



THE PLAY STANDARD | SPORT ADAPTATIONS

# Movement Foundation

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*Ages Three to Six*

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Fundamental movement skills and all thirty-six lessons for the youngest band

Document 9 of 12 | Version 1.0

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## About This Document

This is the only document in the curriculum set that covers a single age band, and the only one that is not about a sport. It exists because of a gap the research made unmistakable.

### The Gap

No national governing body in the Foundation's portfolio publishes guidance for a four-year-old. USA Basketball's youngest official band starts at seven. US Soccer's published Player Development Framework starts at U7 to U8, with no U5 to U6 learning plan in the series at all. USTA's youngest tennis stage begins around five. USA Pickleball has no youth progression of any kind. Below those ages, there is nothing.

That is not an oversight by the governing bodies. It reflects that three- to six-year-olds are not ready for sport. They are ready for movement, and movement is a discipline with its own literature, its own skill taxonomy, and its own instructional constraints.

*Every other document in this set adapts the curriculum to a sport. This one adapts it to a stage of development.*

### What This Program Is, and Honestly Is Not

The World Health Organization recommends that three- and four-year-olds accumulate at least one hundred and eighty minutes of physical activity per day, of which at least sixty minutes is moderate to vigorous. A twice-weekly forty-five minute session supplies a small single-digit percentage of a preschooler's recommended weekly activity.

**So this is a skill and habit intervention, not a volume intervention.** That framing is both more honest and more defensible than claiming to meet a child's activity needs. Coaches should say it to parents in those words, and grant applications should make the same distinction rather than implying the program closes an activity gap it cannot close.

What the program can do is teach the movement skills that make later sport possible, install the character vocabulary the rest of the curriculum builds on, and give a family a reason to move at home. Those are the outcomes to promise and to measure.

## Part One: The Movement Vocabulary

Fundamental movement skills divide into three categories. All three must be programmed. The third is routinely neglected, and the neglect is documented rather than anecdotal.

| Category            | What it is                                        | Skills                                                                                                     |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Locomotor</b>    | Moving the body through space                     | Walking, running, hopping, jumping, galloping, sliding, skipping, leaping                                  |
| <b>Manipulative</b> | Imparting or receiving force from an object       | Throwing, catching, kicking, striking, bouncing, dribbling, rolling, pushing, pulling, lifting, volleying  |
| <b>Stability</b>    | Maintaining equilibrium, including axial movement | Static balance, dynamic balance, stopping, dodging, landing, rolling, bending, twisting, turning, swinging |

**Stability is the category programs forget.** The most widely used assessment instrument for this age, the Test of Gross Motor Development, contains thirteen skills and no stability skills at all. This is a known and criticized limitation of the instrument. Research using structural equation modelling has established that stability functions as a statistically independent construct, and that children cannot develop optimal stability by practising only running, throwing, and catching. Foundation sessions program balance, landing, rolling, and postural work as a named strand every single session, not as a warm-up.

## Ages of Emergence

This table tells a coach what to expect and, more usefully, what not to expect. A skill that has not emerged cannot be coached, only played toward.

| Skill                             | Emergence and progression                                           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Running</b>                    | Emerges around eighteen months; coordinated form by age three       |
| <b>Jumping</b>                    | Develops eighteen months to two years; forward jumping by age three |
| <b>Overarm throwing</b>           | Coordinated form between three and five                             |
| <b>Kicking</b>                    | Stationary ball three to five; moving ball five to six              |
| <b>Catching</b>                   | Balloon or rolled ball one to two; hands-only catch four to five    |
| <b>Galloping and sliding</b>      | Three to five; galloping precedes skipping                          |
| <b>Hopping</b>                    | Emerges around three and a half; ten consecutive hops by age five   |
| <b>Leaping</b>                    | Three to five                                                       |
| <b>Striking a stationary ball</b> | Pushing at two to three; coordinated strike three to five           |
| <b>Stationary dribbling</b>       | Four to five                                                        |

- The absence of forward jumping by age three is a recognized red flag, worth mentioning to a parent without diagnosis.
- Mature patterns become developmentally possible between six and eight given instruction. That is when mastery becomes possible, not when it occurs. Most children never reach it, which is this program's strongest argument for existing.

## Part Two: How to Instruct a Three- to Six-Year-Old

Almost every delivery failure at this age is an adult problem rather than a child problem. The constraints below are cognitive, not behavioural, and a coach who works inside them will find the children suddenly capable.

