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Learning Unit: Developing Manipulative Skills in Elementary School



Unit Objective

The main objective of this unit is to **progressively refine fundamental manipulative motor skills** in elementary students. We aim for them to develop hand-eye and foot-eye coordination, precision, and control in manipulating objects, thus laying the groundwork for specific popular sports skills and fostering an active, healthy life.

Unit Relevance for Elementary Education

This unit is crucial for elementary students, as manipulative skills are fundamental pillars for their holistic physical development and future sports participation. At these ages, the focus extends beyond merely improving physical performance, seeking to foster motor, social, cognitive, and affective competencies.

- **Holistic Physical Development:** Improves coordination (hand-eye, foot-eye), agility, precision, and motor control—essential skills for a wide range of physical activities and sports.

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- **Sports Foundation:** Provides the technical bases for practicing popular sports like soccer, basketball, volleyball, and tennis, increasing confidence and motivation to participate.
- **Cognitive Skills:** Fosters quick decision-making, anticipation, and problem-solving during dynamic play.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Promotes teamwork, communication, respect for rules and peers, perseverance, and the enjoyment of physical activity in a collaborative environment.
- **Participation and Confidence:** By mastering these skills, students feel more competent and confident, which increases their willingness to actively participate in physical education classes and extracurricular activities.

Materials to Be Used

- **Variety of ball sizes and textures:** Basketballs, soccer balls, volleyballs, tennis balls, soft foam balls.
- **Cones:** For delimiting spaces, marking dribbling routes, or creating targets.
- **Hoops:** For delimiting throwing/receiving zones, or for dribbling through.
- **Small goals/Nets:** For practicing precise kicking.
- **Foam rackets or lightweight paddles:** For striking activities.
- **Adhesive tapes:** For marking lines or zones on the floor.
- **Music:** Music player with rhythmic, energetic, and motivating songs for challenges.
- **Visual materials with images:**
 - **Skill cards:** Illustrations of the correct technique for throwing, catching, kicking, dribbling, and striking.
 - **Modified game diagrams:** Simple schemes on how to organize adapted games.
 - **Images of athletes:** Showing the application of these skills in real game contexts.

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Unit Lessons

Lesson 1: Mastering Throwing and Catching!

- **Content to Cover:** Overhand and underhand throwing with one or both hands, two-hand and one-hand catching, and controlled reception (hands, chest).
- **Activities:**
 - **"Musical Targets":** Students throw different-sized balls towards hoops or cones while **rhythmic music** plays. When the music stops, they catch a ball thrown by the instructor or a peer. **Images of throwing postures** are used for reference.
 - **"The Reception Bridge":** In pairs, students throw balls at medium distance, varying the height. The goal is to receive the ball with control using different body parts, if age-appropriate (hands, chest).
- **Focus:** Develop precision and force in throwing, and control in reception.

Lesson 2: The Power of the Foot: Kicking and Dribbling!

- **Content to Cover:** Kicking static and moving balls (with the instep, inside of the foot), and dribbling the ball with the foot.
- **Activities:**
 - **"Magic Goals":** Students kick soccer balls towards small goals or hoops, aiming for different sections. **Stadium-like ambient music** can be used for motivation.
 - **"Dribbling Snake":** Dribble a ball with the foot around cones or hoops in a delimited space, first freely and then with **music that encourages continuous movement**.
 - **"Secret Partner Passes":** In pairs or trios, students pass the ball with their feet, aiming for precision.
- **Focus:** Improve foot-eye coordination, kicking precision, and ball control while moving.

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Lesson 3: Dribbling Masters!

- **Content to Cover:** Dribbling a ball with the hand (basketball) and with the foot (soccer) while moving, with variations in speed and direction, and with passive opposition.
- **Activities:**
 - **"The Ball Labyrinth":** Dribbling circuits with the hand (between cones) and with the foot (in a zigzag pattern). **Music with a constant tempo** is used to encourage maintaining the dribbling rhythm.
 - **"Guardian of My Treasure":** Students dribble a ball with their hand or foot within a delimited space, while a peer tries to touch their ball without taking it (passive opposition).
 - **"Dribbling Relay Race":** Divide the class into teams to perform relays, dribbling with either hand or foot to a point and back.
- **Focus:** Develop ball control while moving and overall coordination.

Lesson 4: Striking with Precision and Control!

- **Content to Cover:** Striking objects with an open hand (volleyball, hand badminton) and with implements (foam rackets, paddles).
- **Activities:**
 - **"Balloon Volleyball":** Students hit balloons or very light balls over a low net (or a string) with an open hand, practicing forearm bumps or soft touches. **Light and fun music** is used.
 - **"The Magic Wall":** Students hit foam tennis balls against a wall with foam rackets, focusing on direction and control. **Images of rackets and striking postures** can be used.
 - **"Badminton Without a Net":** In pairs, students hit a badminton shuttlecock between themselves using foam rackets, without needing a net.
- **Focus:** Improve hand-eye coordination in striking and the use of implements.

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Lesson 5: The Manipulative Skills Festival 🏆

- **Content to Cover:** Integration and application of all learned manipulative skills in modified sports games.
- **Activities:**
 - **"Adapted Mini-Sports":** Organize rotating stations where students apply skills in simplified versions of sports:
 - **Mini-Basketball:** Dribbling and shooting at a low hoop.
 - **Mini-Soccer:** Dribbling, kicking, and passing in small teams towards a goal.
 - **Mini-Volleyball:** Hitting the ball over a low net in small groups.
 - **Mini-Tennis:** Hitting foam balls with rackets in a small space.
 - **Energetic music** is used for all stations. **Modified game diagrams** are placed at each station for guidance.
 - **"The Great Ball Challenge":** A final game combining several skills (e.g., dribbling, passing, throwing at a target) in a sequence.
- **Focus:** Practical application of manipulative skills in real game contexts, fostering cooperation and strategy.

Tool for Progress Assessment and Documentation

For the assessment and documentation of student progress in manipulative skills, the **Manipulative Skills Checklist for Elementary School** will be used. This tool will allow for recording whether students consistently demonstrate the skills, which is equivalent to Level 3: "I Can Consistently Demonstrate the Skill"—meaning the student performs the skill reliably, with confidence and autonomy, in various situations.