

BRIGANCE® Prescriptive

# READINESS: STRATEGIES AND PRACTICE

by **Albert H. Brigance**

Illustrations by Lisa Greenleaf

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## **INDICATIONS OF AND POSSIBLE REASONS FOR DELAYED DEVELOPMENT**

Be alert to factors that might affect development of gross-motor skills.

### **1. Poor Balance**

Balance is the control of the body's position and movement and depends on the healthy functioning of the inner ear and on the senses of touch and sight. Weakness in any of these areas might cause difficulty in proper balance and subsequent movement skills.

### **2. Neurological, Physical or Health Problems**

Many children who have (or have had) neurological, physical or health problems exhibit delayed development. A child who has one or more of the following traits should be referred to a doctor:

- Does not appear to hear well. Perhaps the child does not respond to verbal directions unless they are looking directly at the speaker. Perhaps the child appears to understand more clearly when they are closer to the person giving directions.
- Does not see clearly. Perhaps the child frequently trips over clearly visible objects. Perhaps the child squints when looking at far-away objects.)
- Lacks vitality.
- Tires easily.
- Is obese, underweight or seems to suffer from poor nutrition.
- Becomes excessively flushed.
- Has difficulty breathing, or exhibits symptoms of asthma.
- Complains of not feeling well or of having pain.
- Appears to experience pain when certain muscles or joints are stressed.
- Has an unusual gait.
- Is unusually awkward or clumsy.
- Falls frequently when running, skipping or galloping.

### **3. Limited Experience**

Some children have had limited experience with situations requiring balance. Such situations require that the child adjust their centre of gravity to regain balance.

- Perhaps the child's home environment has not included balance enhancing features such as thresholds, heating grates, stairs, ramps, fire escapes, footpaths or curbs.
- Perhaps the child has had limited use of play or playground equipment. The child may have been discouraged from physical activities that involve balance.
- Perhaps the child has been inactive or sick. As a result, the child may not have had the opportunity to develop balance and strength.

*If a child shows delayed development, a referral to the appropriate school or outside personnel may be in order. Before making a referral, keep daily anecdotal notes on the child, and include the child's strengths and weaknesses.*

## **TIPS FOR TEACHING RUNNING**

### **• Focus on Balance, Flexibility and Speed**

By the age of two, most children can run. The aim of the running teaching activities is to increase balance, flexibility and speed. These skills develop over time with practice. Start with a slow run. As the child's balance and flexibility increase, encourage them to run faster, perhaps by setting goals or using a timer.

### **• Emphasise Stopping, Starting and Navigating Corners**

Motor coordination is developed when a child is able to run at a quick pace, stop on command and move safely in their environment. Relays help develop these skills. Activities that require a child to run with a variety of movements, such as swinging their arms, lifting their legs higher in the air or running in circles help develop motor coordination.

## TEACHING ACTIVITIES (RUNNING)

### 1. Free Run

**MATERIALS:** None.

**LOCATION:** Large, level, open, grassy area.

**GROUP SIZE:** Individual, small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Have the children run freely for a while. Encourage them to maintain a safe distance between each other to avoid collisions. Free running lets children practise without concern about whether their movements are 'correct'. At certain timed intervals (perhaps after two minutes or after three minutes), call out 'Stop'. Call out 'Go' for the children to resume running.

### 2. Kite Tails

**MATERIALS:** A long, colourful ribbon or streamer for each child.

**LOCATION:** Large, level, open, grassy area.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Give each child a ribbon or streamer to hold in their hand. Have each child run with the ribbon or streamer flowing behind them, pretending they are the tail of a kite in the wind. Encourage the children to swoop, run quickly, dive and turn. To make the activity more interesting, you can call out different types of wind. Demonstrate for the children how you think a kite tail would move in each kind of wind. For example, for a breeze, have the children run slowly and smoothly. For a windy day, have the children run more quickly. When you call out 'hurricane', have the children run quickly, spin and turn as their 'tails' move in the gale-force winds.

**NOTE:** This activity is safer and more fun if the children have lots of space. Plenty of space is also important to avoid collisions.

**VARIATION:** To incorporate different movement styles, have the children skip or gallop with their kite tails.

### 3. Duck, Duck, Goose

**MATERIALS:** None.

**LOCATION:** A play area large enough for the group to form a circle that two children can run around safely.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Have the children sit cross-legged in a circle. Choose one child to be the tapper. The tapper walks quickly around the circle and taps each child lightly on the head. As they tap each head, the tapper says, 'Duck.' When they tap a child and say, 'Goose,' that child stands and chases the tapper back to the empty place in the circle. If the tapper reaches this space safely, the goose becomes the new tapper. If the tapper is tagged by the goose, they must continue to be the tapper. As the game progresses, encourage the tappers to tap children who have not been tapped so that everyone has a turn.