### The Two-Item Rule

Working memory capacity at four to five years old is roughly two to two and a half independent items. An adult holds three to four. This is the single most useful number in the document.

| Instruction                                          | Items | Result                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Run to the cone and touch it                         | 2     | Works                                                        |
| Run to the cone, touch it, and come back on one foot | 3     | Fails — capacity, not disobedience                           |
| Statue!                                              | 1     | Works regardless of how many components the routine contains |

**The corollary matters more than the number.** Chunking multiplies capacity. A named, rehearsed routine occupies one slot no matter how complex it is. Building a small vocabulary of named routines is the single highest-leverage instructional decision available for this age band. Teach five or six names, rehearse them until they are automatic, and a coach can then run a session on one-word cues.

**When a child does not follow your instruction, count the instructions you gave.** Two is the ceiling. If you gave three, the failure was yours.

### Concrete, Not Abstract

Reasoning at this age is bound to what can be perceived. Instruction must be demonstrated and physical.

- Make your body a rock works. Keep your centre of gravity low does not.
- Metaphor works when it is tied to a physical referent the child can see. Metaphor without a referent is just abstraction.
- Demonstrate rather than describe. Any single explanation should run under thirty seconds.

## The Perspective-Taking Limit

This is the finding that most changes how the character curriculum is delivered to this band, and it should be in every coach's training.

Below roughly age four, a child cannot reliably represent that another person knows or feels something different from what they know and feel. Performance on the standard test of this capacity crosses from below chance to chance at around three years and eight months and rises above chance after four years. Task simplification improves scores but does not change the trajectory.

**What this means practically.** Think about how she felt is not a coachable instruction for a three-year-old. It asks for a capacity that is not there yet, and repeating it more slowly does not help. What is available at three to four is rule-following and modelled behaviour: we help people up, demonstrated and done, not explained. Between four and seven, explicit perspective-taking becomes available but is effortful and unreliable under load, so prompt it in calm moments and never in the middle of a conflict.

**This constraint runs all the way up the curriculum.** Perspective-taking under real-time pressure is still developing in late adolescence. A sixteen-year-old who fails to consider a teammate's perspective in a heated moment is displaying a normal developmental limitation, not a character defect. That reframing belongs in coach training for every band, not just this one.

## Part Three: Session Design

Sourced parameters and Foundation practice standards are separated below, because the distinction matters and most published guidance in this area blurs it.

### Sourced Parameters

| Parameter            | Standard                                             | Source                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Session length       | 30 to 45 minutes                                     | SHAPE America Active Start: at least 60 minutes of structured activity daily, deliverable in one or more sessions, 30 to 45 minutes per session acceptable |
| Adult to child ratio | 1 to 10 minimum                                      | NAEYC preschool ratio, cited by Active Start                                                                                                               |
| Maximum group size   | 20                                                   | NAEYC. For mixed-age groups the youngest age present governs, so any group containing three-year-olds is staffed at 1 to 10 with a maximum of 20           |
| Outdoor space        | 75 square feet of accessible play space per child    | Active Start                                                                                                                                               |
| Competition          | None with recorded results                           | Active Start: activities should be non-competitive or focused on the child competing against their own prior performance                                   |
| Sedentary limit      | Never more than 60 minutes at a time except sleeping | Active Start                                                                                                                                               |

### Foundation Practice Standards

These are the Foundation's own standards, informed by developmental evidence but not published prescriptions. They are labelled as such deliberately, and anyone citing them should do the same.

| Parameter            | Foundation standard                    | Reasoning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Instructional ratio  | 1 to 6 or 1 to 8 for skill instruction | The NAEYC ratio governs supervision, not instruction. A coach giving individual skill feedback cannot cover ten preschoolers.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Preferred group size | 12 to 16                               | The 75 square feet per child space requirement constrains before headcount does.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Rotation interval    | About 5 to 8 minutes per activity      | Triangulated from three sourced facts: preschool moderate-to-vigorous bouts naturally run six to ten minutes, toddler structured activity accumulates in five to ten minute bursts, and activity accumulates meaningfully in bouts of ten minutes or more. No published rotation interval exists. |
| Explanation length   | Under 30 seconds, demonstrated         | Working memory capacity and perception-bound reasoning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



| Parameter                 | Foundation standard                           | Reasoning                                                |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Simultaneous instructions | Maximum 2 at ages 3 to 5;<br>3 at ages 6 to 8 | Direct application of working memory capacity estimates. |

**On the rotation interval specifically.** There is no published, evidence-based rotation interval for early-childhood movement programs. The five to eight minute figure is a reasonable triangulation and it matches what experienced practitioners do, but it is the Foundation's practice standard rather than a finding. Someone will eventually ask for the citation and there is not one.

