

Skills That Build

Activities to help your child build the essential skills they need

Hello Families!

We invite you to join in the amazing world of early childhood as we bring you activities that focus on the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards. Our first one focuses on children's gross motor skills (using their bodies and large muscles!). These can be done inside or in the backyard and things you have in your house.

Domain	Standard
Physical Development	Uses perceptual information to guide motions and interactions with objects and other people

Obstacle Course

An obstacle course is a great way to keep kids active, using their muscles in different ways and without them knowing they are also starting to learn key math skills at the same time.

How do I do this?

This is a simple set up using things from around the house. A straight hallway or back porch is my preferred place but really any open space can work. You can use chalk outside to create lines for them to follow or draw squares for them to hop on. You can also do this inside with masking tape. My family and I moved not too long ago (plus we love ordering from Amazon!) so we have a ton of boxes laying around and boxes are another great obstacle course tool. Other great obstacle course tools I love to use are chairs, towels and washcloths. There is no limit to the ways you can have them set up – you can have your kids going around, over, under, across by running, walking, hopping, on one foot, backwards, etc. For your younger toddlers you'll want to start simple by going around under and possibly crawling over small objects and then get more complex the older they get.

Idea Moment

Here's an example of an obstacle course my friend did for her 4-year-old using sidewalk chalk.



Image Credit: Liz Henry

Make sure you also check out this video for an example of an obstacle course done in the home.

What Should I Do After Set Up?

When your obstacle course is set up and ready to go; you get to do the most fun part – be your child’s cheerleader! It’s time to encourage them and help give gentle reminders as to what to do next. While you’re cheering them on this is a great opportunity to do what we in the “biz” call parallel talk. Parallel talk is when you tell the child what they are doing. As they are doing the obstacle course be sure to talk to them using position words and sequence words. Here are a few examples...

- First, Maddie is going under the table!
- Next, Miles is walking across the tape!
- Lydia, you are doing an amazing job of hopping over the towel!

As I said before this is a great way to get kids to practice and build their gross motor skills of jumping, hopping, crawling, etc.

Creativity Zone

Here's some ways you can extend this activity to keep your kids interested and engaged...

- You have older, school aged children? Great! They can set up the obstacle course for their younger siblings!
- After your kids are comfortable doing this turn it into a scavenger hunt! Hide a favorite stuffed animal or book and see if they can find it.
- If you have older kids, after each obstacle you can leave a clue leading them to the next obstacle and ultimately to your treasure!

How is math involved with an obstacle course?

Believe it or not, this is a great opportunity to start building early math skills! This can help support their learning of position words and patterns.

Position Words

Position words are those words that tell where one object is in relation to another. In math, the fancy name is spatial relations. These are words like over, under, below, around, beside, next to, between, etc. For our toddlers and two-year-old having them use their bodies in games such as an obstacle course is a great way to start hearing that vocabulary as they are going through your course. The more they hear it, the more they are going to start connecting what they are doing with the words you are using. For 3 and 4-year olds, it's a great time to start having that label during the course showing the word with a picture. A couple of great extension activities for this age group are...

- You can create signs for the position words – an older child or adult can write the position word and the 3 or 4-year-old can draw a picture to go with it and then they can place them at the appropriate place along the obstacle course.
- They can draw a map of the obstacle course and have an older child or adult label the position word at the right spot.

Patterns

Those of you with toddlers at home, I must apologize now – once they do this, they are going to want to keep doing it. Why? Because we are hard wired to recognize patterns, even as young as babies. This is why the babies love the I drop it/ You pick it up game – it's a series of actions that repeats over and over and is predictable. It's the same reason why toddlers love to walk the same circle or path, it's something that is repeated over and over. So, this obstacle course is another series of actions that can be repeated, they will love it. It's also a building block for preparing them for patterns as they get older.

Thanks for checking in for our latest activity! If you want to learn more, please visit our website <https://elchc.org>.