

**ACTIVE
SCHOOLS**
Kori ki te Kura

Circuits and Challenge Courses



**SPORT
NEW ZEALAND**

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Guidelines for Operating Circuits

Circuit training is a type of activity which includes a number of physical activity stations arranged in a given area such as a classroom, hall, gym or outside area. Each station has a different set of physical activities or tasks to be completed before the participants move to the next station.

Because of the variety of activities, circuits can develop all components of fitness and a wide range of movement skills.

Circuits are easy to organise and manage and can be readily modified. All the circuits shown in this chapter can be adapted for any age level, any area and whatever equipment is available.

The combinations and possibilities for circuits are endless, as you will realise after becoming familiar with these circuits.

There are 2 methods of organising a circuit:

1. Children try to complete a specified number of repetitions at each station in the fastest possible time. (Self monitoring).
2. Children remain at a station for a given amount of time before moving on. (Teacher directed).

Guidelines for Operating Circuits

- Pre-teach all activities before introducing the circuit.
- For general fitness include some activities for speed, agility, strength, endurance, flexibility, upper and lower body.
- Physical activities which follow each other should use different body parts or focus on a different component e.g. cardiovascular » strength » flexibility.
- There should be a rise and fall in energy requirements e.g. a period of recovery after hard activity.
- Emphasis should always be placed on performing physical activities correctly rather than on speed.
- Keep the circuit non-stop – there should be no waiting for turns.
- Encourage children to compete with themselves not each other.

- Ensure that the activities match the developmental abilities of the children.
- Make frequent changes to the format of the circuit and the types of activities used. Let the children plan the circuit.
- For each activity station have a card which gives the name of the activity, a diagram or stick figure showing the activity.
- Ensure that all children understand how the circuit works i.e. what to do and when to move on.
- Recording, if any, should be simple and quick.
- Have sufficient activity stations to have a maximum of 15 children at each – 6-8 activities for the average class.
- Plan an activity for those who finish early.
- Teach older children how to monitor their pulse rates.

Activities Suitable for Circuit Stations

- Running on the spot
- Running widths, lengths or circuits of the physical activity area
- Skipping widths, lengths or circuits of the physical activity area
- Galloping widths, lengths or circuits of the physical activity area
- Slip stepping widths, lengths or circuits of the physical activity area
- Brisk walking widths, lengths or circuits of the physical activity area
- Marching on the spot
- Astride jumps/Straddle jumps
- Double foot jumps – side to side – forward and back
- Hops – on the spot – forward
- Twisting Toe Taps
- Walking or Butterfly Swings
- Jumping Knee Lifts Hoe Downs
- Heel to Bottom Pendulum Swings
- Fast Feet Step Ups
- Spring Leg Changes at Bench
- Shuttle Runs/Line Sprints Abdominal Crunchies
- Knee Bends Side Push Ups
- Standing Broad Jumps Hand Presses
- Lunges, Side-to-Side Straddle and Bench Jumps
- Bunny Hop Jumps Over a Bench.

Simple Circuit

Equipment

8-10 cones, 6-8 ropes, 2-3 benches, 6-8 hoops.

Area

Grass (if dry), hard surface, hall.

Formation

Children in 6 groups.

Instructions

- One group at each station. Children work at the station for 30-45 seconds. On whistle, children stop and move on to the next activity. Continue until all children have completed each activity, or you may have them do the circuit twice.

Teaching Points

- Ensure that all the activities have been explained.
- The children need to be well warmed up.

Zigzag: In and out of cones, then run back to the start. Vary the distance between cones.



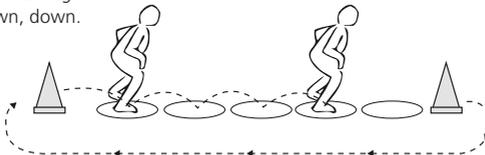
Rope circle: Rope is folded in half. Step over the rope, bring it up behind body and over head. Repeat.



Step ups: Steady walking pace, up, up, down, down.



Follow the leader: Jump or leap from hoop to hoop, run around end cone then back to start.



Side to side jumps

Geordies Joggers

Equipment

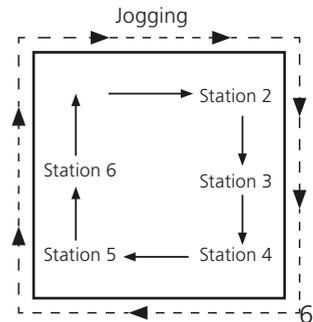
Select the equipment necessary for the stations chosen.