### 4. Squirrel in the Tree

**MATERIALS:** None.

**LOCATION:** Level, smooth-surfaced, open area.

**GROUP SIZE:** Class.

**PROCEDURE:** Choose a few children to be 'squirrels'. The rest of the children pair up and form 'trees' by facing each other and joining hands to make an arch. For each tree, there should be one squirrel in the centre of the tree and one or two squirrels outside the tree.

At a signal, each squirrel in a tree runs to a new tree. The extra squirrels also try to find a tree. Only one squirrel can be in a tree at one time. After each squirrel has moved into a new tree, they change places with one of the trees before the signal to run is given again.

### 5. Chasey

**MATERIALS:** None.

**LOCATION:** A safe playing area with two designated safety zones from 6 m to 12 m apart.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** This activity is an all-time favourite – one that many children learn and play on their own. Select one or two children to be chasers and stand between two safety zones. The other players stand behind one of the safety zones. The players try to run from one safety zone to the other without being caught by the chasers. (Chasers must use both hands to catch.) If a player is caught as they race between the safety zones, they become a chaser and must help catch the other players.



## 6. What's the Time, Mr Wolf?

**MATERIALS:** None.

**LOCATION:** Level, smooth-surfaced, open area.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Select one child to be 'Mr Wolf'. Mr Wolf stands in the den while the chickens (the rest of the children) stand on a safety line 12 m away. The chickens move slowly toward Mr Wolf and ask, 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?' He gives a variety of answers, such as 'Late,' 'One o'clock,' or 'It's two thirty.' If Mr Wolf says 'Dinnertime!' he chases the chickens toward the safety line. Any chicken that is caught enters Mr Wolf's den and helps him catch other players.

## 7. Grab the Bandana

**MATERIALS:** A bandana or ribbon for each child.

**LOCATION:** Large, level, open, grassy area.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Give each child, except one, a bandana or ribbon. Have each child tuck the bandana into their waistband or back pocket, with an end of the bandana hanging loosely behind them. In this game, which is similar to chasey, one child, the bandana-snatcher, chases the other children and tries to pull their bandanas from their pockets or waistbands. When a child's bandana is snatched, they join the chase. This activity is as much fun for the chasers as for those being chased!

## 8. Barnyard Freeze and Go

**Materials:** None.

**LOCATION:** Level, smooth-surfaced, open area.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Select one child to be the farmer. Have the farmer stand at one end of the play area. Have the rest of the children (the barnyard animals) line up at a starting line at the other end of the play area, perhaps 12 m away. The farmer will specify an animal for the children to pretend to be. For example, the farmer might say, 'Run toward me like goats,' or 'Lope forward, bucking like donkeys.' The barnyard animals should move toward the farmer, making appropriate animal sounds ('Naaa-aaa'), or ('Eeee-onh, eee-onh'). Meanwhile, as the animals move forward, the farmer turns their back and counts rapidly from one to ten. At 'ten', the farmer turns back to face the animals and shouts, 'Stop!' The animals freeze where they are. Any child who moves after the farmer turns back around must return to the starting line. The first child to reach the farmer becomes the new farmer and the barnyard animals mosey back to the starting line to begin again.

## 9. Bring Home the Bacon

**MATERIALS:** An object to serve as the 'bacon' (a blackboard duster, a beanbag, a sock).

**LOCATION:** A safe playing area with two goal lines from 4 m to 8 m apart.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Divide the group into two equal teams. Have each team stand shoulder-to-shoulder behind its goal line, facing the other team. Beginning with the child at the far left of the line, touch each head as you count off so that each child has their own designated number. Repeat this procedure with the facing team. Before beginning the game, make sure that each child is aware of their number and realises that there is a facing player with that same number.

Place 'the bacon' equidistant between the two goal lines. (You may want to place it on a cardboard box about knee-high to the children so that they don't bump heads when they reach down to grab the bacon.)

Call out a number. The two children with that number run toward the bacon. Each of them tries to grab the bacon and return safely behind their goal line without being caught by the child from the opposite team. The children may find it fun to circle around the bacon, watching their opponent and waiting for the opportune time to grab the bacon.