## The Frame at This Age

The five-minute frame runs exactly as it does everywhere else in the curriculum, with three adjustments.

1. Huddle In is shorter. One word and one question, and take two answers rather than eight.
2. Call It Out matters more here than in any other band, because a three-year-old learns the value from being named rather than from understanding it.
3. Huddle Out accepts pointing. A child who points at the person who tried hard has answered the question correctly.

## Part Four: The Thirty-Six Lessons

Every lesson in the curriculum is taught in this band. What changes is that the moments are movement moments rather than sport moments, and that the difference between a three-year-old and a six-year-old is larger than the difference between any two other ages in the program.

**Structure of an entry.** Three moments to watch for, a line on how a three-year-old differs from a six-year-old, and a line that applies across all movement activity. This document has no sport variant field, because there is no sport.

## Pillar P — Perseverance at Ages Three to Six

### P1 — Effort

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who runs back to the line instead of walking.
- A child who keeps trying a throw or a jump after several misses.
- A child whose body is working hard, not just moving.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old shows effort in bursts and then stops without warning. That is capacity, not quitting. A six-year-old can sustain a task and can be asked to.

**In this family.** Effort at this age is visible in the body: speed back to the line, height of a jump, how hard they swing. Name what you can see, not what you infer.

### P2 — Trying Again

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who drops the beanbag and picks it up without being told.
- A child who says "again" or holds their hands out for another turn.
- A child who gets back up quickly after falling.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old needs the adult to model going again. A six-year-old can be asked to decide for themselves.

**In this family.** The word AGAIN is the whole lesson at this age. Say it, chant it, and let them say it back.

### P3 — Mistakes

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who laughs at a miss and keeps going.
- A child who changes something after a miss, such as stepping closer.
- A child who tells another child it is okay.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old copies the adult's reaction to a miss exactly. If you sigh, they learn to sigh. A six-year-old can notice their own adjustment.

**In this family.** Your face is the lesson. A miss followed by a coach smiling teaches more than any sentence you could say about it.

### P4 — Finishing

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who completes the whole path rather than stopping halfway.
- A child who stays in the activity until the stop signal.
- A child who puts equipment away before moving on.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old finishes when the activity is short enough to finish. Shorten the task rather than extending the child. A six-year-old can finish a longer sequence.

**In this family.** Finishing at this age is a design problem before it is a character problem. Set tasks a child can complete, then name the completion.

## P5 — Hard Things

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who chooses the higher target, the farther cone, or the narrower beam.
- A child who stays with a skill that is not working yet.
- A child who says something is hard and keeps doing it.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old will choose the harder option for novelty rather than challenge. A six-year-old begins to choose it knowingly.

**In this family.** Offer two versions of every task, one harder. Let the child choose. The choosing is the lesson.

## P6 — Patience

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who waits in line without pushing.
- A child who watches another child take a turn without interrupting.
- A child who stays calm when a turn takes longer than expected.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old can wait for a few seconds. A six-year-old can wait for a turn. Design lines that are short enough for the youngest child present.

**In this family.** The best patience intervention at this age is fewer children per station, not a better lecture about waiting.

## P7 — Courage

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who tries a new movement in front of the group.
- A child who volunteers to go first.
- A child who joins in after watching from the edge.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old may need to watch for several sessions before joining. That is a normal entry pattern, not refusal. A six-year-old can be invited directly.

**In this family.** Joining at all is the courage moment for a new three-year-old. Name it the moment it happens, quietly, to that child.

## P8 — Focus

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who watches the ball all the way to their hands.
- A child who follows an instruction the first time.
- A child who comes back to the activity after being distracted.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old is markedly more distractible, including during focused attention. A six-year-old can hold a task through a distraction.

**In this family.** Focus is the word EYES made physical. Where the eyes go, the body follows, and a coach can see both.

## P9 — Consistency

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who arrives ready to join without a long warm-up period.
- A child who works the same on the fifth turn as the first.