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.

Formation

Divide the class into groups so there is 1 more group than the number of stations i.e. stations = 7 groups.



Instructions

- Set up the circuit activities – have 1 group begin at each station.
- The extra group are the joggers, who jog twice around the perimeter of the circuit area, keeping together.
- When the joggers return to the start “Change” is called.
- All groups rotate 1 station.
- A new group become the joggers at station 1 and the joggers join the physical activity circuit at station 2.
- Repeat until all children have completed each station.

Variations

1. Change the circuit activities.
2. Change the joggers’ activity e.g. walking, skipping, zigzag running.

Teaching Point

- The stations can be set up in a circular or rectangular formation.

Basic Group Circuit

Equipment

As required for the activities selected.

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.

Formation

8-10 activity stations, children in groups of 3 or 4 – 1 group at each station.

Instructions

- Children perform the activity for a timed interval, 30 seconds to 1 minute.
- On a whistle, signal or background music stopping, the children stop and on command move on to the next station and immediately begin doing the activity.
- Continue until all groups have been to each station.
- The circuit may be done twice if time permits.

Variation

1. Add a Jog:
 - Basic group circuit as above.
 - Instead of moving straight to the next station each group jogs around the perimeter of the physical activity area, then moves on as a group to the next station.
 - Next signal jog around the perimeter and on to the 3rd station.
 - Repeat until all stations have been completed by all groups.

Teaching Point

- Stress that correct performance of each activity is more important than speed.

Individual Circuit

Equipment

As required for the station activities selected. Activity cards for this type of circuit require guidelines for the number of repetitions to be performed, usually given in 2 levels e.g.

Astride Jumps

Level 1	Level 2
20	25

Area

Hall, grass, hard surface – mats required if including crunchies or kneeling activities.

Formation

Children begin in groups of 3 or 4 – 1 group at each activity station.

Instructions

- Children decide which level they will work at.
- On "Go", children complete the number of repetitions for their chosen level – then move on independently of the group to the next activity.
- Variations
 1. Add a jog – individuals may elect to jog or walk 1 lap of the circuit before moving on to the next station.
 2. Two children of similar ability could pair up and work together.

Teaching Points

- The capable children can extend themselves, while the less able can complete the circuit successfully at their own pace.
- Emphasise that the circuit is not a race and correct technique is important.



Individual Circuits

Paired Circuit

Equipment

As required for the activities selected (mats needed if working on the ground).

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.

Formation

Children in pairs. Begin the circuit with pairs evenly distributed around the activities.

Instructions

- One partner jogs or walks around the perimeter of the physical activity area while the other partner performs the activity. She continues until her partner returns.
- Swap over.
- When both have had a turn at the activity the pair moves on to the next station and repeats the sequence until the circuit has been completed.

Variation

1. Both partners remain at the station, 1 working, the other partner counting the number of repetitions. This is a useful organisation if repetitions are to be recorded.

Teaching Point

- This activity allows more capable children to exert themselves and the less able to achieve success at their own level.

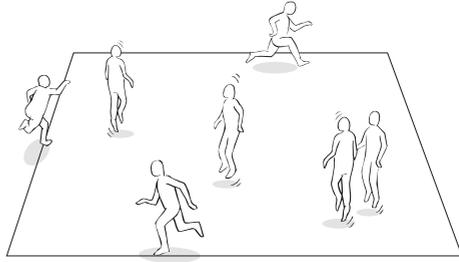
Half In–Half Out

Equipment

Prepared activity cards – equipment as needed for activities selected.

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.



Formation

Free spacing – teacher in a central position. Class divided into 2 groups.

Instructions

- Half the class jogs or walks around the perimeter of the physical activity area to a boundary point and back (approximately 100-200 metres away).
- The other half of the class performs an activity on the spot – displayed by the teacher on a card or demonstrated by the teacher.
- When the boundary runners return or on teacher's signal for change, the groups change over and the runners perform the activity and the activity group jogs or walks.
- On the next change a different activity card is displayed.

Variation

1. Three groups – 1st group = jogging
 - 2nd group = teacher-directed activity on the spot
 - 3rd group = sprinting 20-30 metres.
- Rotate the groups – 1-2, 2-3, 3-1.
- Repeat until all groups have done each activity.

Teaching Point

- The sprinting option gives a very demanding workout. The sprinters may need to rest after 2 or 3 laps.



