

Developing Ball Skills – Throwing

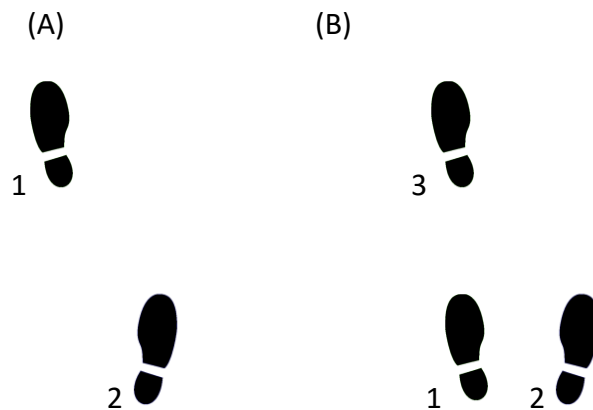
What is age appropriate?

- 3 years: Throws tennis ball overhand 7 feet.
- 4 years: Throws tennis ball overhand to a 2x2 foot target from 5 feet.
Throws tennis ball underhand to a 2x2 foot target from 5 feet.
- 5 years: Throws tennis ball overhand to a 2x2 target from 12 feet.

Strategies

- *Underhand* – although underhand is a simpler motion than the overhand throw, this skill often develops after the overhand throw because children will mainly see parents or older sibling throwing with an overhand throw.
 - *Bowling* – use a children's bowling set or just roll a ball to a tower of blocks to knock them over. Activities like this encourage swinging the arm down and back versus an overhand throw or whipping the arm around the body.
 - *Hand over hand* - Provide hand over hand assistance if the child is just learning how to throw underhand – guide his/her hand down and back.
 - *Practice the underhand throw in various contexts:*
 - ◆ Throw folded socks into the laundry basket
 - ◆ Throw bean bags into a bucket
 - ◆ Throw water balloons at a target on the ground (draw pictures with sidewalk chalk or use hula hoops)
 - ◆ Mark out various targets on the ground (hula hoops, pictures, baskets, etc), have the child begin at a start point and toss the ball/bean bag to the first target, each time moving to where the ball/bean bag landed and attempting the throw again until he/she is successful with getting it in the basket. The child then tries again, this time throwing to the next closest target.
 - ◆ Once the child develops the skill of throwing underhand and is getting more accurate, the above activities can be done with several targets at different distance – have the child choose which target he/she is going to throw to so he/she has to gauge the amount of force put behind the throw.
- *Overhand*
 - *Hand over hand* - Provide hand over hand assistance if the child is just learning how to throw overhand – guide his/her hand up and back.
 - *Practice the overhand throw in various contexts:*
 - ◆ Throw socks into a laundry basket that is raised up (such as on the couch) and on its side. Or, if your child is just learning how to throw, eliminate the accuracy aspect by having the child throw the item and you catch it in the basket.
 - ◆ Stack blocks or place bowling pins/other toys on the edge of the table, throw the ball to knock them over.

- ◆ Create a target that can be hung on the wall or on the fence, throw bean bags, tennis ball, water balloons, etc at the target.
 - ◆ Once your child has developed the skill of throwing overhand, work on accuracy by using smaller targets or moving further away from the target.
- Developing the proper throwing pattern – around the age of 5 children begin to step forward with the foot opposite the throwing arm. Once your child has developed the skill of throwing underhand/overhand with relative accuracy, further development of an appropriate throwing pattern will help with the accuracy from further distances and the distance he/she can throw. Use these cues along with the underhand/overhand strategies above to further develop accuracy.
- *Visual cues* – Draw foot prints or use cutouts of foot prints. Below is an example for a child that throws with his/her right hand. (A) Child starts with feet on 1 and 2 and throws the ball to a target. As the child begins to understand the concept, move to (B) Child starts with feet on 1 and 2, then steps onto 3 just before he/she throws or as he/she throws. Pair with a verbal cue, such as “step then throw.”



- *Verbal cues* – Once your child does well with the visual cues, try using a verbal cue instead. For example, as you demonstrate, say “step and throw” and then repeat that verbal cue as the child tries.
- *Fade Cues* - When this pattern becomes more automatic, fade back the verbal cues (ie. Only provide the verbal cue when he/she throws the ball without stepping – use the verbal cue as a reminder and then see if he/she corrects the throwing pattern on the next attempt).