Jumping and Landing

Young children love to jump. And, they attempt to do so whenever possible. They seem to have a natural fascination with propelling themselves off the ground and momentarily flying through the air. Jumping and landing are required movements in most children’s game, dance, and gymnastic activities.

The Skill

Jumping can be broken down into three successive phases:
1. Takeoff is the action the child takes to propel his/her body off the ground.
2. Flight is the action of the child’s body while it is off the ground and in the air.
3. Landing is the action of the child’s body as it reestablishes contact with the ground.

There are five basic fundamental jumping patterns young children should have frequent opportunities to practice. The patterns are:
1. Two-foot takeoff to a one-foot landing
2. Two foot takeoff to a two foot landing
3. One-foot takeoff to a landing on the same foot (hop)
4. One-foot takeoff to a landing on the other foot (leap)
5. One-foot takeoff to a two-foot landing

Cues

A cue word or phrase is like a movement secret that helps your child learn or perform a skill better. Cues help children focus on one specific part of a complex skill. There are two rules parents should understand when using cues to help their child develop skill. The first step in skill development is to allow your child to simply explore the skill. Ask your child to jump over the crack in the sidewalk or jump down from the bottom step on the stairs. Begin with the most basic fundamental jump—two foot takeoff to a two foot landing.

At first, don’t worry about form or accuracy just experiment with jumping and landing. The second guideline, when your child is ready, only present one learning cue at a time. Too much information when learning a new skill may be confusing. Practice emphasizing one cue for several weeks and when your child has learned that cue then move on to another.
Equipment

Children will not need any equipment to begin jumping but it is recommended to initially provide your child with a focus of something to jump over (rope, hoop, tape lines on the floor, etc.).

Activity

In this activity we will pretend to jump over a river. Give your child the opportunity to practice the skills of jumping and landing while emphasizing swinging the arms when jumping, and landing in a balanced position without falling. The major focus of any jumping activity for young children should be landing on balance without falling.

What Should Parents do?

- Explain to your child that he is taking a walk in the woods and may need to cross a stream or river. When your child comes to the river (rope, chalk line on sidewalk, etc.) she needs to jump over the river without getting her feet wet.
- To assist children in learning the fundamentals of jumping, parents should initially ask children to takeoff on two feet and to swing their arms forward when they jump.
- When landing, children should land on two feet spreading their feet about shoulder width apart so they have a wide base of support when they land. After landing children should practice jumping over the river again.
- Initially, getting both feet to land at the same time may be difficult but continue to emphasize “land with both feet at the same time.”
- After 3 to 5 minutes of jumping your child may need a brief rest period (30 to 60 seconds) before continuing the activity.
- Vary activity by asking your child to see how high or how far they can jump when traveling over the river. Emphasize landing on balance without falling over.
- More experienced children may like the challenge of clapping their hands as the fly through the air, or turning in the air before landing. Whatever the variation, parents and children should continue emphasizing landing in a balanced position.
- More experienced children may want the challenge of taking off from one-foot and landing on two-feet, or jumping off of one-foot and landing on one-foot. The focus should still be the same—swing arms forward when jumping and land without falling.
Assessment Ideas

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2004) has developed benchmarks in this area that suggest that by the time a child completes kindergarten, he/she should be able to jump and land while being under control. Children this age should also be able to jump in different directions both on the ground and off of low obstacles, and to stay on balance and not fall when landing. Observe your child’s jumping and landing skills and record their progression toward reaching benchmarks in this area.

Assessment Opportunities

- Can your child identify and perform the critical elements of jumping and landing (bend knees when taking off, swing arms forward, and both feet at the same time, Balance landing?)
- Ask your child to stand on one side of a line and to jump over taking off and landing on two feet at the same time.
- Jump five times and record the number of times she jumps and lands on two feet at the same time and if she swings her arms forward when jumping.
- Cut out the assessment forms below and place in the child’s room or on the kitchen refrigerator. Record your child’s progress and discuss the cues that are important to learning how to jump and land.

Cue Checklist (place date when observed)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bends knees when preparing to jump</td>
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<td>Swings arms from back to front</td>
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<td>Takes off and lands on both feet at the same time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is on balance when landing and does not fall over</td>
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Skill and Accuracy Checklist (record distance your child can jump)

Parents will need a ruler or measuring tape to measure and record distance. Measure each jump in inches.

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing behind a line jump off two feet and land on two feet, record how far you can jump.</td>
<td>Jump 1 _____ inches</td>
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