



8 Activity Cones



PLAY IDEAS

How many ways can you use these cones to play? Have fun running, jumping, matching, balancing and creating your own races and games. Want more ideas? See below.

SEQUENCING AND MATCHING

- Divide the cones evenly between you and the child, making certain that you each have one cone of each color. Arrange some or all of your cones in a line and ask the child to duplicate the pattern using his/her cones. Continue this activity by stacking cones together and asking the child to duplicate the stack.
- Arrange all eight cones in a line or large circle. Ask the child to pick up cones according to a sequence you specify. For example, you might say, "Please pick up red, blue, yellow." For an added challenge, add colors to the sequence or specify textures.
- Place all of the cones in front of the child. Ask the child to sit down and close her/his eyes, and to use only the sense of touch to sort cones by texture pattern into two groups of four.
- Spread the cones throughout the play area. Ask the child to choose any cone as a starting cone. Ask the child to find another cone that will match either the starting cone's texture or its color, then return to stack the new cone on top of the starting cone. Ask the child to continue gathering the cones, one at a time, to match the color or texture of the topmost cone, until all the cones are stacked.

SCOOPING AND KNOCKING OVER

- Place seven cones on the ground or floor, tipping them over onto one side. Ask the child to use the eighth cone to scoop up the other seven cones. Vary this activity by asking the child to scoop up cones as you describe their color or texture, or by beginning with some cones standing upright on their bases. (Tip: It's OK to use a second hand to steady the stack as it gets heavier.)
- Place all the cones on the ground, and ask the child to help knock them all over to set up the game. Then time the child (with a timer or by counting) as he/she rights each cone with only his/her feet. Vary the activity by calling out categories to have tipped over or righted, for example: "Make all the squares lie down, and all the circles stand up," or "Pick up only blues and reds."
- Set up six cones like bowling pins, in a triangular formation, and ask the child to roll a ball (a soccer ball works well) toward them to knock down as many as possible. With more than one player, offer each child two turns per round and keep score by counting the knocked-down pins.

Variation: Give the child two tries to knock down the pins. After the second try, the child must run to the pins, pick up all the pins that were not knocked down while he/she counts them and run that number of circles around the knocked-down pins.

STACKING AND BALANCE

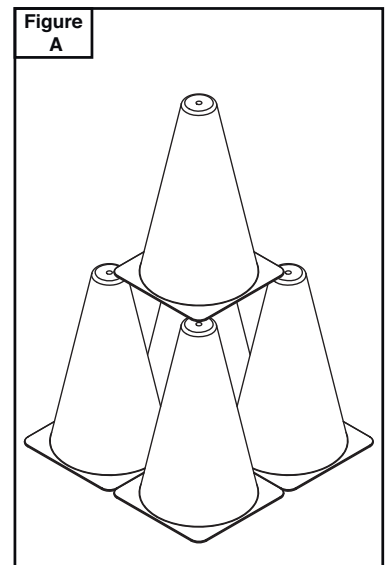
- Stand one cone on the ground, a few inches in front of the child. Ask the child to try and stack cones on it by dropping the cones from waist height. Count the cones that land on the standing cone. Increase the challenge by asking the child to drop cones from shoulder height, with both eyes closed or two cones at a time.
- Variation: Stand four cones together, sides touching, and invert a fifth cone so it's upside-down and supported by the other four. Ask the child to drop cones into it, adding as many as possible until the inverted stack falls over. Increase the challenge by supporting the inverted cone with only three rightside-up cones.

STACKING AND BALANCE (CONTINUED)

- Ask the child to make a three-dimensional pyramid by stacking the cones carefully (four cones in a square at the base and one on top; see Figure A). For an added challenge, try a two-dimensional triangle (with three in a row at the base, then rows of two and one), or ask the child to find his/her own way of building a structure with the cones.

Variation: Beginning with a triangle or pyramid, ask the child to dismantle the structure cone by cone. Ask the child to build a different type of structure with the cones as they are removed, so that one structure grows as the other is taken apart.

- Set up two stacks of cones about three giant steps apart. The child starts at Stack 1 and picks up a cone, balances it tip-down on the palm of his/her hand and tries to walk or run to Stack 2 without dropping the cone. Once the child passes Stack 2, the child is "safe" and is allowed to drop or reposition the cone. The child picks up a cone from Stack 2, stacks it in the cone in his/her hand and walks or runs back to Stack 1 without dropping the two-cone stack in his/her hand. Once again, the child adds a cone, and may drop or reposition the cones while behind the "safe" line. Continue until a cone drops in the center area—then try again and see if the child can balance even more cones!



BRAINTEASERS AND CHANCE GAMES

- (2+ players) Spread out the cones over a wide area, keeping one nearby as the starting cone. A grown-up begins to ask a question that everyone will know, such as, "Who in our family had a waffle for breakfast?" When the players think they know the answer, they race to collect an "answer cone" to stack on top of the starting cone; the first to do this gets to answer the question. If he/she gets the question wrong, the other player gets a turn to stack an answer cone and answer the question. The player to answer the question correctly gets one point. If any player answers incorrectly or is left holding a cone when the other player gets a point, his/her cone must be returned to its original place, and the other player gets to choose a funny way for the other player to return it—such as "walking backwards." Whoever has the most points at the end of the game is the winner!
- (2 players) Use sticks, chalk or lines in the sand to make a large tic-tac-toe board, and assign each player either all the cones with circles or all the cones with squares. Take turns placing cones on the board, with each player trying to get three of his/her cones in a row—either horizontally, vertically or diagonally—for the win!

