloons. Each person grabs a balloon and runs to a chair. They have to sit on the balloon until it pops.

BOX HOP

Lay out a row of cardboard boxes (or laundry baskets). Players must jump from one to the next.

COTTON BALL BLOWING

A cotton ball is blown over a course and to a goal (goal, plate, cup) with the help of a balloon. When all the air in the balloon has been used, then it must be “reloaded” and play continues.

FRISBEE TOSS

Place a clean trash can 10 feet from a throw line. Players try to toss a Frisbee into the can.

HULA HOOP ROLL

Roll a hula hoop using your hand or a stick through a predetermined course. It can be a straight line, curves, or going around obstacles.

INDOOR OBSTACLE COURSE

Banish rainy day boredom by turning the living room or playroom into a challenging obstacle course.

WHAT YOU NEED:

Obstacles—furniture, pillows, etc.

String

Paper and tape

Household objects

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Plot your course. Obstacles that might be included in the course: crawling under or over chairs; crawling under a table without disturbing any balloons dangling on strings from the bottom; sliding under or crawling over a string stretched between two table or chair legs; crawling or slithering through a tunnel made from couch pillows; or stepping on a series of pieces of paper taped to the floor.

2. To make the course even more challenging, add further elements. Have kids go through the course while holding an empty toilet paper tube in each hand. Try wearing a large hat while maneuvering through the obstacles; if the hat comes off, it's back to square one.

VARIATIONS:

Other obstacle possibilities include silly rules like jumping up and down three times after completing certain “stations” or singing a song at a certain point in the course. The variations are almost endless.

LAWN CHAIR SLALOM

Line up several lawn chairs 2 to 3 feet apart. Players must skip around each chair while carrying a half-filled paper cup of water. If they spill, they must start over.

LOG HOPPING

Cut 10 – 12 pieces of string, 4-5 feet long each. You decide how many.

Lay them out 1- 2 feet apart.

Sidewalk version: just draw lines with chalk 1-2 feet apart.

Challenge: try jumping forward AND backward, jumping with both feet at one time.

POWER STATION IDEAS

- Push ups
- Toe tickles
- Beetle bugs
- Jumping jacks
- Jump rope

- Pull ups
- Knee ups
- Mountain climbers
- Burpees

RAKE A BALL

Players use a rake to drag a basketball through the lawn chair slalom course (described above) and back.

ROCK LEAPING

Cut 10 – 12 pieces of string, 2 feet long each.

Form a circle out of each string and place them 3-4 feet apart.

Sidewalk version: just draw circles with chalk 3-4 feet apart.

Challenge: try jumping forward AND backward.

SILLY JUMPS

Mark a starting point on the lawn and then take turns jumping in funny poses to see who can get the farthest. Try jumping doing the splits mid-air, spinning around on lift-off or flapping your arms to stay airborne.

SCOOTER RACE

Activities in the gym could include the use of scooters and either a stick or a plunger as a paddle and have the students participate in canoe races.

SUMMER SHOWER

Players must balance a golf ball on a tee (or on a spoon, for little kids) as they walk through a lawn sprinkler.

THROW THE DICE

You'll need two small (5x5 inch) square boxes from a moving or packaging store for this activity. These are your dice. On one die, write a different activity on each side, such as 'do a cartwheel' or 'walk 10 steps backwards'. On the other die, write mental challenges, geared to the kids' ages, such as 'say the alphabet' or 'spell your name backwards'. Each person rolls the dice and does the two challenges at the same time, like walking backwards while spelling your name backwards.

TIGHTROPE WALKER

Balance a magazine (or thin book) on their heads as they walk the "tightrope" (piece of string or yard stick).

WACKY GOLF

Equip them with unusual "clubs" like a baseball bat or hockey stick and different sized balls. Or, try a baseball or small beach ball. Set up buckets and tin cans around the yard and enjoy the fun of each person trying to get a hole in one.

WALK THE PLANK

Set up a board on two cinder blocks and tie some balloons to it. Players must walk across, stepping over the balloons and stopping in the middle to spell their names aloud backward.

WHIRLING DERVISH

Players must throw a water balloon high in the air, spin around and then catch it.

ZIG ZAG RUN

Place cups or pieces of string in two rows. Put the cups on one side spaced in between the cups on the other side. The rows should be about 4 – 5 feet apart and the cups on each side should be about 3 feet apart.

Sidewalk version: just draw small circles with chalk.

Challenge: run all the way around each cup, going back and forth from side to side.



Ladder Run: The first one's easy. Kids scamper through the rungs of a wooden ladder (sanded to prevent splinters then painted a cheery red) laid flat on the ground.



Hoop Alley: Lay out eight plastic hoops in a straight line. Kids step into each hoop, lift it overhead and drop it behind as they move forward. (Reset the row before the next person's turn.)

Balloon Table: Kids shinny under a table hidden inside a ground-hugging cloud of balloons. Dangling from yarn taped to all sides of the table, the balloons wobble and bump as kids pass through.



Crabwalk: Kids sit on the grass, bend their knees, lean back, and lock their elbows, then "walk" as straight and fast as they can. This activity is great silly fun for the last 8 to 10 feet, when kids are rushing to the finish line.



Rope Swing: Everybody likes to hang around this guaranteed crowd-pleaser. If kids get a good running jump and keep knees high, they are likely to clear the inflatable wading pool. Several big knots tied in the rope's end make it easy to grab.



Tablecloth How-To

A brightly colored disposable tablecloth becomes especially festive with the addition of ordinary white stickers or round labels, available from office supply stores. You can measure out a polka-dot pattern beforehand, placing a faint pencil X at the spot where each sticker will go, or apply them randomly.

Balance Beam: Kids set a good pace and, using all the swagger they can muster, get across the two-by-four balance beam in no time.



Using a hand pump (about \$5 at party supply stores), fill enough balloons to completely mask a table — it took about 100 balloons to cover our 3-by-6-foot table. Tie the yarn or string to each balloon and secure to the table — on top, underside, and all four legs — with heavy tape. Wrap table legs with foam padding.

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Newspaper Walk: Kids are handed three sheets of newspaper and must place one beneath every step they take. This is the perfect event to place at a tricky turn in the course.

Red Wagon Slalom: Stand colorful foam pool noodles in gallon buckets weighted with sand (or soil or stones) and set up in a zigzag pattern. Fill a wagon with small water balloons. Kids must pull the wagon around the outside of each bucket without spilling any balloons.



Balance Beam How-To

You can simply lay an 8-foot-long two-by-four on the grass. Or you can raise it on 6-by-6-by-12-inch blocks: Drill a hole through each block using a paddle or forstner bit and attach to the underside of the beam with long lag screws. Sand corners, and cushion with pillows.