Half In – Half Out

Time Up Circuit

Equipment

As required, depending on activities selected.

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.

Formation

Children in groups of 4-5 with 8-9 stations. One group begins at each station.



Instructions

- Organisation as for the Basic Circuit.
- Groups move on after a set time at each station.
- The length of time at each station increases over a period of days.
- Days 1 and 2 – 30 seconds per station
- Days 3 and 4 – 35 seconds per station
- Day 5 and 6 – 40 seconds per station
- Day 7 – 50 seconds per station
- Day 8 – 1 minute per station (maximum time per station)

Variation

1. If this circuit is to be used over a shorter period e.g. 5 days, follow these times – Day 1 = 30 seconds, Day 2 = 40 seconds, Day 3 = 45 seconds, Day 4 = 50 seconds, Day 5 = 1 minute.

Teaching Points

- Use this circuit as a challenge once the children have become familiar with circuits and are fitter.
- Set an upper time limit on the completed circuit.



Time up circuit

Challenge Circuit (1)

Equipment

As required for the activities selected. Individual activity cards for each station with 2 levels of repetitions marked.

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.

Formation

Individuals evenly spread out around the 8-10 stations.

Instructions

- Organisation as for the Individual Circuit.
- Children decide the appropriate level and perform that number of repetitions before moving on to the next station.
- A time is set of 10 or 12 minutes.
- Children work non-stop for the 10 or 12 minutes to see how many full circuits they can complete in the time – children note their results e.g. 1 circuit + 4 stations, 1 circuit + 1 station.
- Repeat this procedure for 2-3 days. Each child tries to improve his performance over a period of 3-5 days.

Variation

1. All children work at the same level or the same number of variations.

Teaching Points

- This circuit can be used for evaluation if done at the beginning of a term or unit and again at the end.
- Make sure all stations, times etc are identical.
- Emphasise quality of performance rather than speed.

Challenge Circuit (2)

Equipment

As required, depending on activities selected for circuit. Stop watch, individual circuit cards with levels marked.

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.

Formation

Children work individually, spread out evenly around the 8-10 stations.

Instructions

- All children work at Level 1.
- On "Go" children begin the activity at their first station. Once Level 1 repetitions have been completed they move on to the next station.
- Continue moving around the stations until all stations have been completed.
- Teacher calls out the time in minutes and seconds as finishers return e.g. 13 minutes, 20 seconds.
- Children record their time.
- Each day this circuit is done, children try to improve their time.

Variations

1. Children may select the level they want to attempt.
2. Change the format of 1 or 2 of the physical activities after 3-4 days.

Teaching Points

- Ensure that each day the activities are set out in exactly the same order and place.
- Results could be graphed.
- Discourage children from comparing their results with others – it is a self-improvement activity.



Challenge Circuit

Gear Circuit

Equipment

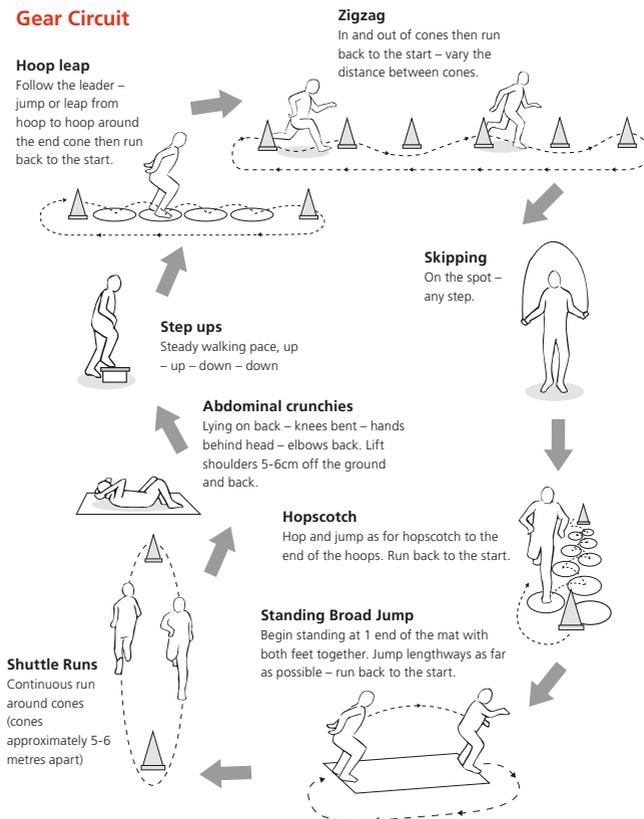
As shown.