- A child who takes part fully on a day they said they did not want to come.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old's consistency is mostly the caregiver's. A six-year-old can begin to own it.

**In this family.** At this age consistency belongs to the routine, not to the child. Keep the shape of the session identical every week and the child will supply the rest.

# Pillar I — Leadership at Ages Three to Six

## L1 — Responsibility

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who carries their own water bottle and knows where it is.
- A child who puts a beanbag or a cone back where it belongs.
- A child who picks up something that fell without being asked.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old can be responsible for one named object. A six-year-old can be responsible for a job.

**In this family.** Give every child one thing that is theirs to look after. One object, named, every session. That is the entire lesson at this age.

## L2 — Initiative

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who helps set up before being asked.
- A child who starts the activity correctly without waiting for the full instruction.
- A child who notices a cone out of place and fixes it.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old acts first without meaning to lead. A six-year-old can be told they went first and understand why that mattered.

**In this family.** At this age initiative looks like helping. Name helping as going first and the vocabulary is planted for later.

## L3 — Teamwork

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who rolls or passes the ball to another child.
- A child who waits for a slower partner.
- A child who helps another child who is stuck.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old plays alongside rather than with. Parallel play is developmentally correct and should not be corrected. A six-year-old can genuinely cooperate.

**In this family.** Do not ask a three-year-old to consider how a teammate feels. Below roughly age four a child cannot reliably represent that another person knows or feels something different. Teach the behaviour as a rule — we help people up — and do not explain it.

## L4 — Accountability

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who says it was theirs after knocking something over.
- A child who says sorry without being told to.
- A child who fixes what they knocked down.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old can name what happened. A six-year-old can name it and repair it.

**In this family.** MINE, said out loud, then fixed. Two steps, both visible. Accept the word without requiring the feeling.

## L5 — Encouragement

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who claps for somebody else.
- A child who says good job without being prompted.
- A child who cheers for the child who went last.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old will cheer because everyone is cheering. A six-year-old can be asked to cheer for a specific person on purpose.

**In this family.** This is the easiest leadership behaviour to install at this age, and it is available to every child regardless of skill. Use it constantly.

## L6 — Communication

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who calls for the ball out loud.
- A child who says they need help rather than going quiet.
- A child who says their own name clearly when asked.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old may need the words supplied. A six-year-old can generate them.

**In this family.** A quiet child at this age is often a child without the words, not a child without the wish. Supply the sentence and let them repeat it.

## L7 — Service

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who helps carry something.
- A child who holds a door, a gate, or a hoop for somebody.
- A child who tidies up something that was not theirs.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old helps because helping is fun. A six-year-old can help when it is not fun, if asked.

**In this family.** Helping is intrinsically motivating at this age and stops being so later. Bank as much of it as you can while it is free.

## L8 — Integrity

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who admits they stepped over the line.
- A child who says another child got there first.
- A child who tells the true thing when the other thing would be better for them.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old confuses wanting a thing to be true with it being true. That is not lying. A six-year-old understands the difference and can be held to it.

**In this family.** Never call a three-year-old a liar. Name the true thing when it appears, and let the concept build.

## L9 — Influence

### Moments to Watch For

- A child whose good behaviour spreads to the children beside them.
- A child who does the right thing first and others follow.



- A child who sets an example for a younger child without being asked.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old is mostly the copier. A six-year-old is beginning to be the copied.

**In this family.** The word is COPY. Point out to the older children in the group that the little ones are copying them, and watch what changes.

## Pillar A — Attitude at Ages Three to Six

### A1 — Respect

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who handles equipment carefully rather than throwing it.
- A child who looks at the coach when the coach is speaking.
- A child who says hello or goodbye to an adult.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old shows respect through gentle hands. A six-year-old can extend it to people they do not know.

**In this family.** Respect at this age is CARE — care for things, care for people. Concrete, physical, and visible.

### A2 — Sportsmanship

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who shakes hands or high-fives at the end.
- A child who does not gloat after winning.
- A child who keeps playing after falling behind.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old does not track winning reliably. A six-year-old does, sharply, and needs the lesson more.

**In this family.** No recorded results at this age. Published guidance for three to five year olds is explicit that activity should be non-competitive or focused on competing against the child's own prior performance.

