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Introduction
The play has an important role in the educational process of each person and it is an experience, essential and inalienable, identifiable in each culture through different expressive modalities. Psychological, pedagogical, philosophical, anthropological, sociological studies have provided a wide variety of interpretations that explain a multi-disciplinary approach to the play, but they don't allow to obtain an univocal interpretation that increases the value of all its aspects. The various theories on the role of the play in the human development are also the consequence of the historical and cultural context in which they were elaborated; they result interesting and valid but partial and incomplete, because they are insufficient to catch entirely the phenomenon. For each child the play is an activity that has an end in itself: it represents a natural phenomenon, an intrinsically enjoyable activity, that takes place without a specific aim, because the child is satisfied by the his/her participation. It doesn't correspond to one or more specific behaviours, to some particular activities but it emerges as a behavioural modality in which the content of the activities, their implementation, the context and the interpersonal relationships are not important.
Each play-motor activity has its particular features and contexts that allow the child to express his/her ways of being and feeling.

The play is a pervasive phenomenon in the child’s life even if in adulthood the contexts take up the more softened features, typical of the conventional environments of the useful and of the rational.

The numerous child’s needs run into the play, a complex activity that is structured according to different ways (different kinds of game) and responding to the needs of age, gender, customs of the referring group, socio-economical status and education.

The infantile play shouldn't to be put in relation only with the concepts of motility, freedom, spontaneity, joy and instinct, exclusively underlying the unconscious aspects of the play. It also activates the mental activity, since the child repeating gestures and actions improves his/her ability to analyse the events and to fix relationships, analogies and differences.

The classifications of the games proposed by several authors reflect the different theories (cfr. Giugni, 1973; Staccioli, 2006; Cambi et al., 2007) and the proposed typologies only represent a theoretical index always in progress, because each game involves, in different measure and in variable and personal ratios, the symbolic, imitative, creative, normative and competitive aspects.
The motor activities realized through the play and the sport are important assumptions for the cognitive, organic-motor, emotional, social development of children. Today, children's natural motivation to play seems to be significantly limited by the technological progress, the urbanization, the disappearance of places where they can play and by the use of television, influenced by negative family or peer ways of life.

Through the play each child experiences his/her body and the possibilities to interact with the outside through gestures, positions and movements. The process of psycho-biological maturation interact with the learnings determining the balanced development of the child.

References:

Role of cooperative methodology learning

Numerous studies and researches in this field have examined the positive effects that the use of the cooperative methodology produces on the increase of the progress in different disciplinary fields, age groups and levels and with very varied tasks, compared with a competitive and individual way of learning (Johnson, 1975/1994; Slavin, 1983).

The cooperative learning differs from the competitive learning in which the pupils work one against the other to reach a better performance than that obtained by the mate; it also differs from the individualistic learning in which the pupils work alone to reach learning aims independent from those of the others.

According to Johnson (1974) the following ways of work organization can be identified:

1) Individual work;

2) Intraindividual competition;

3) Cooperation without competition among the groups;

4) Cooperation with competition among the groups.

The main characteristic that is present in the cooperation and absent in the competition is the existence of common
group aims and activities of the components that are interdependent.
The concept of the group aim indicates a common, central field of strength, that goes beyond the sum of the individual aims; the group task indicates something for which individuals work together. Knowing how to do something, that is the motor activity, allows the participation in the play, helps the rise of behaviours directed towards the other and the ability to modulate them in proportion with the characteristics of the mate. Knowing how to do a motor task expresses the pupil’s ability to manage the same task under the cognitive-motor profile. The application of the executive variants to the learnt motor abilities, in fact, doesn’t have only operative meanings, “knowing how to do something doesn’t determine only the ability to manage the execution of the task, but also the ability to interact with the other in the execution of the same task both on cooperation and competition side” (Fonzi, A., 1991, p. 21).

Knowing how to do something also helps the acquisition of an intentional and oriented behaviour that allows the organisation of social modalities that have a particular cooperative and competitive connotation.

