

Handle the Hurdles

Sensory Input + Balance Training + Postural Control

About Me

Grow & Go, PT, P.C. is a space for babies and children of all ages to participate in movement, activity, and exploration, while the parents and caregivers learn and practice purposeful play.

For children, physical therapy may not seem

fun, or even “necessary” sometimes, but with the

right tools and attitude - it can easily become something to look forward to! This is the

goal for Dr. Donna Kleyman, the physical therapist and owner at Grow & Go, a

Brooklyn, NY based physical therapy clinic for kids.



Mindful Movement

The best kind of play is one that combines fun and novelty with success. A 4 year old student of mine, who was not able to put together the required postural control, righting reaction, and attentiveness for hopping or even standing on one foot, these hurdles did the trick! He has recently started to step onto raised surfaces, but not over. I looked for available hurdles on the market, but majority were too heavy for children to use or not adjustable low enough for students with only emerging skills.

I was in the process of reordering the foot markers from S&S Worldwide and decided to search for “hurdles”. Jackpot! These adjustable height hurdles can be set as low as 2”, fold to store, and can easily be packed for travel. The variety of colors are helpful for providing visual cueing and keeping the child focused on task. I decided to see what a little bridge walking (vestibular input) and stepping over hurdles (strength) could accomplish for my friend’s balance skills.

Best for Any Age (stay tuned for babies crawling over/under these bad boys!)

Group or Single Person Activity; Used in any setting (School, Clinic, Home, Playground)

Keywords: Balance, Bridge, Walking, Gross Motor, Hurdles, Height, Adjustable, Travel Toy

S&S Worldwide Equipment

Spectrum Foot Markers

(Item #: W8997)

Adjustable Height Hurdles

(Item #: W10056)



*Pillows/Cushions, Balance Beam or similar raised and narrowed surface
“End” or Focus Toy : something motivating the child to “get through” the obstacle*



**the fish in the photo were to be brought to the “lake” (green water filled pillow on the floor) as the hurdles were our pretend “rocks” to step over while walking on the bridge. . . pediatrics is fun!!*

Activity

Once you designate the space and create your “imaginary” topic - setting up the hurdles will take less than 5 minutes (and that is counting WITH the child helping to set up, since that is a great all in one activity to test the child’s critical thinking, motor planning, and ability to problem solve.

The hurdles are adjustable - so using this component is key! The first hurdle can be lowest, with each one going to different levels, or allowing the child to have success initially by lowering all of them down.

How to play? The child will take an item to bring to the end and start walking on the balance beam. This can be forward walking, sideways, or backwards - depending on the skill level or need of the child. Once at the hurdle, it is best to encourage child to

find their own grounding and balance when stepping over, rather than to give a hand immediately. Be sure to be nearby and provide necessary supervision or physical support, as needed.

This activity can easily be modified for adaptability or made more challenging for more coordinated and better balanced kids. Combining pretend/imaginative play with these hurdles works great to imbed the challenge and task oriented training (balance) into the child's "natural" play. Kids love the ability to use these hurdles to do "adult-like" gross motor, something they see us doing when we step over their toys on the floor, so you can always incorporate them that way!

Stepping over the hurdles while walking over a balance beam helps develop the child's ability to focus on coordination, balance, and postural control, which greatly contributes to improved cognitive functions (sequencing steps, grading intensity of movement, and righting self when balance is challenged).

And the very best part of all? The fact that these hurdles are kid-friendly and safe, so the child is able (and should be encouraged) to help set up and clean away. It gives them a greater sense of ownership and participation.



As someone who works with children of all ages on development of gross motor, sensory processing, and a host of many other skills, I am always on the hunt for something to add novelty to the experience. Equipment that can be open-ended, multi-functional, and easy to store catches my eye easily, and if it is something that travels well, I am sold!