

Play Ball!

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1. Sit across from a child on the floor. Roll a ball back-and-forth between you. Sing a song while rolling. E.g., To the tune of *Row, Row, Row your boat*, sing *Roll, Roll, Roll the ball. Gently back-and-forth. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily. Rolling happily.*
2. While rolling a ball back-and-forth, label the turns. E.g., *my turn...your turn* or *mine... yours.*
3. Roll the ball slightly out of the child's reach. Say *uh oh* and encourage them to crawl or reach for it.
4. Before rolling the ball, name a category member, such as family member or animal or food.
5. Try rolling the ball along a drawn line on the floor or ground between you.
6. Bounce a large ball back-and-forth between you while sitting on the floor or standing. Label *bounce-bounce-bounce*. Count the bounces. Maintain control. This helps a child to regulate their own behavior.
7. With a beach ball, tap it into the air. Label *up*, then *down* when it lands. Work together to keep it in the air as long as possible. Count the times each of you taps the ball.
8. Toss balls into a large container (E.g., laundry basket or large box). Label *in* when the ball makes it into the basket and *out* when it does not.
9. With an older child, play with marbles outside in the dirt. Together, create grooves or channels in the dirt to guide the marbles. Make a small hole at the end for a goal. Describe the path of the marbles. E.g., *It's going over there. It's coming this way now. Down the hill.*
10. Toss a tennis ball against a wall and catch it when it returns. Label the actions. E.g., *Toss. Catch. Got it!* Talk about *high* and *low* balls, *fast* and *slow*. Count the bounces.
11. Gather different balls to explore. E.g., ping-pong ball, golf ball, tennis ball, basketball. Talk about the sizes, colors, weights, designs, etc. Describe the sounds made when bounced or rolled. How high do they bounce? How far do they roll? What happens to each when placed into a bucket of water?
12. Play a simple version of four-square. Draw four large squares in the dirt or with chalk on pavement. Two-to-four participants each take a square. Bounce the ball back-and-forth to each other. Challenge by singing a simple song while bouncing the ball. E.g., *Row, Row, Row your boat*. Try to match the rhythm of the song.
13. In a circle, play Hot Potato by catching and releasing the ball quickly to the next person.



These games help with self-regulation and modulation of growing strength, let alone cooperation and turn-taking skills.

