

Have a Ball!

Your youngsters will have hours of fun with these ball games—as they build their muscles, coordination, stamina, and overall fitness. Pick a game, grab a ball, and play!

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The big bounce (two or more players)

You'll need: a playground ball

This silly contest lets players test each other's coordination. One player starts by naming a bouncing challenge. *Examples:* "Bounce the ball and spin in a circle before catching it." "Stand on one foot and dribble the ball 10 times with your left hand (or right hand, if you're left-handed)." Players take turns trying the challenge. Everyone who's successful scores a point. Then, the next player issues his challenge. Play to 20 points.

Hot potato volley (four or more players)

You'll need: a volleyball, music

The goal of this fast-paced game is to avoid being the last person to touch the ball when the music stops. Before you begin, have one person stand with her back to the other players and turn on the music. While the music plays, everyone keeps the ball moving

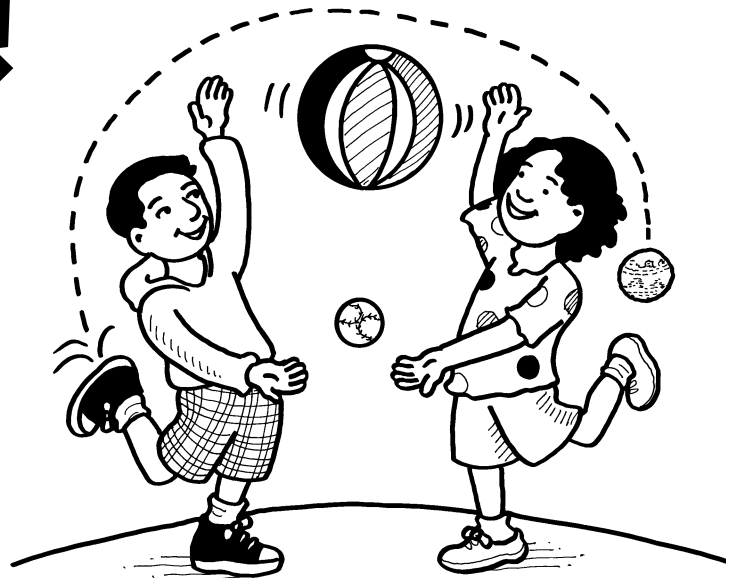


by quickly bumping it—volleyball style—to any other player. The person in charge of the music turns it off at random. When the music stops, everyone gets a point—except the last player to touch the ball. Then, that person takes over the job of playing the music. Whoever reaches 10 points first wins the game.

Baseball tag (three players)

You'll need: a baseball or softball, two baseball gloves, two rugs or other items to use as bases

In this old favorite, one player must dash from base to base without getting tagged by a player with the ball. Set the bases about 15 feet apart. Two players are fielders, and one is the

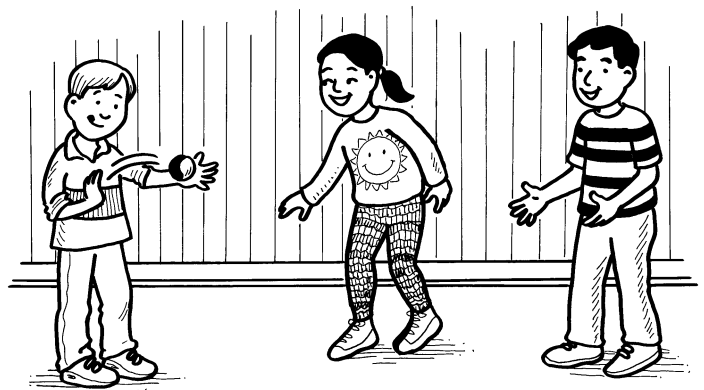


runner. The fielders each guard a different base. The runner chooses a base to stand on. Play starts when the fielders begin tossing the ball back and forth to each other. At any time while the ball is in motion, the runner can try to dash to the other base. If she makes it there before the fielder catches the ball and tags her with it, she's safe and gets to run again. If the fielder tags her with the ball before she reaches the base, the two trade roles.

