

Striking with an Implement

Striking and controlling a ball with an implement (racquet, stick or bat) can occur in many forms. As a result, its application to sports varies. For example, the horizontal striking pattern occurs in softball, while a more vertical pattern is found in golf, cricket, and hockey. Many sports (e.g., tennis, badminton) include striking in several planes, and share the same movement concepts as striking with the hand. (Developing FMS Manual, Sport NZ).

Foundation skills for striking need to be practised in the early years, starting from birth, and continuing into the preschool and school years. When children are first learning these large-motor manipulative skills, it is important to remember that their goal isn't complete accuracy. They need to start by mastering the action. It can be helpful to have them practice using imaginary or slow-moving objects at first.

In developing striking skills, you can utilise a large number of different objects / materials. You can use balloons, bean bags, koosh balls, bits of cardboard and wood (cut to the needed size), as well as a variety of traditional equipment such as bats, racquets or clubs and tennis, hockey, and softballs.

1. At first object and child should be stationary, e.g., striking a large ball off a cone or tee.
2. Next the object moves, but the child remains still, e.g., hitting a pitched beach ball with a bat.
3. Both child and object are moving, e.g., keeping the ball in the air with a paddle.



Striking with an Implement - Activities (Under 5's)

- Tie a balloon to a door frame or ceiling with a piece of string, encourage children to hit the balloon with; cardboard bat, rolled up newspaper or fly swat.
- Once children are more confident in striking see if they can keep the balloon up (no string attached) with their bat.
- Set out an elevated net/rope and in pairs children can try and hit a balloon back and forth with their fly swats or bats.
- Place a tennis ball in the toe of a stocking and tie the stocking to a horizontal bar or tree branch. Get the children to strike the ball with a small bat or racquet. When there are two or more children, they can strike it to each other.
- With a plastic ball or ping pong ball see if children can hit their ball around on the ground with their cardboard stick/rolled up newspaper or fly swat.
- Once children are confident in hitting their ball see if they can do it with control and more precision, dribble their ball around on the ground. Set out obstacle's children have to try manoeuvre their ball around, over under etc.
- On top of a cone or tee put a medium or large ball that children have to try and strike off. With older children you can make the target smaller and focus more on the skill of striking / swing etc.
- Hoop golf- Using a paper towel tube, rolled up newspaper or small bat get the child to try and hit the ball into the middle of hoops that are spread around.
- Place cardboard boxes on the ground. Using a cardboard bat, rolled up newspaper or other roll the ball along the ground towards the box then hit the ball into the box.

Discovering Striking with an Implement

Exploring Short Implements

Set-up - Racquets, padder tennis bats, small balls/balloons, hoops. In a defined hard area, children spread out with a ball and racquet/bat each.

Activity

Can you ...?

- put your racquet on the ground and pick it up.
- balance the ball on one side of the racquet.
- balance the ball and move around.
- without changing grip, balance the ball on the other side of the racquet.
- hit the ball up to head height with palm up/down, then alternating palm up/down
- try the above with the other hand.
- hit the ball up moving forwards/backwards/sideways/along specified lines and in a circle.
- hit the ball up 10 times without letting it hit the ground.
- using the racquet bounce the ball on the ground standing still/running.

Activity

In pairs, who can...?

- drop the ball and hit it a short distance for your partner to catch.
- drop the ball and hit it to bounce to your partner.
- hit the ball backwards and forwards with a partner.
- find a wall and take alternate hits against it.
- hit the ball backwards and forwards over a net/bench/rope.
- continue the above while facing side on to the direction of your hit.
- continue the above alternating forehand and backhand.