### A3 — Manners

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who says please or thank you without a reminder.
- A child who greets the coach on arrival.
- A child who waits for their turn to speak.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old says the words. A six-year-old can be taught eye contact with them.

**In this family.** This is the most trainable value in the entire curriculum at this age. Three sessions of consistent prompting produces a child who greets adults by name.

### A4 — Gratitude

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who thanks the coach at the end.
- A child who thanks the adult who brought them.
- A child who notices somebody set something up.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old thanks a person. A six-year-old can thank a person for a specific thing.

**In this family.** Point at the set-up before the session starts. Somebody put out these cones. That is the whole lesson.

### A5 — Emotional Control

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who gets frustrated and keeps going anyway.
- A child who takes a breath instead of throwing equipment.

- A child who calms down without an adult stepping in.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old needs co-regulation — an adult who is calm nearby. A six-year-old can begin to self-regulate with a cue.

**In this family.** BREATHE is the cue and it works because it is one syllable and physical. Practise it when everyone is calm so it is available when they are not.

## A6 — Response

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who does not get the color or the turn they wanted and carries on happily.
- A child who changes their mood on purpose.
- A child who makes the best of a station they did not want.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old recovers fastest through redirection. A six-year-old can be offered the choice explicitly.

**In this family.** CHOOSE is the word. Offer a real choice within the activity and the concept becomes something they have done rather than something they were told.

## A7 — Inclusion

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who invites another child into a game.
- A child who partners with somebody new.
- A child who notices somebody standing alone.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old does not notice exclusion. A six-year-old both notices it and can cause it deliberately.

**In this family.** The word is INVITE. At this age inclusion is a coach design decision — rotate partners so it never becomes a choosing ritual — supported by a named behaviour.

## A8 — Listening

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who lets somebody else finish speaking.
- A child who follows an instruction correctly the first time.
- A child who repeats back what somebody else said.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old can hold about two things at once. A six-year-old can hold two, occasionally three.

**In this family.** If a child does not follow your instruction, count the instructions you gave. Two is the ceiling at this age, and the failure is usually yours rather than theirs.

## A9 — Energy

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who arrives excited and lifts the group.
- A child who claps, cheers, or hustles between stations.
- A child who stays upbeat when the group gets tired.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old's energy is weather. A six-year-old can begin to generate it deliberately.

**In this family.** READY faces and READY bodies. Ask for both by name at the start of every session and it becomes the routine.

## Pillar Y — YOU at Ages Three to Six

### Y1 — Identity

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who is the same person whether they succeeded or not.
- A child who names something good about themselves.
- A child who does not call themselves bad at something after a miss.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old does not yet build a self-concept from outcomes. A six-year-old is starting to, which is why this lesson begins to matter.

**In this family.** Catch the sentence "I am bad at this" the first time it appears, and replace it out loud with "you have not learned that yet."

### Y2 — Confidence

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who attempts something they refused before.
- A child who says out loud that they can do something.
- A child who shows an adult a thing they have learned.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old's confidence is situational and resets each session. A six-year-old can begin to carry it forward.

**In this family.** The word is CAN. Every session should end with each child having one new thing they CAN do, and being told so by name.

### Y3 — Fuel

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who chooses water over a sugary drink.
- A child who talks about a food that gives them energy.
- A child who tries a new food at snack time.

**Three versus six.** Both ages understand fuel as a concrete idea. Neither can handle the reasoning behind it, so do not supply any.

**In this family.** Food is FUEL, the way a car needs gas. Never comment on any child's body, size, shape, or appearance, in any direction, at any age. This is a binding rule, not a preference.

### Y4 — Rest

#### Moments to Watch For

- A child who is visibly well-rested and shows it in mood and energy.
- A child who talks about their bedtime routine.
- A child who says they are tired and names why.

**Three versus six.** Three to four year olds need ten to thirteen hours of sleep. Six-year-olds are not far behind. Both are frequently short.

**In this family.** While you are sleeping your body is getting stronger from everything you did today. That sentence is the whole lesson and it is true.

## Y5 — Body

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who drinks water without being told.
- A child who takes a breath to settle themselves.
- A child who talks about playing or moving outside of this session.

**Three versus six.** Both ages need reminding to drink. Neither reliably notices thirst during play.

**In this family.** Three to four year olds need at least one hundred and eighty minutes of activity a day, of which at least sixty is moderate to vigorous. This session supplies a small fraction of that. Tell parents so plainly.