Hacky Sack pass (two or more players)

You'll need: a Hacky Sack or a small beanbag

In this game, players bat the ball back and forth using their hands, but there's a "catch." Each player must bat the Hacky Sack once with the palm of his right hand, then once with the palm of his left hand before batting it to the next player (a total of three hits). If a player drops the Hacky Sack or fails to bat it with each hand, he gets a point. But in this game, you don't want to score points! The low score at the end of 5 rounds wins.



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Golf ball and spoon race

(two or more players)

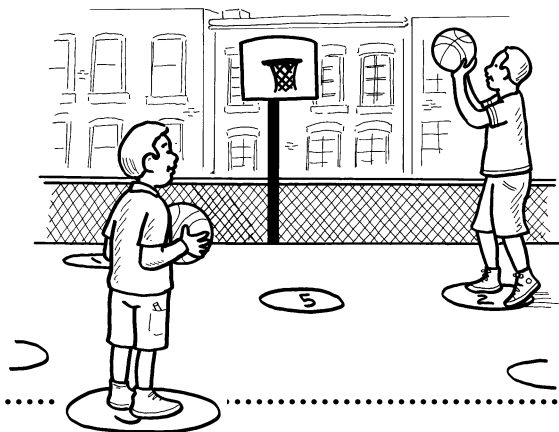
You'll need: golf balls, large spoons

Try this game indoors or out. First, choose the course. It can be a straight or zigzag line, or you might design an obstacle course. Each player stands at the starting line and places a golf ball on a spoon. At a starting signal, players carry the balls on spoons through the course. You can't touch the ball with your other hand or use it to hold the ball in place. If a player drops the ball, she must return to the starting point, put it back on the spoon, and begin again. The winner is the first player to cross the finish line. *Variation:* Try this as a relay race between two teams with an equal number of players.

Shot spots (two or more players)

You'll need: a basketball, sidewalk chalk, a basketball hoop

Any season is basketball season with this game of skill. Before starting, players take turns numbering "shot spots" on the court with sidewalk chalk. The first player chooses a spot and marks it "1." The next player picks a spot and marks it "2," and so on, until 10 spots have been marked. Players take turns shooting the ball, starting at "1." When a player makes a basket, he advances to the next spot for another turn. If he misses, he tries again from the same spot on his next turn. The first player to advance around the court making a basket from every spot wins. *Variation:* For indoor play, use a trash can and a wadded-up newspaper "ball." Mark spots with bits of masking tape.



Beach towel toss

(four players divided into two teams)

You'll need: two beach towels, a beach ball

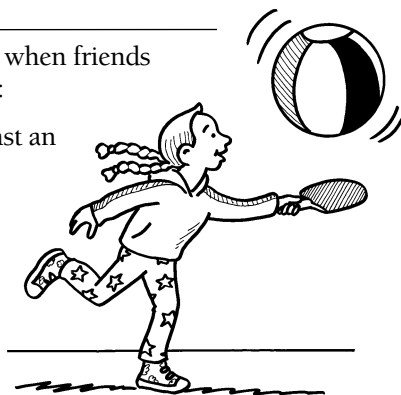
Not at the beach? No problem! Here's a beach game for your backyard or a park. Each pair of players holds a beach towel between them like a hammock, standing close enough

to each other so the towel sags a bit in the middle. One team places the beach ball in the center of their towel and launches it into the air by pulling the ends of the towel away from each other. The other team runs to catch the ball with their towel and launch it back to the other team the same way. When one team drops the ball, the other team scores a point. Eleven points wins the game.

Ball games for one

Your child can enjoy active time even when friends or siblings aren't around. Try these ideas:

- Play solo tennis. Hit a tennis ball against an outdoor wall with a tennis racket.
- Juggle sponge balls (the ones used as pool toys work well). Or bat a sponge ball across the yard with a pool noodle.
- Bounce a Ping-Pong ball into a row of plastic cups. Can you get the ball in each cup once?



- In an open field or a big yard, kick a soccer ball as far as you can, run to where it lands, and dribble it back. Try to kick it farther each time.
- Make your own carnival game by stacking empty cans in a pyramid on the ground and throwing a softball to knock them down. *Variation:* Turn it into a bowling game, and roll the ball to knock the cans down.
- Keep a beach ball in the air by hitting it with a Ping-Pong paddle.

Editor's Note: Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

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