Area

Hall, grass (if dry), hard surface.

Formation

As shown below.



Instructions

- Children in groups of 4-5.
- One group at each activity station.
- For “follow the leader” activities children follow one behind the other to the end of the course then back to the start again.
- For other activities e.g. shuttle runs, standing jump, crunchies, skipping, there should be enough gear i.e. bench space, skipping ropes, mats, for 4-5 children per group.

Teaching Points

- Select activities appropriate for the age level.
- Emphasise **safety** when using gear.
- It takes some time to set the circuit up so co-ordinate with other classes to share the gear on the days you are doing circuits.
- Some children may be wary or afraid of gear so may need plenty of encouragement and support.



Zigzag in gear circuit

How to Organise Skipping Circuits

1. Have 6-8 stations or activities set up around the area you are using e.g. netball/tennis court.
 - At each station have a card with the name of the activity and a diagram if possible.
2. Divide the class into even numbered groups, 4-6 per group.
3. Each group begins at a different activity – if you have 6 groups you will need 6 stations.
4. Rotation is in a clockwise direction and can be organised in 1 of 2 ways.
 - a. Groups rotate after a specified time e.g. 1.5 minutes – this means all groups move at the same time e.g. on whistle from teacher. As soon as groups reach the next station they start that activity.
 - b. Children begin as a group at an activity – each child completes a specified number of repetitions then moves on individually to the next station.
 - Station cards would have the number of repetitions on them e.g.

Skip With Rebound

Level 1	Level 2
30	50

- Option a) is recommended as an introduction to circuit work or for junior classes.
5. Change 1 or 2 of the circuit station activities every 3-4 days to add variety and challenge to the circuit.
 6. Have children create their own skipping activities to include in the circuit.
 7. Pre-teach the organisation of a circuit and the individual activities in the circuit before attempting the full circuit.

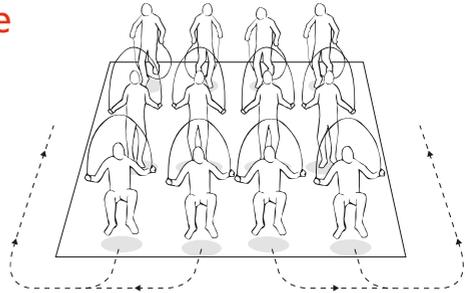
Skipping on the Move

Equipment

One rope per child – cones or markers to show the boundary.

Area

Extensive hard surface.



Formation

Children in lines of 6-8 lined up across the width of the area being used, all facing the direction of travel.

Instructions

- First line travels to the end of the area.
- Each line follows – as children get to end they jog back around the sides of the area and line up again.
- **Running Step 1** (1 leg and turn):
 - Use a running leg action with the rope.
 - One turn of the rope for every step.
 - Row 1 begins at teacher's direction.
 - Rows 2, 3, 4 follow as directed.
- **Running Step 2:**
 - Running leg action but the rope only turns after left and right legs have stepped. The rhythm call is left – right – rope turn. The run becomes like a leap.

Variations

1. Run lifting knees high in front.
2. Follow the Leader Run – children form 1 long line or several shorter lines – 2 arm lengths between children. Children follow the leader.



Skipping on the move

Basic Skipping Circuit

Equipment

Activity cards as shown. Equipment for each station is written beside cards.

Station 1.

Follow the Leader 2 cones, 6 ropes

Station 2.

Double Rope Jump 6 ropes

Station 3.

Basic Skip 6 ropes

Station 4.

Rope Circle 6 ropes

Station 5.

Rope to Rope 5 ropes

Station 6.

High Jump 1 rope

Area

Grass, hard surface the size of a netball court.

Formation

Area set up as in diagram. Children in groups of 4-6.

Instructions

- One group begins at each station.
- 1-2 minutes at each station.
- Blow whistle after 1-2 minutes and children move clockwise to next station.

Variation

1. Change the activity at 1 or 2 stations every 3-4 sessions.

Teaching Points

- Teach all the activities before attempting the circuit.
- Begin with simple, easily learned and performed activities.
- Challenge the children to work hard at every station.

Advanced Skipping Circuit

Equipment

As for station cards.

Station 1.

Long Rope 1 long rope, 1 cone

Station 2.

Twisting 6 short ropes

Station 3.

