

# Incredible Shrinking Target

## Incrementalism: Adjusting Movements by Degrees

You have to be on your toes all the time, especially when you encounter the Incredible Shrinking Target! It's so smart, it knows how well you're doing, and just when you think you're right on target, it shrinks. Want to give it a try?

### EQUIPMENT

- Music
- Baby toy
- Blanket
- Pillows
- Soft ball
- Apple
- Bowl with water
- Rope
- Chalk
- Sponge
- Hoops of varying sizes
- Beanbags
- Milk bottle
- Small chair
- Clothespins

### KEY BENEFITS

- Self-organization
- Changing direction and changing plane
- Changing and judging speed
- Changing and judging force

### LANGUAGE FOCUS

center, middle, between, forward, back, left, right

### CRITICAL SAFEGUARDS

Never leave children unattended around water.

### TEACHING GEMS

- When using equipment of different sizes, be sure to use words to remind children which hoop to aim for. "Aim for the large



hoop." "Aim for the center hoop." Say it as they do it. Remember: Language + Experience = Understanding.

- Providing children with the physical experiences and opportunities to adapt their bodies through positioning, pacing, and pressure allows for increased accuracy, deliberation, and control of body movement.
- Provide visual cues for children to stand on and aim for, such as dots or lines on the floor, so children can mark their progress.

## ON THE MOVE

## WATCH ME GROW

## IN THE KNOW



### Snugglers

**TINY MOVES.** Infants are just beginning to explore the world of movement. Go slowly so the brain has time to process the moves.

**SLOW DANCE.** Hold baby's feet and create a gentle and fluid repetitive pattern (up and down, in and out). Sing as you "dance" the feet to a very slow beat. Repeat, this time holding and dancing baby's hands. Try putting on music that has 60–80 beats per minute. (D 2–3 min.)

**BABY ROBOT.** Repeat the "Slow Dance" activity, only this time move very slowly, an inch at a time (think robotic movements). This gives baby a sense of moving in increments. (D 2–3 min.)



**EYE-FLYING FUN.** Lay baby on her back and hold a toy above her within her field of vision. Capture her attention, then very slowly fly it around in circles and dip it down toward baby. If she reaches for it, let her grab hold with her hands or her feet. (D 2–3 min.)

## ON THE MOVE

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### Squigglers

**STEERING.** Getting to where you want to go means learning how to steer yourself.



**BABY-GO-ROUND.** Lay baby on her tummy on a blanket with her favorite toy on a slippery surface. Holding 1 side of the blanket, gently and slowly turn in a circle, stopping and starting for fun. Change direction. As baby becomes more comfortable, change direction randomly. (D 1–2 min.)

**PLAY-GO-ROUND.** Lay baby on her tummy on the floor and kneel down next to her on her right side. Play and talk to her, encouraging her to turn toward you. Slowly make your way around to her left, stopping to play at different points along the way. Change the pace of your movements. Try this with baby lying on her back, too. (D 3–5 min.)

**BABY STEERING.** Create a short crawling path with pillows on either side and encourage baby to crawl through. Next, add a gentle curve to the path to encourage her to steer herself through, over, and under things. (D 3–5 min.)



### Scampers

**DYNAMIC TARGETING.** As little ones learn to move, they must simultaneously learn to cope with a world that's in motion, too!



**KIDDIE DODGEBALL.** Put the child on all fours. Gently roll a soft ball to her as she crawls. Roll the ball in front of her, beside her, around her, toward her, and away from her, enticing her to chase it. (D 3–5 min.)

**APPLE SNATCH.** Float an apple in a bowl of water. Sit the child on your lap and show her how the apple bobs up and down. Encourage her to pick it up with 1 hand, then the other, then both hands. And remember, never leave a child unattended around water. (D 2–3 min.)

