



Leading Little Ones

Helpful Hints for Managing Pre-school Children

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With early childhood education programs becoming more prevalent in today's society, physical educators find themselves with the responsibility of educating themselves about developmentally appropriate practices at the early childhood level. It's no longer acceptable to simply "water down" the elementary curriculum. Educators must look at the specific needs of their age group and plan accordingly. Remember, too, that it is a responsibility of the physical education teacher to help young children develop attitudes, habits, knowledge, and movement skills that will assist them in leading a life filled with physical activity. In the book, *Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity for Children Birth to Five Years*, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education has provided the guidelines below for help in establishing a program that promotes "health-related fitness and movement skills."

Guidelines for Preschoolers: from *Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity for Children Birth to Five Years* (NASPE)

- Guideline 1.** Preschoolers should accumulate at least 60 minutes daily of structured physical activity.
- Guideline 2.** Preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of daily, unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.
- Guideline 3.** Preschoolers should develop competence in movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.
- Guideline 4.** Preschoolers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- Guideline 5.** Individuals responsible for the well-being of preschoolers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Some Important Areas to Emphasize When Teaching Early Childhood Students

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| 1. Colors | 11. Parts of the body |
| 2. Letters | 12. Patterning |
| 3. Numbers | 13. Matching |
| 4. Animals, their sounds, and the way they move | 14. Rhyming |
| 5. Social Skills (manners, sharing, etc.) | 15. Shapes |
| 6. Seasons, holidays, and special events | 16. Basic Fitness & Nutrition concepts |
| 7. Direction (R, L, up, down, etc.) | |
| 8. Sequencing (examples: following directions in order, dance choreography, etc.) | |
| 9. Basic physical skills (examples: locomotor skills, throw, catch, bounce, and kick) | |
| 10. Language/ vocabulary development - Verbs, adverbs, and prepositions (example: jump quietly around) | |

Hints for Classroom Management

1. Establish signals that mean certain commands. This will minimize the time you spend giving directions. (Example – The use of my “quacker” means that all my students, “the baby ducks”, walk immediately to me, “the mother duck”.)
2. When talking with students in a large area, call them in close to you to minimize distractions. Whenever possible, physically get down on the same level as the students. It helps children focus on you, instead of other things around them.
3. Definitely have a stop and go signal. (Examples: rhymes, music, whistle, hand, etc.)
4. Preface directions with “When I say go,” “When you hear the music,” or something similar. If you do not do this, children will pick up equipment or begin an activity as soon as they hear even a small part of your directions. Practice this at the beginning of the year and as needed during the year.
5. When you have children using equipment, establish a location for where that equipment will be placed when you say “stop.” Set consequences for children who do not follow your request. If you do not do this, children will be playing with the equipment instead of looking at you and listening to you.
6. Give directions first, followed by a demonstration. If talking and demonstrating at the same time, young children often have difficulty following both. (A common mistake by P.E. teachers is trying to talk to children while dribbling a ball. The noise level makes it difficult for children to follow what the teacher is saying.)
7. Don’t be afraid to add a time factor to directions. Try “by the time I count to 5...,” or “Meet me at the circle by the time I count down to 0,” or “Before I finish this song can you...” Young children do not often understand the significance of time, so countdowns can be very helpful.
8. Many children are familiar with the rhyming words of Dr. Seuss and Mother Goose. Rhymes can make short work of a long explanation and children seem to remember them easier. For example, “If you’d like a stamp of mine, walk right to the thin black line” tells a child what, how, and where.
9. Remember that most Early Childhood students are non-readers, so visuals are an important part of their learning experience and can clarify your explanations. Visuals can help with directions, instant activities, and classroom rules and procedures.
10. Establish classroom rules, procedures, and consequences the very first time you see the students and continue to go over them for at least the first two weeks. I have visuals that I use with my rules, so I have my students view a visual and repeat the rule back to me. This reinforces expectations. As needed throughout the year, review rules and procedures with students. Since I am the “Mother Duck,” I start the year wearing a duck visor and read the book *Come Along Daisy*, by Jane Simmons. This story reinforces listening and following directions.
11. When a child is having difficulty following rules and procedures, have a special place where that child can spend a few moments thinking about appropriate behavior. You might establish a thinking chair, a break room, or a dugout. Timeouts do not have to be long, but the child should determine for him/herself when he/she is ready to return to activity. Place the responsibility on the child for correct behavior if he should decide to return, but make sure he understands that there will be a greater consequence if he should return and repeat inappropriate behavior. (I have previously used the thinking chair idea with a picture of “The Thinker” wearing gym shorts and a t-shirt. When ready, a student

moved to a picture of the “light bulb” which meant he had a better “idea” how to behave. When I saw him at the “light bulb,” I motioned him to come participate. I am currently using “The Break Room,” a picture of a coffee cup, and a “Clock,” which has the words, “Time to Play,” above it.)