Circuit Skip 6 short ropes

Station 4.

Tug of War 6 short ropes

Station 5.

Cross Over 6 short ropes

Station 6.

Partner Skip 6 short ropes

Area

Grass, hard surface the area of a netball court.

Formation

Area set up as in diagram. Children in groups of 4-6.

Instructions

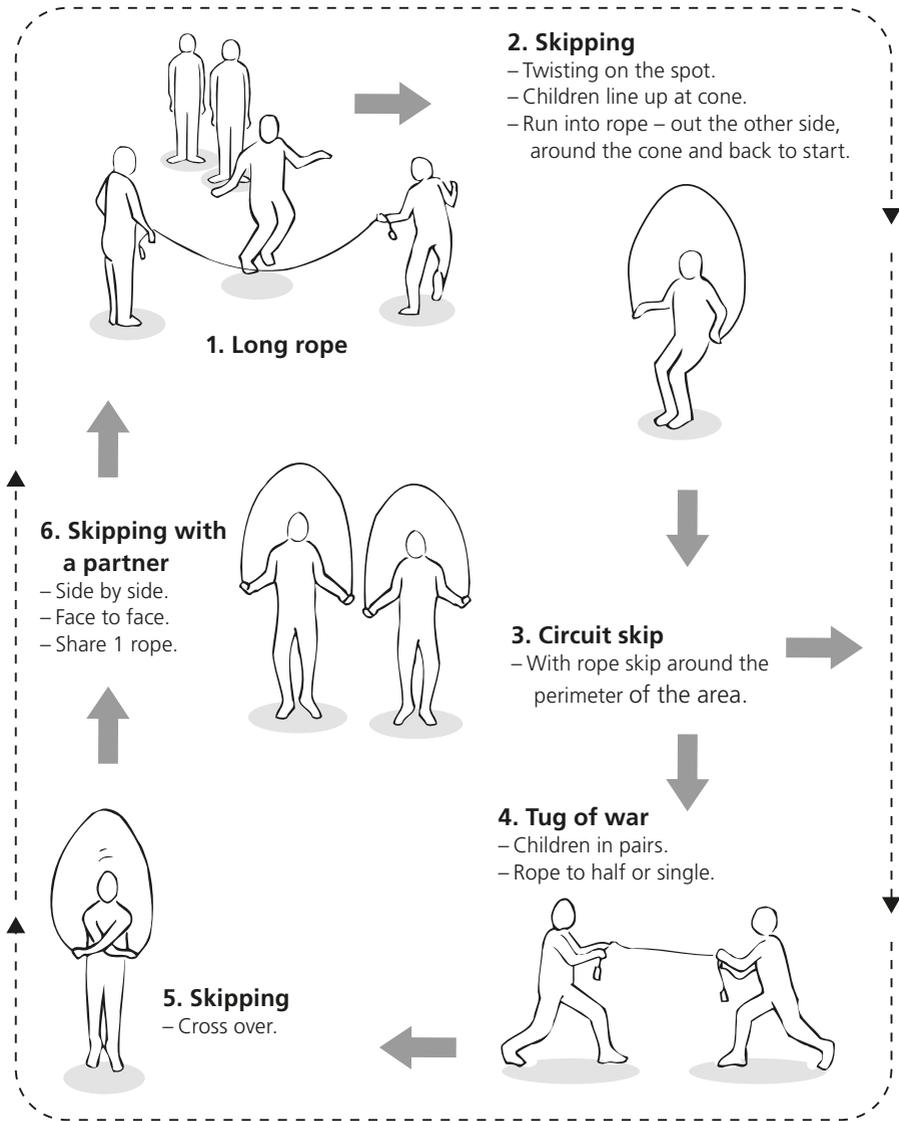
- One group begins at each station.
- 45 seconds-1 minute at each station then move on clockwise to next station.

Variation

1. Change 1 or 2 activities every 3-4 sessions.

Teaching Points

- Teach all the activities before detailing the circuit.
- Begin with activities that are easily learned and performed.
- Use the *Jump Rope for Heart* manual for more advanced steps.



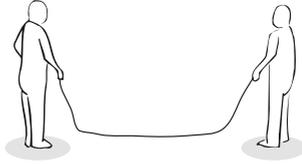
Long-Rope Circuit

Equipment

5-6 long ropes, 2 cones.

Area

Short grass, hard surface, hall – the length of a netball court.