To have both an effective collaboration and cooperation, there must be a real interdependence among the members of the group in the implementation of a task, a commitment to the mutual help and a sense of responsibility towards the
group and its aims. The cooperation expressed by the child during the play in the relationship with the peer, represents an important and fertile field for the study of the birth, the growth and the development of adaptive modalities based on the operative dimension, the interaction and the dialogue. The play represents a valid support for the cooperative learning, because it has an important role in the educational process and it is an essential and inalienable ingredient of the human experience: actually, it shows itself in almost all behaviours opening significant areas of freedom, action and creativity.

Essential references

Children's games in kindergarten  
Psycho-pedagogical and methodological aspects

1. Play a in child's education process

Play promotes the development of a child's personality. For each child the motor experiences lived through play favour the perception of himself/herself, the discovery of objects, the environment, and the relationship with other people (Bruner JS et al., 1981; Oliverio Ferraris A., 2003).

Play, which is an important element of motor activities, is a preferential means of learning. It increases the value of educational relationships, which allows a closer adherence to the child's motivations and facilitates the realization of a formative process with suitable educational methodologies, through the versatility of the experiences and gradual learning (Le Boulch J., 1998).

Play does not correspond to a motor skill, behaviour or a particular activity, it is an expressive way in which the consequent method of activity realization, context and interpersonal relationships acquire a formative value (Bruner JS et al., 1981).

Each recreational-motor experience has its own peculiar characteristics and contents that allow the child to express himself/herself in different ways (tab. 1).

<table>
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<th>Table n.1 The characteristics of the recreational experience (Antonelli, Salvini, 1987):</th>
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<td>• <strong>Free</strong>, what is - chosen voluntarily or accepted;</td>
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<td>• <strong>Uncertain</strong>, what is - linked to causality, expectation, able to activate uncertainty and a variety of emotions;</td>
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<td>• <strong>Totally or partially unproductive</strong>, what is - not strictly bound to specific motor tasks or performances;</td>
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<td>• <strong>Partly regulated</strong>, what is - submitted to flexible and re-invented rules;</td>
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<td>• <strong>Fictitious</strong>, what is - accompanied by a consciousness of unreality in relationship with daily life;</td>
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<td>• <strong>Authentic</strong>, when the child is able to integrate play in his/her entire daily experiences.</td>
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Play is a phenomenon that involves a child’s life (Perucca, 1993), even if, in adulthood the contents change and take on more shaded characteristics typical of the conventional spheres of usefulness and rationale.

A child’s needs are met in play, a complex activity that is structured according to different modalities (different types of games), which respond to the age of need, gender, customs of the community or reference group, socio-economical status, and educational process.

Childhood play, should not be associated, solely, with the concepts of freedom, spontaneity, happiness and instinct, underlying only the unconscious aspects of play; it also activates the cognitive activity as the child, through the repetition of gestures and actions, improve their ability to analyze the events and to establish relationships, analogies and differences (Le Boulch J., 1998).

The classifications of ‘game’ proposed by several Authors reflect different theories, (cf. Giugni G., 1973; Staccioli F., 2006; Cambi F. et al., 2007) and the proposed typologies represent only a theoretical index in constant evolution, as every game contains, in different measures and with variable and subjective relations, symbolic, imitative, creative, normative and competitive aspects.

After a first analysis, the most recurring classifications of games in literature (games of exercise, symbolic games, normative games, games with rules), are attributed to the succession of child’s cognitive, motor and socio-affective development phases. It is difficult, almost impossible, to measure the different relationship of physical, cognitive and socio-affective involvement present in each game (Elkind & Flavel, 1969; Piaget J., 1968).

According to J. Piaget (Elkind & Flavel, 1969) the characteristics of infant games reflect child’s cognitive evolution. They correspond to the three stages of human intelligence: sensory-motor; representative or symbolic, and normative. They represent activities that reproduce the assimilation-accommodation-adaptation processes. Towards
the end of childhood and adolescence play is characterized by all three factors. Piaget suggests the following classification:

- **Exercise games**, these are mainly sensory-motor games with the scope of being able to handle objects and to explore the external environment. The game consists in repetition or imitation, its aim is to verify a skill. The game begins with the repetition of an action, up to the task that activates the motor scheme (running, jumping) and the motor ability (running, throwing). This evolution stimulates the perceptive processes, the motor structures and progressively also the cognitive processes of intuition and logic.

