

Homemade physical activity materials

Item	Instructions
Balance Beam	Use a 4x4 beam of about 8 feet in length. Secure two stabilizing pieces of lumber to the bottom of the beam with screws. Smooth the edges with a router or apply carpeting or matting over the length of the beam. (Contact a local hardware store for assistance).
Balance Boards	Use a ½" or ¾" piece of plywood for top of the balance board. Use a piece of piping or any other strong material that is shaped in a cylinder for bottom. Wrap the piping in tape if its surface needs to be smoother. Try making different shapes (circle, rectangle, square) for the top of the balance board.
Beanbags	Cut a heavy, sturdy cloth material into a 4" x 8" rectangle or a 6" x 6" rectangle. Fold the piece of cloth over to make a square (make sure you are folding the sides you want on the outside of the beanbag inwards). Triple stitch two of the sides. Turn the cloth inside out to expose a smooth outside surface. Fill with dried beans or other seeds. Sew the last side. If you want to get really creative, try making bean bags in different shapes!
Bowling Pins	Use either empty ½ gallon plastic bleach bottles or potato chip canisters. Fill each with 2 to 3 inches of sand to weigh them down.
Climbing Rope	Select a rope with a diameter of 1½ inches. Put a few knots in the bottom half of the rope so children can be successful at climbing. Space knots about 9 inches apart. By leaving the top half without knots, it can serve as a challenge to more experienced climbers.
Jump Ropes	Use 3/8" to ½" sash cord or plow line (this can be purchased at a hardware store). Cut into 5 to 8 foot lengths for individual short ropes. To prevent unraveling, wrap rope ends with duct tape and cut through tape with a sharp knife. If you would like longer ropes, cut pieces into 10 to 16 foot lengths.
Ladder	Rails of the ladder can be made from 2" x 2" or 2" x 4" pieces of lumber. The rails should be between 7' and 12' long. Rungs should be between 12" and 16" inches long with a piece of wood either 1½" in diameter or a 2" x 2". Use screws and/or nails to fasten rungs securely with spacing of 12" to 14" apart. Sand and paint or varnish the ladder for safety. Also, consider using varied spacing between the rungs for a more challenging experience.
Cones	Ask government traffic and highway agencies if you can have discarded traffic cones. Otherwise, half gallon bleach bottles or milk containers that have been emptied and cleaned can be used for cones by filling them with 2 or 3 cups of sand to keep them from tipping.
Movement Mats	Purchase clear plastic carpet runners. Cut footprints, handprints and seatprints from contact paper. Apply them to the carpet runner. This can help guide children in their movements.
Parachute	Instead of purchasing a parachute, use a sheet from a queen size or king size set. Military supply depots also may have old, inexpensive parachutes.
Scoop	Cut the bottom from a cleaned ½ gallon plastic bottle with a handle. Tape along the cut edge for safety!
Tires	Ask a tire store if you can have discarded automobile rubber tires. Look for tires of different sizes for children to have different handling and lifting experiences. You can paint the tires various colors and with designs using lacquer or water-based paints.
Vaulting Box	Stack old newspapers and magazines in a cardboard box. Tape and tie the box securely. Now you have a vaulting box!
Wands	Saw off discarded broomsticks or dowels in lengths of 30 inches or less. Sand and paint each colorfully!

From *See How They Run: A Lesson Guide to Preschool Movement Education* by Joni Coe and Lee Allsbrook. 1978.