



Throwing, Catching and Bat and Ball Games



Where Does It Go Wrong?

Difficulty	Possible Reason
Difficulty throwing the ball forwards, often shooting it up into the air.	Swinging the arm through too quickly or letting go too late. Rooting the feet firmly and holding the body stiffly can prevent the throwing arm moving smoothly with rhythm to release the ball with precision. This is often due to poor stability in the body.
Difficulty gauging how hard or how softly to throw the ball.	Grasping the ball too tightly and therefore not being able to release it on time Not being able to visually judge the distance the ball is required to travel. Not having a good sensory awareness from the muscles and joints which tell the brain about where and how we are moving.
Eyes and hands for catching or eyes and feet for kicking not working together to meet the oncoming ball.	Inability to track the oncoming ball thereby not 'seeing it' in time to get hands or feet ready. Not having good standing balance can make it difficult to move the feet and adjust the body position to catch or trap an oncoming ball when it is thrown slightly out of reach. Clasping the hands too quickly causing the ball to bounce off the hands or too slowly, missing it completely or causing the ball to bounce off the body. The child has not yet developed whole body co-ordination.
Inability to follow the moving ball with the eyes as it travels towards them.	This may be due to a visual field (focusing) difficulty for example, not being able to see the ball coming out from the 'background' until it is almost in front of them.
Turning away from the oncoming ball or closing the eyes for fear of being hit by it.	Same reasons as above but also a developmental stage of catching that all children go through before learning to trap the ball against their body.
When they do grasp or catch the ball, they do not move to 'absorb' the catch and then have difficulty repositioning the body to return the throw.	Holding the body rigidly with feet planted firmly facing forwards can mean that the child does not have good balance or stability in the body to make the necessary adjustments to change body position with speed and accuracy.
Difficulty with balance either when standing still or on the move and respond to an unpredictable moving object.	Poor body stability from weak posture muscles or instability around the shoulder joints.

Tips and Hints

Catch and Throw



- ✓ The larger the object being thrown, the easier it is to catch. Textured balls with a softer surface may also be easier to grasp such as 'Koosh balls' or bean-bags (see resources).
- ✓ Catching requires the ability to look and follow a moving object whilst being able to get the hands in the right place to catch the object. If the child turns his/her head away from an on-coming object being thrown for fear of being hit, try reducing the distance between the thrower or the catcher. Bouncing the ball to the child will also slow down the speed and give him/her time to respond to the on-coming ball. Try using a balloon or a knotted chiffon scarf as these move more slowly. If the child does not like balloons, you can purchase some balloon covers. See the resource section for suppliers.

Catching

- ✓ Select catching equipment that is matched to the size, confidence and skill level of the child so that he/she will be motivated to participate more actively. Don't necessarily think that catching and throwing always has to be with balls. Try some of the following:
 - Scarves (knotted chiffon or shower puffs). Balloons (try filling these with water this is a great game for the summer)
 - Balls of wool and beach balls are large and soft to catch if you don't over inflate them
 - Paper balls made of crushed paper bound with masking tape or commercially bought Chinese style 'Plusballs' which you inflate with a straw (see resource section)
 - Rubbish bags or grocery bags filled with a balloon or newspaper
 - Welly boots – have a 'Welly wanging' competition!
 - Rolled up pair of old socks
 - Tennis ball tied into a stocking leg – this creates a 'tail'.
- ✓ When passing or throwing the 'ball' always ask the child if he/she is ready. This alerts him/her to the presence of the ball and keeps him/her on task. It might help if the child can stand on a marker like a carpet tile or in a hoop to focus him/her on where to stand. Once the child can catch the bigger, slower moving objects successfully without the use of the basket or catching gloves, he/she needs to practice catching objects in his/her hands rather than trapping them against his/her body. He/she needs to practice making subtle adjustments to his/her body posture. This means taking steps away from his/her standing position to catch a ball outside his/her reach i.e. leaning back or stepping back if necessary to 'absorb' the oncoming ball or forwards if the ball is thrown too short or sideways if the throw is going wide.

The next step is for you to change your starting position before each throw so the child has to adjust his/her standing position to follow the ball. You can make this faster and less predictable to make the task harder for the child.

Throwing

- ✓ To begin to learn to throw, you could start the child off with smaller objects aiming to throw 'underarm' to land in a wide box, bin, hoop or target which is placed quite near to him/her. This can then be made more difficult by having the child throw an object at a smaller target, or at a target that's further away, or one that's moving.
- ✓ Practice different styles of throwing for example; under-arm, over-arm with either or both hands and with both hands pushing the ball away from the chest.
- ✓ In order to encourage accuracy when throwing, the child can practice by throwing against a wall. Place a small marker or sticker about eye level and get the child to point at the target (this helps to reinforce they eye hand movement required to hit a target). When throwing the ball, encourage the child to keep looking at the marker because this helps them to focus their attention on the target and prevents them from throwing the ball accidentally up into the air.



GAMES TO PLAY

How Far?

What you need

A variety of things to throw e.g. sponge, balls of wool, shower puffs

What you do

Play this outside. Encourage the child to throw the various objects predicting which ones they think will travel the furthest/least and why. This will also help with language skills and is a good science experiment. What happens if they are wet or if it is windy?

Directional Ball

What you need

Small ball

What you do

In standing, with legs hip width apart, use the hands to move the ball around the body.

Figure eights – push ball around ankles and feet making a figure of eight (8) shape.

Pass the ball hand to hand around the waist.

Pass the ball hand to hand around the head.

Pass ball front to back and visa versa through legs.

Pass ball under the thigh, lifting foot off the floor each time (like standing on one leg).

Lying on their back on the floor with knees bent and feet flat on the floor, the child needs to pass the ball from one hand to the other by lifting his bottom off the floor.

What you need

Play in pairs

Ball

What you do

In pairs, stand about the same distance from a marked point, for example an empty ice cream container or up-turned waste paper basket. Throw a ball (or beanbag) to a partner. If it is caught, the partner takes a step backwards, but if the ball (or beanbag) is dropped, both partners take one step forward. If the throw does not reach the partner, the thrower takes one step forward. The winner is the one who is the greatest distance from the marker when the stop signal is given.

Pancake Toss

What you need

A bean bag or a rolled up pair of socks (pancake)

Lightweight bat (pretend frying pan)



What you do

Have a starting line and stand behind it balancing the beanbag on the bat held out in front. Begin by walking straight ahead to a finish line without tossing the 'pancake' (beanbag). To make it more fun, try to do this at a gentle jog then add in a toss or two each run! Try making it much harder still by placing obstacles to walk around.

USEFUL RESOURCES

For a range of equipment and resources such as Balloon Balls, Koosh Balls, Kick-a-Flick, Sticky mitts and many more:

Davies Sports

www.daviessports.co.uk

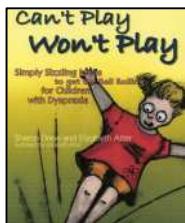
Tel: 0845 1204 515

Special Direct

www.specialdirect.com

TTS Group

www.tts-group.co.uk



See 'Can't Play Won't Play' For more tips, hints and practical ideas by Sharon Drew and Elizabeth Atter Available from: Jessica Kingsley Publishers www.jkp.com