- **Symbolic games**, the child represents reality in an imitative and conventional way, using the concepts of sequence and association, according to logical structures of symbolic reproduction of experiences. The child plays “pretending to”, imagining people and events, reproducing what they have previously seen and therefore, they are able to assimilate and understand the surrounding reality. At the age of 4-5 children play construction games (disassembling, reassembling, adjusting, building in part) which are cognitive operations suitable for the recreational situation carried out.

- **Instruction games**, these come after egocentric type games and they indicate the passage to socialized games made of rules;

- **Games with rules**, these are played by roles and rules, observing general game rules and giving up their individual rights to that of the group in which the child plays. The games in this phase (7-10 years) correspond to all games in which the child has to confront the meaning of rules, up to more complex types of games as sport-play. These activities contribute to form the child’s social skills and to transform concrete thought into formal thought (Elkind & Flavel, 1969). This is one of the most important phases of the cognitive-motor and affective-social development; thought process in this period becomes
adult, it is a dynamic thought able to reason through assumptions and deductions.

Each motor activity proposed through play refers to the relationship with cognitive, motor and socio-affective functions and vice versa, in a continuous, variable and circular relationship. Therefore, each game has distinct connotations that make it, in part or completely, different from the others on a methodological level, some games are more helpful than others, because they promote, primarily, the achievement of certain targets, for example in the logic-mathematical, motor, linguistic, musical field etc...

What is the starting point to study play in the development process of a child's personality in kindergarten?

A global education process addressed to all a person's aspects, the physical-organic, psychological, emotional-affective and social development and their interactions (to promote learning, behaviours and attitudes), has its foundations and is realized through the body and the experiences carried out through movement, gestural expressiveness, postures, and play (Elkind & Flavel, 1969; Piaget J., 1968; Giugni G., 1973; 1986). In the promotion and actuation of an educational process, in fact, the body and movement are the mediators between 'I' and the world (according to phenomenology), the person and the others represent the elements that build balanced relationships among the different areas of the person, which are foundations of health promotion. Movement and play, in particular during childhood, are ineludible fields of experience that promote interdependent relationships among every person's area or function. The physical activities activate and coordinate, i.e. the cognitive, organic-motor and socio-affective functions these represent the dynamic components of the personality, in which each single function integrate and influence each other (the evolution or the delay in the development in any one of these
functions influence the others and the child's growth on the whole).

The link among the functions in a person’s evolutionary age vary according to the personal rhythm of each area, dictated by the processes of maturity and learning, in consideration that individual behaviours remain indissoluble.

Therefore, the body is the first object the child has to discover, to learn, to communicate and play is the main way to learn and communicate with the others (Elkind & Flavel, 1969).

Through play every child experiences his/her body and the possibility to establish relationships with the external environment through gestures, postures and movements, the processes or psychobiological maturity interact with learning, determining a balanced development of the person. (Piaget J., 1968).

The verbal and non-verbal learning process, the cognitive-affective maturity, and socialization are, therefore, pedagogically reachable targets only when they pass through child’s motivations and through his/her modalities to gain experience. (Antonelli & Salvini, 1987). Each child’s experience is important, that is, it gains value for the person and interacts with past experiences, only if it is lived as a game.

According to these premises, play that is performed through physical activities, animation and dramatization, like common and traditional games, constitute a preferential modality to promote health education, implement education process and a person's balanced development through the interaction with cognitive, motor, socio-affective functions in relation to motivations and individual rhythms of the development.

Sport will represent its evolution, differentiation and variation.
2. To rehabilitate and to increase the value of the play in the contemporary society

Motor activities achieved through play are essential requirements for the development of a child’s personality, in which natural motivation appears today significantly limited by technological progress, urbanization, the disappearance of areas dedicated to infant play and the use of television, influenced by models of family life and adults that are sometimes negative (Smith & Biddle, 2008).

In the contemporary society in order to understand the meaning and the value of recreational activity, we have to consider the child in relation to his/her daily needs of adjustment to the environment in which he/she lives, to his/her ability to reassemble truth and imagination in the right prospective (Bruner JS, et al, 1981).

The messages proposed by media, adults’ habits and life styles, the relation between experiences lived at school and after school hours, the urbanization process of our towns, often represent a limit for the active involvement of adults in children’s activities and play (Dwyer J. et al., 2007).

In fact, with the arrival of industrial, technological and multimedia society plus the era of mass consumption, play and industrially made toys highlighted the characteristics of serial games (Staccioli F., 2006).