## SEQUENCE

### SEQUENCE OF SKILLS

- 2-6 Uses a doll or other toy to act out a scene.  
Watches others play and plays near them (parallel play).  
Engages in domestic make-believe play, imitating an adult activity for five minutes.  
Engages in domestic make-believe play, imitating an adult activity for ten minutes.  
Engages in domestic make-believe play, imitating an adult activity for fifteen minutes.  
Engages in domestic make-believe play, imitating an adult activity for twenty minutes.  
Plays simple group games such as 'Ring Around the Rosy'.  
Begins to play with other children with adult supervision.
- 3-0 Begins to take turns.
- 3-6 Usually plays cooperatively, but may need adult help.  
Takes turns with assistance.  
Has an imaginary companion/playmate.
- 4-0 Plays games with rules.
- 4-6 Incorporates verbal directions into play activities.  
Takes turns in play without adult supervision.
- 5-0 Plays cooperatively with one or two children for at least fifteen minutes.
- 5-6 Plays a pretend career/professional role in play.  
Plays two or three table games.  
Plays cooperatively with two or three children for five minutes.  
Plays cooperatively with two or three children for ten minutes.  
Plays cooperatively with two or three children for fifteen minutes.  
Plays cooperatively with two or three children for twenty minutes.<sup>6-0</sup>

## TEACHING ACTIVITIES

### 1. Puppet Show

#### MATERIALS:

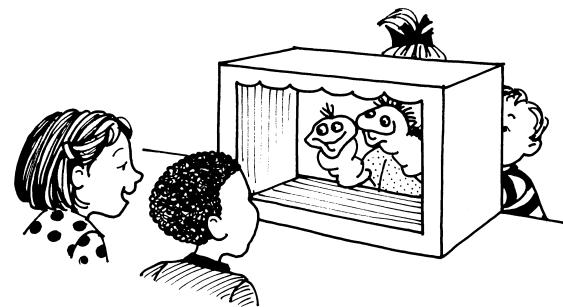
- Puppets (hand puppets, finger puppets, stick puppets, puppets made by the children)

(for a puppet stage)

- A large appliance box with the upperfront panel cut out.
- A towel draped over the back of a chair.
- A blanket or sheet hung over a card table.
- A curtain on a spring rod suspended in doorway.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Have each child make a puppet. Encourage the children to name their puppets and make up stories about their puppets' lives and personalities. Have the children take turns introducing their puppets to the class. Then work with the children to make up stories involving interactions between the puppets. Suggest themes or scenarios to inspire the children. Have the children take turns in groups of two or three putting on short puppet shows for their peers. Ask questions to spark imagination and to help the children to expand their stories. For example, you might ask, 'Alice, why is your puppet, Stella, so angry?' Or you might ask the questions to the puppets directly: 'Stella, why are you so angry?' Encourage communication and positive role playing among children and puppets.



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## INITIATIVE AND ENGAGEMENT SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS

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### OBJECTIVE

To exhibit initiative and engagement skills and behaviours that will foster and enhance independence, confidence in performing functional skills, and the development of responsibility, self-discipline, study skills and attention span.

### RATIONALE

At an early age most children begin to develop habits, attitudes, behaviours and skills that can greatly affect their adjustment and performance in school. Habits, attitudes, behaviours and skills developed at an early age may be carried into adult life and determine career success or failure. Thus, it is important that the young child's environment foster and promote the development of good habits, attitudes, behaviours and skills related to initiative and becoming engaged in activities. Proper initiative and engagement skills and behaviours are also recognised for their value in developing morals, self-concept and personality. Most initiative and engagement skills and behaviours involve attending, thinking, physical performance, social skills and speech. This stimulation facilitates mental, social, physical and speech development.

### 2. The Matching Game

**MATERIALS:**

- Pairs of matching picture cards.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group.

**PREPARATION:** Make sure that each picture card has a matching card in the deck. Shuffle the cards. Turn all the cards facedown on a flat surface.

**PROCEDURE:** Explain to the children that the object of the game is to pick up two identical cards. Each child may pick up only two cards on each turn. If the cards they pick do not match, they must turn them over and put them back where they were. If the two cards do match, the child may put them aside as a pair. Tell the children to pay close attention to where each unmatched card is placed. With some flexibility, insist that the children adhere to the rules of the game, taking one turn at a time and turning over only two cards at each turn.

### 3. Shoe Shop

**MATERIALS:**

- Empty shoeboxes.
- Old shoes of various sizes and styles.
- Measuring tape.
- Toy cash register.
- Shoe horns.
- Tissue paper.
- Paper bags with handles.
- Mirror.

**LOCATION:** Classroom.

**GROUP SIZE:** Small group or class.

**PROCEDURE:** Set up a 'shoe shop' in a corner of your classroom. The shoe shop can be used during free play or choice time or it can be used during formal instruction time. Children may imitate adult roles, pretending to be shoe salespeople and customers. Encourage the 'customers' to try on the shoes, walk around in them and look in the mirror. Encourage the 'salespeople' to help by measuring feet and shoes, boxing and bagging shoes, and running the cash register. Help the children get into character by asking questions like, 'What colour shoes are you looking for today, sir?' and 'How much are these, please?' Allow the children to feel safe and confident in experimenting with adult roles and interactions.