Formation

5 or 6 pairs of rope turners about 4-5 metres apart. A cone at the beginning and end of the circuit, jumpers lined up behind the starting cone.

Instructions

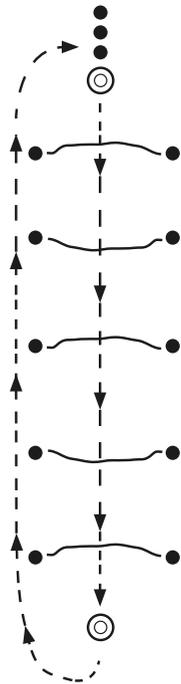
- Turners turn ropes continuously.
- One after the other jumpers run through the ropes.
- Around cone and back to start.
- Repeat 4-5 circuits then change the turners.

Variations

1. Some ropes turning in, some ropes out.
2. Jumpers stay in the rope and jump then run on.

Teaching Points

- Encourage children to sprint along the outside on the way back to the starting cone.
- Change the rope turners frequently.



Rope Circuit – Wheel Circuit

Equipment

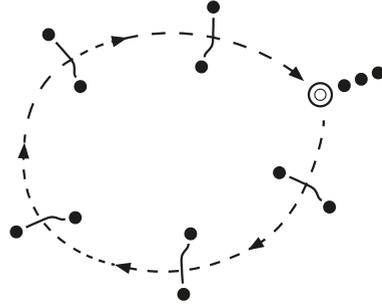
4-5 long ropes, 1 cone.

Area

Hard surface/short grass – area the size of a netball court.

Formation

4-5 pairs of rope turners in a large circle formation as in diagram. Remaining children in a line behind the cone.



Instructions

- Ropes are turned continuously.
- Jumpers jump into and out of each rope in turn around the circle – then back to cone.
- After each jumper has done 3 or 4 circuits the turners can be changed – have children change rope turners without stopping the continuous movement.

Variations

1. All ropes can be turned the same way or some ropes turning inwards – some turning out.
2. Jumpers stay in the rope for 5-6 jumps before running out.
3. Have some children run around the circle in a clockwise direction while at the same time have some children move in an anti-clockwise direction.

Teaching Points

- Make the circuit more demanding by increasing the size of the circle.
- Change the rope turners frequently.

High Tide

Equipment

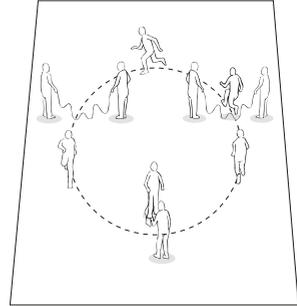
Four long skipping ropes per group.

Area

Grass, hard surface.

Formation

Groups of 12-16 children who make a circle.



Instructions

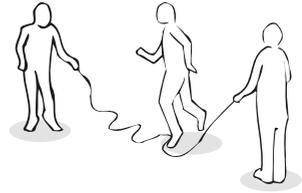
- Four pairs of children hold long skipping ropes as in diagram.
- Rope holders stand still moving the ropes.
- Remainder of children move around the circle jumping the moving ropes.
- Teacher is the caller.
- There are 4 calls which have a movement associated with the rope:
 1. "The sea is choppy" – the pairs holding the ropes move them up and down like waves
 2. "The sea is flowing" – pairs wriggle the ropes sideways
 3. "The sea is low" – pairs hold the ropes tight just above ground level
 4. "The sea is high so stay dry" – pairs hold the ropes tight at waist height.

Variation

1. Have the children devise their own calls and movements.

Teaching Point

- Two short ropes can be tied together to give longer ropes.



Challenge Courses

These are an exciting extension to circuit training and involve a running circuit with obstacles or equipment which must be travelled over, under, around or along.

OBSTACLES – Benches, cones, hoops, mats, playground climbing frames, rope swings, crash mats, pipes, slides, adventure playground apparatus, paths, fences, slopes, sandpits, trees.

Where possible set up an all-weather, permanent challenge course using landmarks around the school grounds.

If equipment needs to be moved to set up a challenge course, either inside or out, it can be time consuming, so co-ordinate with other classes to be working with challenge courses on the same day or week. This shares the responsibility for setting up and putting away the gear.