Independently of age, sex and social conditions, play is always more often a condition of isolation. Always less natural and occasional objects are used to play with, resulting in a consequent reduction of recreational-motor experience of symbolic transfiguration of the objects used. Therefore, creativity and its modalities of expression, are mainly reduced to non-verbal ones. (Staccioli F., 2006).

Urban and domestic areas in which a child can freely move are always fewer: some years ago street pavements represented a place where children could play, groups of children ran in the street playing with whatever was at hand., re-inventing traditional games, the roles were flexible and not rigidly bound to rules, relationships among children
of different ages were more open and in continuous
evolution and transformation. 
Today, sedentary habits in children (and adolescent) has
come to become a style of life which is possible to measure: measure
the absence of movement, that is the quantity of movement
and play that a child (and adolescent) should have, but does not. (Pate R., 2001).
Consequently, sensory-perceptive functions as auditory,
tactile, visual, kinesthetic and the motor schemes, crawling,
rolling, walking, running, jumping, which are the main
stages of learning and motor development process, have a
compromised evolution.
The indications that stimulate a child’s and adolescent’s
recreational-motor and sportive activities should promote a
process of education on physical active life styles that should
be acquired at the kindergarten and primary school and be
maintained for life, within the vast field of health education
(Malina R., et al., 2004).
The reduction of the time dedicated to spontaneous play or
that with older children and family represents for a child not
only the premises of a sedentary life style, but above all the
significant reduction or loss of a primary activity, both
amusing and motivating, through a recreational-motor
activity a child learns to know himself/herself, learn motor
abilities, learn to socialize and to confront himself/herself
with the others (Smith & Biddle, 2008).
Scientific evidence (Twisk Jos W.R., 2001; Strong W. B. et
al., 2005; Graf C. et al., 2006; WHO, 2007; Timmons W.B., et
al., 2007) agree on the benefits of physical activities in the
childhood age for the prevention of several pathologies
(overweight and obesity, type II diabetes, cardio-pathologies,
etc.), promoting the adoption of institutional measures at
different levels (family, school, community), that promote
regular physical activity, identifying in the lack of daily
motor activities the factors that characterize children’s
present life styles.
The reduction of daily motor activity, related to children
population, will determine a minor physical efficiency at the
succeeding ages, a reduced functional skill that will reflect on the levels of development and motor coordination (Malina R., 2004; Stratton G. et al., 2008).

The effects of a sedentary life overtake the organic area: the reduction of motor skill development levels noted in the evolutionary age and the lack of the elementary perceptive experiences that derive from this—predominately expressed through the play—cause a circular process for which the lack of successful experiences lead to avoid motor activities and to prefer a sedentary occupation for their free-time (Stratton G., et al. 2008; Stodden DF et al., 2008).

In fact, through a circular process that starts at the beginning of school, the reduction of the recreational experiences, independent of the modalities/context of development, represents for the child a reduction of successful opportunities (body-motor) and personal believes to succeed (physical self-efficacy) in performing a task correctly, in participating in a game of group or in an individual recreational activity with success (Stodden DF., et al., 2008).

This will gradually contribute to reduce the child’s motivations towards play and the following occasions of individual motor practice or in groups, because they are frequently associated to negative experiences.

Therefore, it is extremely important to promote body-motor experiences in the family, at school and in community contests in recreational forms, to systematically control the child’s level of physical activity, motor development and the statute-contemplation evolution parameters in order to promote a two-way educational approach (Tucker P., 2008):

- **Education of movement**, that is the development of motor abilities and the learning skills;
- **Education through movement**, that is the balanced relationship amongst cognitive-motor, emotional-affective and social development through motivating recreational and sport activities.

The importance of daily movement and play for kindergarten children, makes it essential to propose regular games and
motor activities suitable to their motivations and motor characteristics, increasing for example, urban areas designated to infant playgrounds, constructing safe pathways to go and come back from school on foot or on bicycle, opening school playgrounds, gyms and sports facilities when there are no lessons and during the holidays, offering the possibility do physical activities at the kindergarten and primary school (Pate R., et al., 2006).

