

Piggy in the middle

A games activities core task for key stage 1 children

You need:

- a variety of balls
- markers to separate areas and to use as spots
- a video camera and playback equipment (this is optional, but it is useful to record the children's first and then later attempts at the core task to show their progress).

What is the core task?

The 'Piggy in the middle' core task involves children trying to score as many points as possible by throwing and catching a ball between players on their team.

The pupils work in groups of four, with three attackers and one defender. The attackers pass the ball between them – the person with the ball must stand still but the others can move around. The defender tries to intercept the ball without touching any of the attackers. The attackers score one point for each pass they make and the aim of the game is to score as many points as possible in one go. If they drop the ball or the defender gets it they have to start counting again. Each team plays for five minutes before swapping roles.

This core task can easily be adapted to striking and stopping a ball using a bat, racket or stick, or to kicking and stopping a ball using the feet.



To help the children evaluate and improve their core task performance, ask them:

- Can you describe how you moved to catch the ball?
- How did you throw the ball? Why did you choose this technique?
- What type of throws did you use in your game?
- What did you do to try to intercept the ball when you were defending?
- What was your highest score? How do you think you could improve this?

How are the children doing? Look out for them:



moving into different positions to catch the ball



throwing with a suitable technique



moving to try to intercept the ball



showing awareness of others when moving around the court



making simple decisions about when and where to run



watching and describing what others are doing



knowing how to score and follow the rules of the game



making it difficult for their opponents

To make the task easier or harder, consider changing one or more **STEP: Space Task Equipment People**

Piggy in the middle: development activities

After the children's initial attempt at the task, you will know what they can do, how well they can do it, and what they need to work at. To help all of them make progress and achieve in different areas, choose from the activities suggested here and add some of your own.

Developing skills

Throwing and catching

- Give the children opportunities to experiment with underarm and overarm throwing, and throwing fast and slow, high and low using the widest range of equipment possible. Help them to understand when to use different throws (eg overarm for distance, underarm for accuracy).
- When catching, teach the children to make a target with their hands, watch the ball all the time it is in the air, cup their hands and cushion the ball into their hands.
- When throwing, teach them to face the target and take a step forward as they throw. Show them how their throwing arm should follow through and point in the direction of the throw.

- Working in groups of three, ask the children to throw the ball for one of their team members to catch and then to run into a space. Ask them to practise making a target with their hands and using good technique for throwing underarm.

Moving in games

- Teach the children how to dodge and swerve to avoid other players.
- Ask them to try activities that involve throwing a ball to a partner from different distances. Talk with them about how far it is best to be from a partner to receive a pass.

Evaluating and improving

How do you know where to position your body to catch? How does it help other players throw to you if you make a target with your hands? How can you show other players that you're ready to receive a pass? Why should you watch the ball as it goes through the air? What happens if you take your eyes

off the ball? When should you use an underarm throw? When should you use an overarm throw? Why is it difficult for other players to pass to you if you stand too close to them? Why is it difficult if you are too far away?

Making and applying decisions

Tactical choices

- Teach the children to throw a ball to a partner and run immediately to a spare spot in the space.
- Talk with the children about when it is good to use a fast and a slow pass.
- Divide them into teams for playing 'Piggy in the middle' and, in their teams, ask them to discuss tactics. How will they tell each other when they are ready for a pass? What type of throws will they use when? How will they make sure they use all the space?

Playing against opponents

- Teach the children how to get away from a defender and find a space. Give them opportunities to practise dodging, swerving and controlled stopping.

Evaluating and improving

Why are dodging and swerving important in games? Why is controlled stopping important? If you're a defender, how can you beat an attacker? If you're an attacker, how can you beat a defender?

- Show them how to mark other players as a defender to make it difficult for them to pass or catch the ball.
- Give the children opportunities to take part in team activities and encourage them to talk to each other in their teams about how they can outwit their opponents.

Scoring and following rules

- Challenge the children to invent a scoring system for different games.
- Ask them to think of different ways of keeping the score when they play 'Piggy in the middle'.
- Talk with them about the rules for the game and whether they are fair.
- Ask them to change the rules and say whether it makes the game harder or easier.

Ask the children to watch another group playing 'Piggy in the middle'. Can you describe what the attackers and defender did? Did you notice any changes in speed and direction? How did the players throw the ball? Were their throws accurate or not? Can you copy any of their tactics to help you play 'Piggy in the middle' better?

Developing physical and mental capacity

Warming up

- Talk with the children about why we warm up (to prepare our bodies for physical activity).
- Help them to recognise the way their heartbeat, breathing and temperature change during a warm-up.
- Ask them to take part in controlled joint movements, activities that gradually raise their temperature and whole body stretches.
- Explain to them that being active helps their bodies to grow, develop and work well.
- Ask them to describe which body parts they use during different games.
- Talk with them about the meaning of the word 'active'.

Heart rate

- Teach the children to put one hand over their heart and feel their heart beating.
- Ask them to describe how their heart beats before exercise (eg slow, quiet). Ask them to tap out the rhythm.
- During games and at the end of a warm-up, ask the children how their heart rate has changed. How would they describe how their heart is beating now? (eg fast, loud)

Evaluating and improving

Why do we warm up? What happens to your breathing when you start to run around? To your temperature? To your heartbeat? How do you think you should warm up to play 'Piggy in the middle'? Can you demonstrate stretching activities and warm-up games?

What changes does your body go through when you play an energetic game? Why does your heart start to beat harder and faster?

Games activities core tasks

This chart shows how the new games activities core tasks relate to the existing core tasks in the QCA/DCSF schemes of work for games activities. It presents a visual snapshot of the pitch and challenge of different tasks, enabling you to track and plan pupils' progress in games activities.