12. I believe that young children need to take responsibility when they have done something wrong. Therefore, when actions are inappropriate, I discreetly approach the student and ask him to go over and touch the visual that goes along with the rule they have broken and quietly verbalize what they have done wrong. For example, if someone is talking when the teacher is talking, I might have that student go over to the picture of “Inspector Respect” and say, “I will not talk when the teacher is talking” and then come back and join us. Or, if someone tattles on a classmate, I may ask him to touch “Shoo Fly” and say, “I will not tattle on my friends.” (At the beginning of the year, be sure to discuss with your students what constitutes “telling” (helpful) and “tattling” (hurtful)). In my opinion, this works better than just saying “Don’t tattle on your friends, please.” It makes the student stop and think about what his actions were and what he can do to correct them. This may seem like a hassle in the beginning, but it will eventually pay off. The more students can recognize their own poor choices, the less likely they will be to repeat them.

13. If a student must apologize to someone for inappropriate behavior, it is important that the person not only say “sorry,” but say what he is sorry for. For example, rather than just saying “sorry,” a child might say, “I’m sorry for pushing you in line.” This helps young children take full responsibility for their behavioral choices and recognize that their actions affect others.

14. When introducing skills to the early childhood student, give correct information, but do not necessarily expect correct performance. Time, opportunity, practice, and maturity will have a lot to do with the development of a child’s skills. Even though a child may be taught the opposition of hand and foot when throwing, it does not mean that he will do it every time he tries. A teacher’s job is to plant the seed for correct skill development. When a child is ready, he will put this information into practice.

15. Because early childhood students have a relatively short attention span, change activities often, keeping activities simple with uncomplicated instructions. Watch for signs of talking, whining, lying down, wandering, interference with the work of others, or complete stoppage of work. These are signals that it is time to move on to something else.

16. On occasion, allow time for supervised “free time” or “open gym.” Set up various stations, establish rules, and stand back and watch. This is a great way to observe children’s physical and social development. It’s fun to see how they implement what they have learned.

17. Getting children active as soon as possible is very important. They often have short attention spans and do not sit well. Plan instant activities as soon as they enter the room. You will discover that there are far fewer behavioral problems when this is done.

18. Remember that no lesson plan is set in stone. Much of what you accomplish in a day is dependent upon factors like class dynamics, change in routine, absence of the regular classroom teacher, an unsettling event, etc. The key for any teacher is to know your students and be as flexible as possible.



Visual Aids for Appropriate Behavior

Adapted from *the Physical Essentials Curriculum*

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OOPS and DAISY - These ducks are used as a self evaluation tool. DAISY represents a day that a student is satisfied with (listening, following directions, getting along with others, working hard, staying on task, etc.) and OOPS represents a day that a student might need to make improvement in these kinds of areas. Students touch one of the two ducks at the end of the class period. If they touch OOPS, they need to understand what behavior made it an OOPS day and verbally express how they will change their behavior to make it a DAISY day the next time they attend class. Occasionally, a student may touch between the two ducks if they feel their day was so-so. That is his choice.



Inspector Respect - His motto is “Respect yourself and others.” The emphasis is on appropriate choices so that you do not interfere with the right of others to learn.



Topsy Turtle - His motto is “Try your hardest.”



General Space - This is the large space (area) that the class is working within.



Private Space - This is the small space (personal space) that each person places around himself/herself that allows working without interfering with others.



Shoo Fly – This fly reminds students not to tattle. When they start to do so (or I can see them coming towards me with a tattle) I quietly sing “Shoo fly don’t bother me a tattle tell you should not be.” Initially, I talk with them about the difference between telling (the purpose is to help) and tattling (the purpose is to hurt or get someone in trouble). Encourage problem solving.



Happy Hearts – This symbol reminds students to treat one another with kindness and to make an effort to be a friend to all.



The Break Room and Time to Play Clock - The Break Room is a designated area where children go when they need time to think about their behavior. The Time to Play Clock is the designated area that children move to when they feel they are ready to listen, cooperate, and return to activity.