The concept of daily motor activity, above all for children, is now recurrent in several studies (Corbin C. B., Pangrazi R. P., 2003; Hallai, Pedro C., et al., 2006; Tuker P., 2008) it is necessary, therefore, to focus our attention on two complementary levels: processes to promote and develop recreational-motor activities in function to health education, prevent illnesses and improve the quality of life (Thomas W. Rowland T. W., 2007); identify methods, contents and tools to use.

Kindergarten and primary school children should practice 60 minutes of daily structured and unstructured physical activity rich in amusing and varied motor experiences table n2) (NASPE, 2002; Corbin & Pangrazi, 2003).

Finally, games and playing offer the opportune keys to interpret infant development based on experience, that is, on what the child sees, touches, observes, knows and re-elaborates. Recreational activity is a source of knowledge, an opportunity of intellectual, affective and social growth. Everything the child learns passes through play. A denied game in infancy and adolescence is to be charged to the formation of an impoverished person in all his/her components and dimensions: he/she becomes disharmonic, with a reduced conviction of success, not very open to the confrontation and relationship with others, often inadequate to carry out tasks and responsibilities that a child has to face in adulthood (Piaget J., 1968; Elkind & Flavel, 1969; Le Boulch J.,1998).
Play requires the stimulation of a wide range of movements, motor schemes and positions that are integrated among themselves, and that ensure an effective interaction with the environment, objects and others people. Each game requires a differentiated motor activity according to child's level of development and set targets, the duration, the use of tools and the contest of the game. (Malina R. et al., 2004).

The basic motor skills, so defined because they are the first to emerge in the child's development, are the matrices, which are the requirements for consequent learning that will continue to enrich and to improve during the child's life.

The basic motor skills or “motor schemes” take place in time and space, they are: rolling, crawling, climbing, walking, running, jumping, throwing/catching, kicking; their relation with postures, flexing, stretching; bending, rotating; pushing, resisting, allows to learn always more complex motor skills and to resolve motor problems in a life made of relationships, play and sport and to give variable answers. (Gallahue DL., 2006).

As everybody knows, that motor development depends on maturity and learning processes. (Mussen P.H., 1982; Gallahue DL., 2006):

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**Table n2**

Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Aged 3–5 (NASPE, 2002)

1. Accumulate 60 minutes structured physical activity daily.
2. At least 60 minutes, and up to several hours, of daily, unstructured physical activity and not to be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when asleep.
3. Developing competence in movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.
4. Have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
5. Individuals responsible for the wellbeing of pre-schoolers to be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child’s movement skills.

**Source:** NASPE (National Association for Physical Education) (2002). Active Start, A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years, Reston, VA: AAHPERD
The process of maturity is prearranged by an individual's genetic inheritance which influences the type, quality and process times; the process of learning is based on the type and quality of experiences proposed to the child; this process is influenced by subject's willingness (motivation).

Why do the games have an expressive and communicative value for children's motor development? It's possible to speak about “motor literacy” (Gallahue DL., 2006). Motor schemes and postures are assimilated to alphabetical characters. By analogy, as the child learns to speak, to explain himself/herself and to communicate through the use and the combination of a certain number of alphabetical characters (from A to Z) the same as the performance of a motor scheme, the relation between motor schemes and postures represent the child's expressive-communicative and motor learning modalities. The rules are the same and the motor schemes take on the characters of a real language with semantic, syntactic and logic factors (Taiti P., 1983).

Through games the child learns the concepts of space (ahead, behind, right, left, on, under, high, low, inside, outside, large, narrow, etc.), time (before, after, fast, slow, contemporaneous, subsequent, alternating, etc.), quantity (a lot of, little, all, part, etc.) and quality (heavy, light, hard, soft, smooth, rough etc.) that represent generalities, the rules for the evolution of learning, the matrices of every kind of learning, transferable into several languages. These concepts applied to movement are real executive variances, modalities of performance of a motor skill and relation between motor schemes and skills (Gallahue DL., 2006).

A game, many variances: each game contains one or more executive variances, so, for ex.: the Bell (jumping: inside-outside, near, far, etc.); the Prisoner Ball (throwing: far, near, inside, outside, before, after, etc.); the Four Corners (running: right, left, fast, slow, before, after, ahead, behind, etc.), Catch (running: fast, slow, before, after, right, left, ahead, behind, inside, outside, etc.), but, above all, it expresses the relations between the motor schemes and the
executive variances and it increases the child’s opportunities to learn new variances, new relations and more complex skills. A game of *dramatization* promotes several executive variances according to sequences, durations, variable intervals, alternating of muscular contractions and relaxations according to the theme and the contest.