BRAINTEASERS AND CHANCE GAMES (CONTINUED)

- (2 players) Have one player (“the stacker”) stack half the cones (one of each color) in secret, hiding the order from the other player (“the guesser”). The guesser must try to replicate the hidden tower by stacking the other cones one at a time, and asking the stacker whether each guess is correct. Keep track of how many mistakes are made to score the game: 0 mistakes: Super Stacker!; 1–2 mistakes: Cone Commander; 3–4 mistakes: Fading Colors; 5–6 mistakes: Wobbly Tower!
- (1–2 players) Stack the cones in any order while the child turns around and does not look. When the stack is finished, the child describes one of the cones from memory, such as “yellow circles” or “red squares.” (To make this easier, a parent can list the colors and textures aloud to help the child choose a cone without looking.) The player then looks at the stack. He/she must remove cones, one at a time, from the bottom or top of the stack to retrieve the chosen cone in the fewest moves possible.

Variation: Play with two players, asking both to look away while the order is set and then take turns removing cones (one cone per turn) from the bottom and/or top. Whoever removes the chosen cone is the winner!

RACES AND OBSTACLE COURSES

- (2 players) Line up each set (the circle set and the square set) of cones across the length of the play area to make a straight course for each. The cones of each set should be spaced at “doubled” intervals—for example, there might be two feet of space between cones 1 and 2, four feet between cones 2 and 3 and eight feet between cones 3 and 4. (Adjust the number and position of cones for your play area.) Assign one course to each racer, and ask each racer to get ready at the #1 cones. On the count of three, the racers should run to each cone in order, stopping to tap the target cone and then returning to cone #1 between each lap (1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 4, 1). The first runner to return to his/her cone 1 at the end of the race is the winner! (See Figure B for details.)

For a one-player game, set up one course and time the child completing the race. For added interest, introduce different types of motion (hopping, crab-walking, skipping, etc.) to get to and from each cone.

- (2+ players) Position cones to form an obstacle course, including a different activity at each stop. For example, you could use three cones in a line to weave in and out of, one as a “fence” to hop over and two mixed-up pairs to match and stack in order (squares, circles, squares, circles). Time each child who tries the obstacle course. The fastest contestant is the winner!
- (1+ players) Set up the cones in a wide circle or path and assign specific motions for each part of the course. For example, the child might leap for one segment, skip for another and hop on one foot for another. You may wish to combine actions or design an obstacle course that leads the child to a chosen destination or activity. For example, you might direct the child by saying, “Please hop to the red cone, walk in a zigzag to the blue cone, bear-crawl to the orange cone, and take a seat for story time at the yellow cone.”
- (2+ players) Mark a starting line using two cones, allowing enough space between the cones for runners. Mark a finish line in the same way. When the race starts, all runners race across the starting line and over the finish line. The first runner across the finish line wins.

RACES AND OBSTACLE COURSES (CONTINUED)

- (up to 4 teams) Mark a starting line and finish line. Divide runners evenly into teams, line teams up behind the starting line and give a cone to the first runner in each line. When the race begins, runners carry the cone over the finish line, run back across the starting line and hand the cone to the next runner. One team wins when all of its runners have crossed back over the starting line with the cone.
- (2–4 runners) Mark a starting line and finish line. Divide runners into teams and line teams up behind the starting line. Give one cone to each runner and set extra cones aside. When the race starts, the first runner in each line runs to the finish line, sets her/his cone down directly on the finish line (not on another cone) and runs back across the starting line. The next runners take turns stacking their team’s cones together on the finish line. As soon as any team’s cones are all stacked, the team reverses the activity and starts removing cones. The first team to bring all of its cones back over the starting line wins!
- (2+ players) Place all the cones in a straight line, spaced evenly (at least several feet apart) across the play area. Tip some of the cones in different directions to indicate a different kind of motion a player must use when he/she reaches them: upright=hopping, tipped forward=run forward, tipped backward=walk backward; tipped to the side=gallop facing that side. Players take turns moving through the course while a grown-up times them. During his/her turn, each player may change the position of any one cone, which can be used to speed up his/her own progress or increase the challenge for opponents. Whoever has the fastest time wins!

GET INSPIRED TO CREATE YOUR OWN GAMES! HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- Tallest Tower Contest (Build a tall tower using the cones in any way you can!)
- Olympic Torch Game (Hold one cone like an ice-cream cone and pile others on top—a wobbly challenge for relays, obstacle courses or timed balance activities.)
- Long-Jump Contest (Measure out lengths, mark the longest leaps and try to break your own record.)
- ID the Missing Cone (Great for cognitive skills: Line up or group the cones, have the child look away, then remove one or more or change the order. Ask the child to figure out what has changed.)
- Replicate a Pattern from Memory (Line up cones in a pattern or sequence, and ask the child to replicate it. Builds memory and cognitive skills.)
- Hand, Fingers, Feet, Knees (Carry a cone to the finish using different body parts—an exciting way to spice up a race or relay!)
- Bear Crawl (Have the child place each hand on top of cones and use them to “walk” like a bear.)
- Egg Hunt (Hide a plastic egg or small ball underneath one of the cones for a hunt. Use “hot” and “cold” to guide the seekers, or give hints about the appearance of the right cone.)
- Catcher’s Cone (Use the cone to catch a ball thrown by a friend. See if you can throw or bowl with one, too!)

Figure B