Be still – Stop the Behavior
Remove yourself from the situation
Evaluate the problem and how you will fix it
Apologize to anyone who was negatively affected by your behavior
Keep working on positive choices

Positive attitude
Lots of cooperation
Always do your best
Yeah for good choices

A Sample of Early Childhood Rhymes for Physical Education Classroom Management

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| 1. | 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 – We’re done! | | (An easy countdown when asking children to stop activity.) |
| 2. | Place your hand upon your heart
Show me you have a good start | | (Done after aerobic activities. Students show me a pumping action with the hand that is not on the heart.) |
| 3. | Criss cross
Applesauce
Cross your legs or (Hands on knees) | | (How students sit when waiting) |
| 4. | Sitting in a W
Is so very bad for you
That is why we sit
Criss cross applesauce | | (An easy way to remind students to sit in a way that does not hurt knees or hips.) |
| 5. | If you’d like a stamp of mine
Meet me at the thin black line | | (or any other specified line) |
| 6. | Friends of mine
Make a line
(or)
Friends of mine, make a line
One by one we stand behind | | (Used for lining up purposes) |
| 7. | Leave Mother Nature on the ground
She likes to be left where she is found | | (Used to discourage picking up things up outside) |
| 8. | P.E.
Is <u>right</u> for me! | | (Used when students get a stamp on their right hand. It helps them learn left and right.) |
| 9. | When you’re done with the rest
You are <u>left</u> with the best | | (Used when students get a stamp on their left hands. It helps them distinguish left from right) |
| 10. | Show me you are standing tall
Place your back against the wall | | (Used when lining up and ready to say our Daisy Day cheer) |
| 11. | Show me that you’re ready please
Place your hands upon your knees
Now give them a great big clap
Place them both behind your back | | (Fun line up rhyme) |
| 12. | Stop, freeze
Eyes and ears on me, please | | (This is the rhyme I use the most.) |
| 13. | Baby ducks, come to me
Time to go as you can see
You have been good listeners today
Now we will be on our way | | (sung to the Barney tune) |
| 14. | Place your hand on your head
I will stamp it there, instead | (or) | (sung to “Put Your Finger in the Air”)
Put your hand on your head, on your head (clap clap)
Put your hand on your head, on your head (clap clap)
Put your hand on your head, and I’ll stamp it there instead
Put your hand on your head, on your head (clap clap) |

(Add the word right or left in front of the word “hand” if emphasizing directional concepts.)

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| 15. | Look at, look at, look at me
I've got something important to see | (or) | Look at, look at, look at me
I'm doing something you should see |
| 16. | Listen, listen, listen today
I've got something important to say | | |
| 17. | Hoo-ray (or)
For a Daisy day | Daisy, daisy, daisy day (or)
Let's all stop
And shout, HOORAY! | Hooray, Hooray
We had a Daisy Day |
| 18. | Clap, Clap, Clap and say
Today I had a daisy day | | (I sometimes do the first part of this rhyme at line up time and the children respond with "Daisy Day.") |
| 19. | I'm so very proud of you
You chose to work and listen, too! | | (A "nice job" rhyme done as warranted.) |
| 20. | Listen please to the whole song
Or you might get the directions wrong | (or) | Listen to the entire song
So you don't get the directions wrong |
| 21. | <u>Walking</u> is the way to go
Not too fast
But not too slow | | (Change the first word and emphasize a different movement.) |
| 22. | When you hear the music play
Move around in a <u>skipping</u> way. | | (Change the movement to whatever you want to emphasize.) |
| 23. | Pick things up, don't be slow
Hurry up, it's time to go! | | (Used when putting equipment back in it's proper place.) |
| 24. | Move to the side
So the other class can go by. | | (Used when passing on the right side of a class on the sidewalk.) |
| 25. | ACT – IVE
Active is the life for me! | | (Fun cheer to do before beginning or ending an activity.) |
| 26. | Cough in your elbow
If you please
Do the same thing
When you sneeze. | | (I teach children to cough in their elbow or down the front of their shirts.) |
| 27. | This show and tell
Is just for me
Cause I've got something
You need to see! | | (I use this when I am demonstrating or talking about a skill and do not want the children doing it while I'm talking.) |
| 28. | Foot check, foot check,
Look and see
Are your feet (on the line) or (together)
Where they should be? | | (Good line up rhyme) |

I also use rhymes when teaching skills because key words cue students about correct technique. For example, when teaching overhand throwing, I might say "Make an L so you can throw well," or "Up and out, that's what it's all about" or "Reach high, for the sky, not down, to the ground." If a child is working on a forward roll, I often say, "Bumpers up (bottom), chin to chest, hands in close, now roll your best." I occasionally get a parent who mentions that their child uses rhymes at home for rules, procedures, or skills. Years after students have left my program many can still recall rhymes they learned in Physical Education. Use your imagination and create rhymes or cheers that work in your situation!