Learning to play in order to learn to communicate: in this prospective the important elements of a game are identifiable in *space, time, roles*, the method to determine the *score*, in the use of *objects/tools, and in relationships that are established among the participants* (Parlebas P., 1997). These elements and their reciprocal relations determine the *structure* of the game and its internal *logic*.

The concepts of learning space-time-quantity-quality referred to movements, is common to every age group and it can be applied to every verbal and non-verbal learning (Le Boulch, 1998).

Every executive variance represents a phase of motor and learning development.

The learning of the executive variances for each and all motor schemes and postures should follow a circular growth process that leads to learning new and more complex motor sequences, up to the acquisition and the stabilization of the motor skills (Gallahue, 2006).

Therefore, motor language is learnt and enriched through the proposal of individual games, in pairs, in groups, with or without tools and relations among the executive variances that promote all sensory-perceptive, coordinative and conditional, expressive motor skills.

The “*motor literacy*” process realized at home and at school, should be carried out through a series of teaching and methodological actions that ensure the child, in particular kindergarten and primary school children, educational conditions to develop all motor skills and to improve the command of his/her motor skills progressively.

The educational process should aim at child’s learning of “the wider motor foundations” of motor schemes in *quantitative* and *qualitative* terms (Le Boulch J., 1998)
This allows the learning of motor skills that are updated systematically, also in relation to physical growth (Malina R., 2004).

If the child is allowed to play, he/she learns and develops motor schemes in a natural and independent way.

Since the first months of life, the movement games performed by the child are associated to cognitive and socio-affective experiences: the child learns to plan an action to reach a purpose, he/she revokes the necessary variable motor schemes, he/she operating a transfer among the skills learnt identifying what they have in common and generalize, transferring to different contests and learning. (Bruner JS, 1981; Salvini A., Tarantini F. 1989).

The cognitive abilities are the characteristics that allow the person to understand, control and modify information in relation to subjective and objective needs of active adaptation to the environment (Piaget J., 1968). A traditional game as the “Bell”, for example, reflects a multilevel motor structure that allows different degrees of expression and executive modalities. The game entails, different levels of difficulties and each difficulty can be overcome once the child has acquired the motor ability tackle the previous motor tasks. (Parlebas P., 1997). Each body-motor activity stimulates the mental aspects and it becomes intuitively understandable why each motor act is also a mental act and why it is assimilated to a cognitive process.

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Games

The chairs

**Game description:** Put some chairs in the midst of the room, one chair in less than the number of the players (if the players are 10, the chairs are 9), turn on the stereo and let the music start. When it stops everyone must sit down. The one who stays standing goes out taking away one chair!

**Variants:** A variant is the use of some hoops instead of the chairs.

**Specific aims:** improvement of motor abilities, sense-perception abilities, auditory and visual abilities; spatio-temporal orientation.

**Fundamental motor skills:** walking; running.

**Number of participants:** in proportion to the available space.

**Tools:** chairs.
Quiz

**Game description:** Divide the children in two groups and propose them a simple quiz. Preferably, the questions will be simple and on healthy eating or foods. All children of the two groups will take part in the game. Alternately, each child will start doing a simple course (for example doing a somersault on a mat or passing under a bridge of rods or jumping over a hurdle) to reach the teacher. The child who comes in first has the right to answer to the question. Naturally, the group that scores the highest number of right answers wins.

**Specific aims:** improvement of the velocity ability; sense-perception and auditory abilities; motor coordination.

**Fundamental motor skills:** running, rolling, crawling, throwing.

**Number of participants:** the group-class.

**Tools:** handball or volley-ball, mat, basket, etc.
The shock

**Game description:** Divide the children in two groups, that form two semicircular lines one in front of the other. All members of the group are hand in hand. The two heads of the queue hold the teacher’s hand, who starts sending the "shocks", i.e. strong handshakes. The heads of the queue must send the shock to the next person as far as the last child of the queue, who must put his/her hand up. The group that guesses earlier how many shocks have been sent wins one point. It is a sort of “cordless phone”, that however implies some difficulties!

