

The basics

letting go of the ball after '1, 2, 3 go'

This group session covers both early language and number for children who are at the very beginning of their journey.

Resources

Have ready a:

- different ball for each child. Coloured large 'grippy' balls are best, but also include a soft/easy to grab ball, a ball that can light up and a ball that blows out a little puff of air when squeezed and a jingly ball. These are all aimed at attracting the child's attention – the additional sensations can attract and hold attention – blow on their face with the ball, hold a glowing ball near their face, jangle a ball with a bell in it, etc. An open mesh ball or a cloth ball will also be useful for those who may struggle to grab hold of the ball,
- box to fit all the balls in,
- bell (to use to get child's attention if necessary).
- cover for box (bright coloured cloth)



Activity 1

Start with the child sitting supported if needed. The child may need support so that their full focus and effort is on arm and eye movement.

Say and sign the child's name. Once you have eye contact hold one of the balls near to them and say "ball".

Move it slowly away from them and place it on the floor and sign ball.

Pick up the ball (they may have lost eye contact with it when you placed it on the floor) and grab their attention to it again (use bell if needed), count *1, 2, 3, go* and as you do so move the ball from side to side and up and down and the child should track the ball.

As you say "go" roll the ball to the child.

In the beginning you may have to be quite near the child and place the ball into their hands. (Some children will have a better grasp than others, use the mesh ball for those with a weaker grasp.)

Repeat several times.

Activity 2

Play *1, 2, 3 go* with several balls. Hold onto several balls and assist the child to also hold a ball. Slowly count "*1, 2, 3, go*" and encourage/help the child to let go of the ball on the word "*go*" as you also let go of your balls.

Help the child to grab a ball again. Repeat several times.

Put the balls in a box. Use the sign/words '*ball in*' as you do so.

After several weeks the child will have developed more awareness and will be ready to progress slowly.

Alter the activity slightly.

Now start with the balls in a box on the floor covered with the brightly coloured cloth...

Activity 3

'where's ball?'

Start by showing the balls in an open box and then cover the box with a cloth, say/sign "where's ball?". This will begin to develop early placement/memory skills.

Let the child have a turn to pull the cloth off and take a ball.

Ask the child using speech and sign for their ball back,

say '*Jack*', wait for eye contact, then sign and say '*ball*' and, '*1, 2, 3 go*' (slow instructions).

Encourage/help guide their child's hands to let go.

Finish by playing with several balls as in activity 2 then ask the child to put the balls in the box. Use the language '*Jack*', wait for eye contact '*ball in*'.

Put balls away.