**WRIGGLE AND STOMP.** Once the child is steady on her feet, lay out a small piece of yellow rope and wriggle it. Encourage the child to try to step on the rope. If she succeeds, stop wriggling and cheer her success! (D 2–3 min.)



### Stompers

**ADJUSTMENTS.** Fully realized body control requires the ability to adapt movements while in motion.



**STOP THE MUSIC.** To explore changing speeds, sing a song and encourage the child to dance with you. Sing slowly and slow down your movements. Sing fast and speed up. Stop singing and both of you freeze in place! Repeat several times, then mix up the order in which you speed up, slow down, and stop. (D 3–5 min.)

**MY FIRST LINE DANCE.** To explore changing direction, create several simple dance steps with the child. Be sure the choreography includes stepping forward and back, left and right. Repeat the dance several times until the child is familiar with the steps, then change the speed of the song from fast to slow. (D 3–5 min.)

**STEP IT UP.** To explore different-sized movements, repeat the dance steps you created for "My First Line Dance," only this time have the child exaggerate the movements, taking really big, long steps and then really small, short steps. For the finale, mix up the big and small steps. (D 3–5 min.)



## ON THE MOVE

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### Scooters

LEARNING TO AIM is more than getting a child ready for sport. It's teaching her how to apply trial and error while measuring distance, direction, and force.



**CLEAN THE BOARD.** Draw a 3-ring target (the bull's-eye) on the wallboard. Give a child a wet sponge and have her step back several paces and shoot for the bull's-eye. The sponge will leave a wet spot. Examine where the sponge left its mark and talk about where it is in relation to the center of the bull's-eye. Let the child try again. Celebrate when she gets closer to the bull's-eye. Allow children to take a few turns each and continue rotating the play so everyone gets lots of tries. *Note:* If you don't have a board, you can play this on an outside surface, such as the building wall or a fence. (D 5–10 min.)

**THROUGH THE HOOP.** Hang a large hoop about 1' off the ground. Explore all the ways to move through the hoop without touching the sides. For instance: (1) Step through facing forward. (2) Step through facing backward. (3) Crawl through hands first. (4) Crawl through feetfirst. With a group, have them hold hands and go through the hoop without letting go. Now set up 3 different-sized hoops and try again. (D 2–3 min.)

**SHOOT THE HOOP.** Hang a large hoop. Give a child several beanbags and have her stand several paces back from the hoop. Show her how to aim and throw underhand. Repeat until she gains confidence, then have her step back 1 pace to increase challenge. Allow children to take a few turns each and continue rotating the play so everyone gets lots of tries. To change it up, hang the hoop at different heights. (R until children are confident at each distance)



### Skedaddlers

PRECISION MOVEMENTS require full control over the muscles for even the smallest changes in movement.



**SHOOT THREE HOOPS.** Hang 3 different-sized hoops next to one another. Give each child 3 beanbags and have children stand several paces back from the hoops. Begin at the largest hoop and have them shoot until they succeed. (Depending on the number of children, this can be done together or each can take their turn.) Then move to the next hoop. When children have been successful with all 3, go around to the other side, retrieve the beanbags, and shoot the hoops from that side. Next round, stand 1 pace back. (R 3–5 tries per hoop)

**THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING TARGET.** Make a loop out of a piece of rope and put it on the floor. Give a child several beanbags and have her step back several paces. Have her throw the beanbags underhand into the loop. Once she's showing confidence, tighten the loop to make a smaller target. Continue to make the target smaller as she masters the activity. For group play, have the children stand around the loop. Once each has a try, tighten the loop for a smaller target. (R 3–5 tries)

**CLOTHESPINS IN A BOTTLE.** Place a milk bottle on the floor and put a small chair next to it. Have the child kneel on the chair and lean over the bottle so she's peering right down into it. Have her hold a clothespin or peg over the mouth of the bottle and drop it in. *Note:* Standing over the bottle may be easier for some children. If the activity is too hard, find a bottle with a wider opening. (R 3–5 tries per child)

