

# move to improve

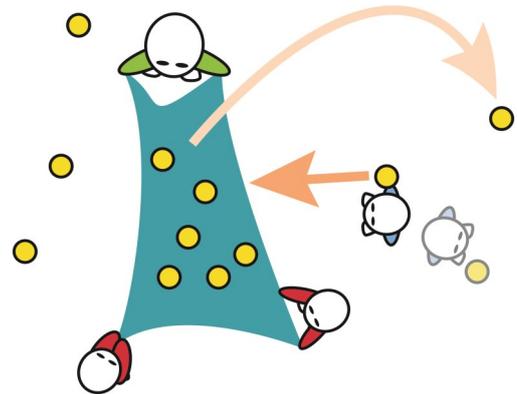
These move to improve activity guidelines are designed to be used in conjunction with the move to improve website. Please go to [www.movetoimprove.org.uk](http://www.movetoimprove.org.uk) for full guidelines and information for parents and carers.

## Popcorn maker



Suitable for:

- 3 or more players
- Outdoor area
- Main skills: Hand-eye skills
- Age appropriate: 3-7years



### Make it happen

This activity is often played in schools and clubs with lots of children using a parachute, however it can be done in an outdoor space with a small group using a blanket, sheet or even a large towel.

- A minimum of two people (diagram shows an adult and two children) will hold out a blanket raised off the ground with a number of light soft balls placed on it (see **Make your equipment appropriate**).
- By holding onto the edges of the blanket and making it billow up and down, the balls will bounce up into the air.
- The people holding the blanket can try and bounce the balls off the blanket so that the fielder(s) can collect them and throw them back on.
- This can be a collaborative activity where the people holding the blanket wait until all the balls have been collected and put back on, or a continuous competitive activity where the fielder has to try and get the balls back on before the others are able to bounce them all off. As long as there is at least one ball on the blanket the fielder is still 'in the game'.
- The more balls that are used, the more challenging and dynamic the activity is.

### Make it safe

*We provide this list only as a guide of what parents/carers may wish to consider. Please also read our general guidelines on the **Parents/carers information** page.*

- Ensure that the space you have available is suitable for the activity.
- Children can get quite excited playing this game so you might want to add in some calm 'slow motion' periods.
- Use lightweight, soft balls such as sponge balls or the plastic balls used in a home ball pit (see **Make your own equipment**); heavier balls like tennis balls can be too heavy if they fly up into the face of young children.
- To avoid collisions when picking up the balls, advise them not to bend over with their heads down but to reach in from the side with knees bent and arms outstretched as if feeding a piece of meat to a crocodile.

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Please see our sections below to help you make more of this activity and keep your children coming back to it over time.

## Make it fun

- Pretend the blanket is a fishing net and the balls are fish trying to jump out of the net. The fielders can either return the fish to the net or place them at a collection point to signify them returning to the sea.
- Pretend the blanket is a big cooking pot and the balls are vegetables that the collectors have to throw in to make a soup.
- **Leaper's theme:** The blanket represents Bumpy the elephant's big popcorn pan. Start by rippling the blanket at first to gently heat the popcorn. Gradually intensify the movement to heat up the popcorn and bounce it out of the pan. Bumpy rushes around chomping up all the popcorn.

Please also read our general guidelines on the [Parents/carers information page](#).

## Make it a challenge

- Set a timer and everyone freezes when time is up. If there are more balls on the blanket than the fielders have won, if there are more balls on the ground than the bouncers have won.
- Make everyone work as a team by setting up a collecting point away from the blanket. Start the clock, the bouncers have to bounce all the balls off the blanket and the fielder has to gather them and take them all to the collecting point. Once every ball is at the collecting point then stop the clock. Can they beat their time?
- Have one ball that is a different colour/size/weight to the rest. Try and just bounce that ball off without bouncing off any others. Or, try and bounce all the others off but make sure the different one stays on until the end.

Please also read our general guidelines on the [Parents/carers information page](#).

## Make your equipment suitable

- Use lightweight, soft balls such as sponge balls or the plastic balls used in a home ball pit; heavier balls like tennis balls will be too heavy if they fly up into the face of young children. *Some ideas for making lightweight balls: roll up a sock and tuck it in to itself, partially inflate some balloons, roll up paper into little balls, use some pom poms.*
- Practice with blankets/sheets of different sizes until you find what works best for the amount of people you have playing.

Please also read our general guidelines on the [Parents/carers information page](#).

## Make it more energetic

### Fielding movement

- For a further challenge you can state that the children can only move in a certain way to collect the balls (e.g. hopping, jumping, on all fours, hopscotch, starjumps, etc).

### Throwing technique

- 3-5 yrs: show the children how to throw underarm and also overarm from the shoulder.
- 5-7 yrs: encourage that the children throw overarm from the shoulder. They can point with their non-throwing arm to help them with aiming and they should follow through with their throwing arm as they transfer their weight forward. To give them more of a challenge, they can only throw balls back on to the blanket from no closer than 2 metres away.

### Catching

- Teach the children to catch the balls as they bounce out of the blanket.
- 3-5yrs: keep eyes on the ball, get their body in line with it, hands together and cupped or closed around it. Secure ball by bringing it inwards towards body.
- 5-7yrs: all of above, plus place hands together with fingers pointing upwards for a ball arriving at chest height and fingers pointing downwards for a ball arriving below chest height.

Please also read our general guidelines on the [Parents/carers information page](#).

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This **move to improve** resource is provided as a guideline only for parents and carers who wish to supervise physical activities for their children.

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