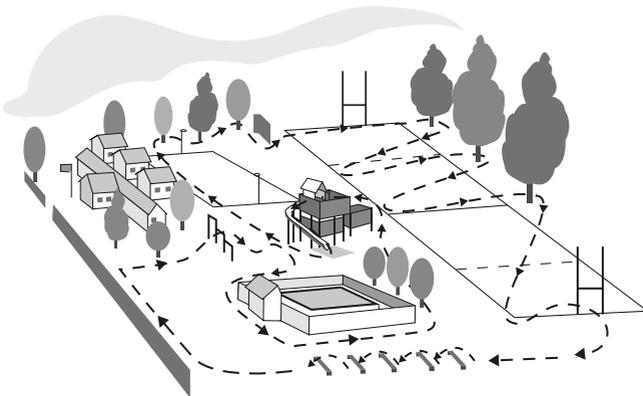
Challenge courses should be challenging and interesting with a stress on safety factors.

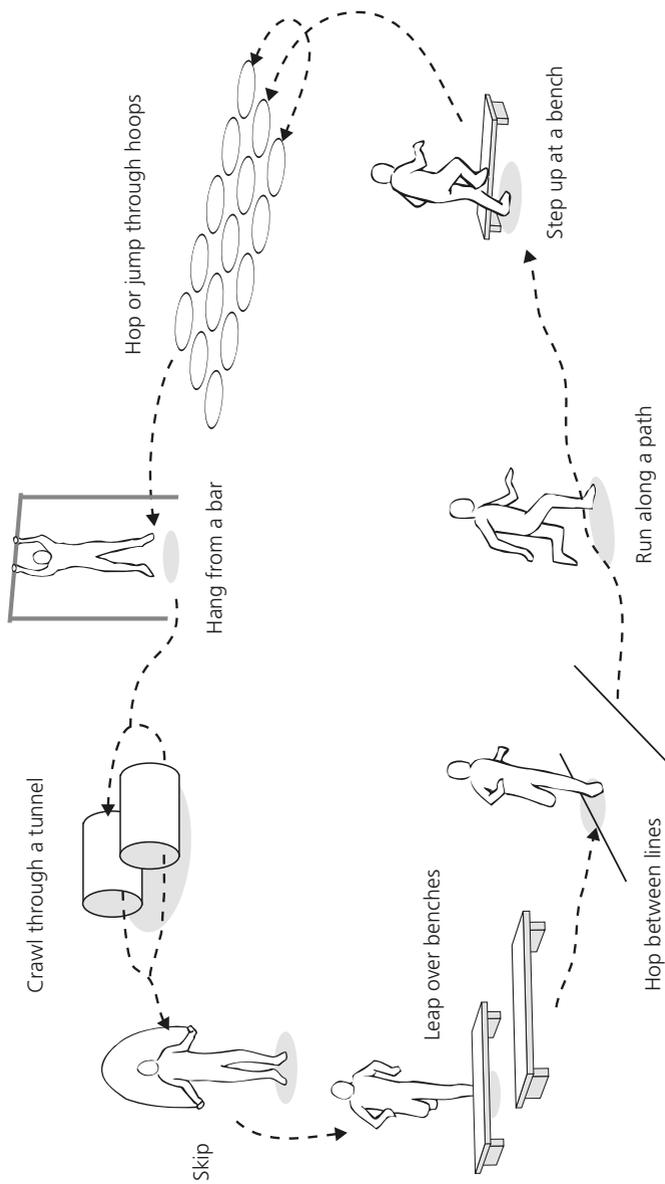
- Use the course in different ways.
- Children run the course individually.
- Time individuals per circuit.
- See how many circuits can be completed in a set time.
- Children work in pairs, groups.
- Groups may challenge others to a directional run with 1 group going clockwise, the other group anti-clockwise.
- Groups may find 1 different way of using some part of the obstacle course.

The following are some suggestions for different challenge course ideas, most of which can be used indoors or outside:

- Climb over, under and along benches.
- Jump over a series of benches about 1 metre apart.
- Crawl through hoops.
- Run through spread-out hoops.
- Leap from hoop to hoop – vary the distances.

- Climb over a box horse.
- Climb over 3 boxes together, first 2 layers – 3 layers – 4 layers.
- Walk along a narrow board or upturned bench.
- Jump over a high rope (1 metre).
- Crawl under a series of low ropes.
- Crawl through or climb over a pipe.
- Run around a tree.
- Zigzag around a line of trees.
- Climb over, swing on a climbing frame.
- Swing on a bar.
- Run up and/or down some steps.
- Jump up to touch a mark on a tree.
- Run up and/or down a slope.
- Jump over a mat or a series of mats.
- Roll sideways on a mat.
- Hop across a marked area.
- Zigzag around cones.
- Use the adventure playground.