## Y6 — Goals

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who names something they want to get better at.
- A child who practises the thing they said they wanted to improve.
- A child who tells somebody else about their goal.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old names a wish. A six-year-old can name something they are working on and return to it.

**In this family.** One thing, said out loud, in front of the group. That is a goal at this age. Do not write it down and do not track it.

## Y7 — Self-Awareness

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who says they need a break rather than melting down.
- A child who names a feeling out loud.
- A child who knows what calms them.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old can name a feeling with help. A six-year-old can name it and sometimes act on it.

**In this family.** NOTICE is the word. Ask how their body feels at the start and again at the end, every session, and the vocabulary builds itself.

## Y8 — Honesty

### Moments to Watch For

- A child who admits they did not try hard on something.
- A child who gives an accurate answer rather than the one that sounds good.
- A child who says they need help.

**Three versus six.** A three-year-old is not capable of a settled distinction between wishing and reporting. A six-year-old is.

**In this family.** Reward the honest answer visibly, especially when it is the unflattering one. That is what makes honesty survive into the next band.

## Y9 — Balance

### Moments to Watch For

- A child fully absorbed in play without needing prompting.

- A child who invents a game or a variation.
- A child who talks about playing outside at home.

**Three versus six.** Both ages should be getting the majority of their movement from unstructured play, not from this session.

**In this family.** Published guidance for this age is at least sixty minutes of structured activity and sixty minutes to several hours of unstructured play per day. Free play is not the reward at the end of the session. It is the point.

# Coach Notes for Movement Foundation

## Delivery Errors Specific to This Band

- Giving three instructions. The most common failure in the entire curriculum and the easiest to fix. Count them before you speak.
- Explaining instead of demonstrating. Reasoning at this age is bound to what can be seen. A thirty-second demonstration beats a thirty-second explanation every time.
- Asking a three-year-old to consider another child's feelings. The capacity is not there. Teach the behaviour as a rule, model it, and let the understanding arrive later.
- Correcting parallel play. A three-year-old playing alongside rather than with another child is developing normally. Do not treat it as a teamwork failure.
- Keeping score. Published guidance for this age is explicit that activity should be non-competitive or self-referenced. A recorded result at four years old teaches nothing the child can use.
- Programming only running, throwing, and catching. Stability is an independent capacity and will not develop as a side effect. Balance, landing, and rolling are a named strand in every session.
- Extending a task the child cannot finish rather than shortening it. Finishing at this age is a design decision.

## When a Child Will Not Join

A new three-year-old who watches from the edge for several sessions is following a normal entry pattern, not refusing. Do not extract them, do not negotiate, and do not make joining a public event. Let them watch, keep the session shape identical each week so it becomes predictable, and invite quietly and briefly each time. Most children join when the environment stops being novel.

A six-year-old who will not join is usually managing embarrassment rather than fear. Reduce the difficulty of the entry task so that joining does not require performing, and name a moment for them within the first ten minutes once they do.

## Talking to Parents About This Band

Parents of preschoolers ask two questions. Whether their child is behind, and whether the program will make them good at a sport.

On the first: coaches describe what they observe and never diagnose. The ages of emergence table exists to tell a coach what is normal, not to give a coach a screening instrument. The one exception worth mentioning to a parent, gently and without conclusion, is the absence of forward jumping by age three.

On the second: the honest answer is that this program builds the movement skills that make later sport possible and the habits that make later sport enjoyable. It does not produce athletes at six, and any program claiming otherwise is selling something. Say that plainly. Parents respect it, and it is the position that survives contact with a pediatrician or a physical education teacher.

Coaches also tell parents the activity numbers honestly. Three- and four-year-olds need at least one hundred and eighty minutes of movement a day, of which at least sixty is moderate to vigorous. This session supplies a fraction of that, and the rest has to happen at home. That conversation is the single most valuable thing a coach can do for a preschooler's health, and it takes twenty seconds at pickup.

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Play Academy Foundation, Inc. is a national nonprofit that brings professional sports, wellness, and recreation programming directly into the neighborhoods where children live.



Roughly half of American high school students attend no physical education in a given week, and fewer than three in ten attend daily, against a national recommendation of daily physical education. That deficit has held for thirty years. The Foundation exists because it is not going to close on its own.