**Specific aims:** improvement of the speed of reaction and tactile discrimination.

**Number of participants:** the group-class.
The bell

**Game description:** Besides drawing the bell, find a small stone or a flat object in order to play. Choose a quite flat one, neither so big nor too smooth, otherwise it doesn’t slide. The rules of the game are the following: you can play this game alone or with some friends. The most important rule is to play jumping on a single leg. To decide who may start, count out. The first player goes in the box GROUND and he/she throws the stone in the box with the number 1. Jumping on a single leg he/she goes from the box GROUND to the Box 1, he/she picks up the stone, he/she turns on his/herself and he/she comes back to the box GROUND. Than he/she throws the stone in the Box 2, he/she jumps in the Box 1 than in the Box 2, he/she picks up the stone and, always jumping, he/she comes back to the box GROUND. The player goes on throwing the stone in the Box 3 and he/she continues in the same way to the box SKY. Now, the player has to play in reverse order and so from the box SKY he/she throws the stone in the Box 8, than in the Box 7 and so on back to the box GROUND. The player can lean both feet on the boxes 4 - 5 and 7 - 8. Pay attention, the player or the stone can not touch in any case the lines of the boxes. Never step on the lines! If the stone falls down in a wrong box or on a line, the player loses his/her turn and he/she may start again from the box where he/she has made the mistake, only after that.
all other players have played. The player who finishes earlier wins!

**Specific aims:** improvement of visual discrimination ability; explosive strength, spatio-temporal orientation, static and dynamic equilibrium; modulation of the muscle strength.

**Fundamental motor skills:** jumping, throwing.

**Number of participants:** small groups (3-5 children).

**Tools:** Drawing on the floor.
Hide-and-seek

Game description: A player, chosen at random, is the one who “stays under”; he/she must lean his head with closed eyes on the wall (or another vertical surface) in a place chosen as “lair” or “keyhole” and count aloud. While he/she counts, the other players look for some right places to hide themselves. When the count is finished, the player who "stays under" must find the others. As soon as he/she finds one of his/her friends, he/she must run towards the “lair” saying aloud the name of the person he/she has seen, who is disqualified (or “captured”). In the following turn of game, usually, the first captured player will stay under. If a player is able to reach the lair without being seen or however before the player who “stays under”, he/she can declare “lair” or “free!”, avoiding his/her capture. If the last player of the game reaches the lair, he/she can also declare "lair for all" (or "all free!"); in this case, the previously captured players are free and the player, who stayed under, will stay under also in the following turn.

Variants: As the most part of the traditional children’s games, hide and seek is known in many countries and in a large quantity of variants. The main variant is that in which the player who stays under must touch the opponents to capture them, rather than simply seeing them. This variant is one of the simplest ones of this game family.
Specific aims: improvement of sense-perception abilities, auditory and visual abilities, spatio-temporal orientation, dynamic equilibrium, running speed.

Fundamental motor skills: running.

Number of participants: group-class.
One, two, three...star!

**Game description:** Choose the child who will represent the “star” and put him/her in a specific point of the field of play. The other children form a line on the other side of the field (about 20 metres from the “star”) and they must try to reach the star who has closed eyes and turn his/her back on them .... but the star suddenly shouts "One, two, three... star!". At the word “star” he/she turns him/herself towards the children opening his/her eyes while the children must make some steps ahead stopping at the word star. The children who are caught moving must come back to the starting line. The one who touches earlier the “star” takes his/her place.

**Specific aims:** improvement of sense-perception abilities, auditory and visual abilities; dynamic equilibrium; spatio-temporal orientation.

**Fundamental motor skills:** walking.

**Number of participants:** group-class.
**Touch, touch the colour...**

**Game description:** Children move freely in the space of play. A child says "Touch, touch the colour...(choosing a colour at pleasure)". The other children must try to touch with their hands an object with the indicated colour. The child who has chosen the colour must try to catch another child who doesn’t manage to find the object of the fixed colour. If he/she manages to touch him/her, he/she takes his/her place and the new child will choose the next colour. If he/she doesn’t manage to touch him/her, the same child will play again the same role of choosing the colour. The children who manage to touch the object of the fixed colour are safe and can not be touched, but they should always keep their hand on the colour until every children manage to find an object of that colour and to touch it or if a child is caught before touching the object of the indicated colour.