Challenge Course – Outdoor

Equipment

15 cones, pipe to crawl through, climbing frame, 10 hurdles or benches, 6-8 trees, stop watch if timing. Use whatever landmarks and equipment you have.

Area

Outside – school grounds, playing field.

Formation

Children individually – then in pairs.

Instructions

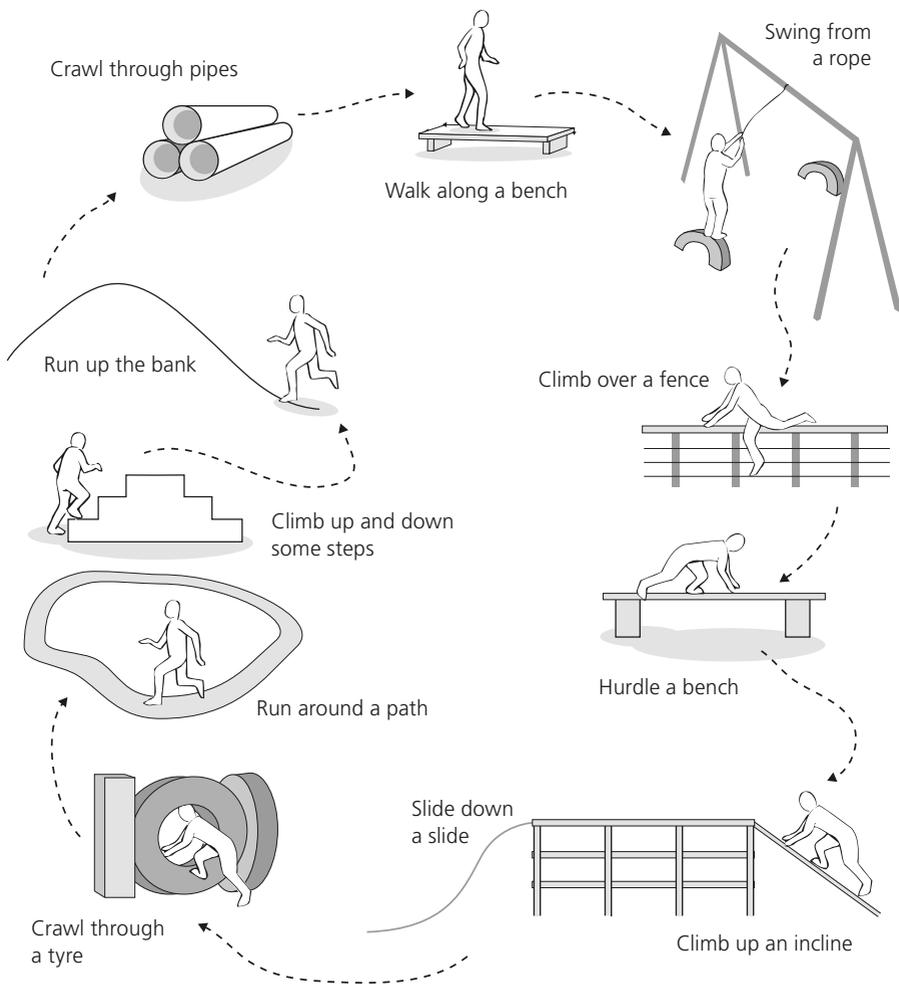
- Equipment needs to be set up before the daily physical activity session.
- Explain the course to children. If complicated, a copied sketch map may be required.
- Have class jog a familiarisation lap.
- Children repeat the course individually then in pairs or groups.

Variations

1. Change the direction of travel.
2. Include activity stations where children do some “on-the-spot” activities.

Teaching Point

- Stress safety and correct use of gear.



Challenge Course – Indoor

Equipment

As required.

Area

Hall, gym, classroom – with modifications.

Formation

Individual, teams or groups.

Instructions

- Set up the course in advance.
- Explain the activities.
- Children jog the circuit to familiarise themselves with it.
- Repeat several circuits – individually, in pairs, groups etc.
- Possible gear – benches, boards, hoops, tyres, ropes, bins, boxes, vaulting horses, mats, markers (skittles, cones, beanbags, softball bases...).

Variations

1. Change the activities.
2. Run the course in the opposite direction.

Teaching Point

- If including activity stations keep the activities simple with no more than 10 repetitions.

