

## Indoor activities burn energy and encourage creativity

During the winter months, especially on frigid days, indoor activities are a great alternative for outdoor play. Physical activities burn energy while encouraging both large and small muscle and motor skill development, and imagination. Here are some ideas to help kids stay active this winter.

**Obstacle course:** Each child takes a turn through an obstacle course. Creativity is key. The course might include walking on a balance beam (a line taped on the floor), crawling through a make-shift tunnel, hopping over a barrier, dropping clothespins over the back of a chair into a bucket, and sliding down a little slide. Once they complete the course, have children sit at the finish line and encourage others to complete the course.



**Simon Says:** Get kids moving by having “Simon says” actions like jump, reach for the sky or hop on one foot. Then, to foster thinking skills and creativity, have each child take turns as Simon and lead the group for three actions. Simon Says can take on different themes, such as acting out animals or feelings, like happy, sad or sleepy.

**Follow the leader:** Follow the leader gives children a chance to be inventive and learn how to be a good leader. Ask for a volunteer to be the first leader. Rotate through the group until each child has a chance giving directions to follow. As a fun twist, have each child think of an animal, and lead the line through the play area acting like his or her favorite animal. To get things started, they could roar like lions, hop like frogs or stomp like elephants.

**Scavenger hunt:** Develop a list of items for children to find in a certain time limit. Some items could be in plain sight, and others might need to be found with a new perspective – like on tiptoes. This activity also encourages cognitive and language development by matching objects to words and thinking critically about where an item might be.

**Dance party:** Dancing helps perk up and develop muscles, so turn on some tunes. If it’s hard to get the group moving, ask each child to lead the group with a different dance move, or mimic a dance of yours. Before the dance session, children could make their own instruments during craft time, like a tissue box guitar. For more information on how to encourage and support a child’s progress as he or she grows, visit [helpmegrowmn.org](http://helpmegrowmn.org).