

Kick It

Cost: None

Mess factor: None

Suggested location: Living room or other comfortable space

Experiences your children will have

- Stretching their leg muscles and kicking their feet
- Cause and effect — moving their bodies and causing objects to move

Materials

- For nonmobile infants: an open space and a fixed, soft surface, such as a couch
- For nonmobile or newly mobile infants: ribbons or small blanket
- For sitting, crawling, and walking infants: soft balls that your infant can kick or throw

Beginning

For nonmobile infants: With your infant sitting up or lying down, touch the bottom of your child's feet with the palms of your hands. This will likely result in your child pushing against or kicking your hands.

For mobile infants: Choose a space where your infant has room to move, and offer some balls to kick. Accept that your child might instead choose to throw the balls.

Middle

Describe your infant's actions. For example, you might say something like, "You're kicking against my hands! Kick, kick!"

For nonmobile infants: Repeat this activity with your infant's feet up against a sturdy, padded piece of furniture (e.g., a couch). You can also dangle ribbons or a small blanket near your child's feet for them to kick. Infants will enjoy watching the way the ribbons move and feel them against their feet as they kick. This increases children's awareness of their bodies and different ways they can use them.

For mobile infants: Comment on how your child chooses to use the balls, and use them in the same way. Describe how your child is moving their body and the effect those movements have on the ball. For example, you might say, "You swung your leg back and kicked the ball. It rolled all the way over under the window" or "You held the ball in both hands and threw it way up." These comments increase children's awareness of their bodies and the different ways they can use them.

End

Let your infant know that it is almost time for the next part of the day by telling them what is coming up next. After your child has kicked a few more times or has lost interest, gently pick up your infant and prepare for the next part of your day.

Cleanup

Gather up any materials you have used and set them aside for use at another time.

Older children

Older children may enjoy kicking balls and trying out different ways to use their bodies. Assist them in finding soft balls and a space where young infants will not be bumped, trampled, or startled. Older siblings of sitting, crawling, or walking infants may enjoy gently rolling or kicking a ball back and forth with their younger sibling.

Hints

- Your infant will stay engaged with activities longer when you are present and are reflecting their emotions. Be sure to stay on your child's level, make eye contact, offer gentle touches, and periodically make comments about how your child is moving.

More!

Throughout the day, comment on your child's use of their body (e.g., moving arms or legs, moving in different ways, moving different body parts at the same time). Encouraging children to move their bodies in different ways will help strengthen their muscles for future tasks such as walking, running, jumping, and climbing.

Special needs accommodations

Be sure to position children in ways that are comfortable while allowing them to explore ways to move their bodies. Placing nonmobile infants on their back is usually a comfortable position for making eye contact and moving arms or legs freely. If you have questions or concerns about your child's physical development, contact your pediatrician.