

# BANANAS HANDOUT

## Ideas For Gross Motor Activities From Molly Sullivan

- **Make a “Bumpety-Bump”**

Sew together double bed sheets (or similar sized material) and stuff with fist-sized pieces of foam. Use a low box or bench to jump off (one-at-a-time) onto the Bumpety-Bump.

- **Encourage Fantasy Play**

Have plenty of pillows and blankets to make nests, forts, castles, caves and mountains.

- **Make a Rope Swing**

Use a 1”-1 1/2” rope with a big knot on the bottom and knots about every 18” for children to climb up and swing on. This can be hung in a doorway. (Have a hook or other method to hang it out of reach when you don’t want it in use.)

- **Build a Slide Ramp**

Turn a 6’ long, 1’ wide smooth plank into a slide/ramp. Attach a 1” x 1” stick, nailed across one end, to make it more stable when used as a slide off a box or on one side of a stairway. As a ramp, it can bridge boxes, tires, sawhorses, etc. Pillows under the ramp or at the end of the slide make for good landings!

- **Hang a Hammock**

A net hammock hung from one hook (about 6”-12” from the floor) with a pillow in it will make a swing a child can lie belly down on and control with his/her own movement.

- **Use Mattresses and Mats**

An old mattress or 2” fabric-covered foam mat are good for somersaults, tumbling or wrestling. An old mattress and box springs are good for bouncing on.

- **Make-Your-Own Hiding Places and Houses**

Use sheets or blankets to cover tables, boxes or tires to make hiding places or mysterious houses.

- **Designate a Running Path**

Design a clearly marked pathway for running in circles or a straight path from a wall to a soft place to flop down. Encourage children to come up with different ways to move – crawling, crabwalking, walking backward, hopping like a rabbit, hopping on one foot, etc.

- **Play Balloon Volleyball**

Use couches, chairs, clotheslines as a net and bat balloons across to one another. Or play balloon “hot potato,” where children try to keep a balloon in the air without letting it touch the ground.

**Other Hints:** Children should be barefoot or in thick sock/slippers when doing any of these activities to avoid accidents and to help pillows, etc. last longer. Encourage the children to alter the space themselves and encourage quiet as well as active play. Keep your eyes open for interesting things to add – barrels, baskets, beach balls, bean bags – whatever appeals to you.

**Remember:** Make sure all equipment is safe and age appropriate and ensure the safety and success of these activities by providing close adult supervision. Check equipment frequently for exposed nails or other unsafe features.

*Many thanks to Molly Sullivan, former Berkeley provider, for sharing her great ideas with us.*

