



From: <http://movingsmartblog.blogspot.com/2011/03/smart-steps-let-em-roll.html>

LET 'EM ROLL!

If you've ever watched a preschooler roll around on the floor, you know it's a surefire giggle-producer. But what you may not know is rolling is great for his body and his brain for lots of reasons, including:

- **Vestibular Development** (to assist in balance)
- **Midline Development** (to assist in coordinated movement and thinking)
- **Sensory Development** (to assist in creating his understanding of the world)
- **Gross Motor Development** (to build strength and coordination)
- **Proprioception** (to develop a tactile understanding of space)



This is why rolling is one of my favorite movement activities for little ones. But after you roll around for a while, what do you do next? Try a few of these ideas the next time they're on a roll...

SMART STEPS: LET 'EM ROLL!

For kids able to walk, run, skip & hop, approximately ages 4+
Indoors or Outdoor Grassy Area

SMART STEPS – GET ROLLING

WHAT TO DO

Start by asking if they can show you how to roll around on the floor.

WHY DO IT

This little warm up gives children a chance to “practice,” reminding their muscles and their brains of the sensations of the movements they'll need for the more advanced activities to follow.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When starting out, kids have a tendency to roll the top half of their body first then flip their legs over. Watch to see if they can keep their bodies straight like a pencil with a moderate degree of control as they roll. And see if they can roll in both directions. This creates a balanced experience for both body and brain development.

SMART STEPS – ROLLING SIDE BY SIDE

WHAT TO DO

If you have more than one child playing, have them lie down next to each other shoulder to shoulder. Have them choose a direction to roll, then roll together in unison. NOTE: If you do not have another child with you, try lying down on the floor and playing the game with him.

WHY DO IT

Two things happen when children try coordinated rolling...

1. **THE ROLL SLOWS DOWN.** The slower the roll, the easier it is for the brain to absorb and retain the physical sensations of the movement, which in this case, helps build balance (vestibular system).
2. **TEAMWORK DEVELOPS.** Asking two or more rambunctious preschoolers to do this together creates a playful dynamic for foundational social skills such as cooperation, decision-making, supporting and encouraging others, and learning to work together. If you're playing with your child, be sure to let him lead the activity so he is “in charge” of the play.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Watch to see if the children can sense what the others are doing taking turns going in different directions so that they all have a chance to “lead” the roll.





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SMART STEPS – ROLLING HEAD TO HEAD

WHAT TO DO

For two children (or for you and your child to do together), lie on the floor opposite one another with your heads together. Have them reach up and hold onto a soft toy or small piece of fabric such as a sock. Then have them roll in the direction of their choice, and back again without letting go. NOTE: For solo play, put a string down on the floor and have your child try to keep his fingers on it as he rolls.

WHY DO IT

This adds additional challenge to tandem rolling...

1. **THE ROLL SLOWS DOWN.** As noted above, slower rolling builds balance.
2. **ROLLING WITHOUT ARMS.** Rolling by using only your shoulders, hips, and legs requires additional strength, coordination, and concentration.
3. **TEAMWORK DEVELOPS.** Again, this is a cooperative activity that helps children learn what it feels like to be part of a team working towards a mutual goal.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Encourage them to roll together so they don't get tangled up or lose their grip. Because they can't see each other, this activity requires even more concentrated effort to think about what the other person is doing and work in sync with one another.

SMART STEPS – WE'RE A CONVEYOR BELT!

WHAT TO DO

This is best with three or more children, but can be done by two players. Have all the kids lie down next to each other, shoulder to shoulder. Place a soft toy such as a teddy bear on the belly of the first child in the line. Tell the kids they have to get the teddy bear from the first child to the last child, by rolling – and importantly, they can NOT use their hands. Have the children roll in unison, creating a conveyor belt to move the toy from child to child!



WHY DO IT

As a group game this creates...

1. **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.** Children, all working together, yet throughout the activity, they each have their turn being responsible for passing the teddy bear along.
2. **TEAMWORK/COMMUNITY SPIRIT.** Large group games make children feel a sense of belonging and commitment to the group.
3. **ACHIEVEMENT.** Working together, the children feel a sense of accomplishment – “We did it!”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Coach them to keep their shoulders together. There should be no gaps between the players so have the children watch their neighbors as they roll. Empower the children at end of the line to be the team captains, helping the manage the group and change directions when necessary.