**Specific aims:** improvement of sense-perception abilities, auditory and visual abilities; spatio-temporal orientation.

**Fundamental motor skills:** running.

**Number of participants:** group-class.
The handkerchief

**Game description:** Form two groups; choose some categories (animals, colours, foods, numbers, etc.) and prepare two cards with similar elements, one for each group (ex. two cards with the lion, two cards with the same colour, two cards with the same food, two cards with the same number, etc).

So, each child will have the same element of another child of the opposing group.

Children put themselves one in front of the other: an adult (or alternatively a child if they are odd) maintains a handkerchief and calls at random one of the chosen element. The two children with the same element card go near the person maintaining the handkerchief and tries to catch it. The one who catches the handkerchief must run back to his/her place without making him/her touched by the opposite.

If he/she is touched he/she must give the handkerchief to the other group that gains one point.

If he/she manages to reach his/her place without being touched by the other child his/her group gains the point.

**Specific aims:** improvement of sense-perception abilities, auditory, visual and tactile abilities, speed of reaction, spatio-temporal orientation.

**Fundamental motor skills:** running.
**Number of participants:** group-class.

**Tools:** a handkerchief, drawn cards.
Prisoner ball

Game description: The players are divided in two groups each one with at least four players. They clash in a rectangular field of about 15x8 metres, divided in four lines of different size, two smaller ones on the borderline and two bigger ones on the centreline, where alternatively the members of the two groups position themselves and start the match. Two leaders are named and by lot (ex. tossing a coin) they must dispute the right to choose the members of the group and to start playing. Alternatively, a member of the group must try to hit one or more opponents, throwing the ball with his/her hands, without overcoming with his/her feet and arms the borderline that divides the two fields. The shot is valid only if the ball doesn't hit neither the wall nor the ground before touching an opponent. When an opponent is hit by the ball he/she becomes “prisoner”, and he/she must move to the smaller line, behind the members of the group that has scored. If a prisoner catches the ball, he/she may try to hit the opponents to be free again. If after a shot the ball is caught by a player of the opposition, the one who has thrown the ball must go into the area of prisoners. The aim of the match is to capture all opponents or, if a time is fixed, to finish the match with more prisoners than the opposition.
Variants: A variant, instead, provides that the match finishes with the “capture” of the opposing leader, who obviously is “unknown” by the opposition.

Specific aims: improvement of sense-perception abilities, visual and tactile abilities; spatio-temporal orientation; evaluation of the distances and trajectories; speed of action and reaction.

Fundamental motor skills: throwing–catching.

Number of participants: group-class.

Tools: a ball.
The four corners

**Game description:** A square is drawn on the ground and four players must occupy the corners, while a fifth player stays in the centre. He/she must try to gain one of the four corners while the other players attempt the exchange place. If he/she succeeds, the one who has lost his/her place goes in the centre of the square and the game starts again.

**Specific aims:** improvement of sense-perception and visual abilities, spatio-temporal orientation; speed of action and reaction.

**Fundamental motor skills:** running.

**Number of participants:** group-class.

**Tools:** none.
Cross the door

**Game description:** The players must be at least three. Two players place themselves one in front of the other, hand in hand, stretching their arms. The two players rhythmically put up and down their arms, while the other player or players must try to cross the door without being blocked.

**Specific aims:** improvement of sense-perception and visual abilities, spatio-temporal orientation; speed of action and reaction.

**Fundamental motor skills:** running.

**Number of participants:** group-class.

**Tools:** none.
The target

**Game description:** The game takes place in a gym with two groups: draw a circle with a diameter of about 4 metres; the area in the circle is a neutral space, no one can get in. Inside this area draw a smaller circle with a diameter of 1 meter. The children have to try to hit the area of the little circle throwing the ball in it. The group that hits the target the highest number of times wins.

**Specific aims:** improvement of sense-perception and visual abilities, space-temporal orientation; speed of action and reaction.

**Fundamental motor skills:** throwing.

**Number of participants:** group-class.

**Tools:** a ball.
**Donkey Tail**

**Game description:** The children are divided in two groups, they are allowed to move freely, walk and/or run, in the field and in every available space; each group is given coloured ribbons, of two different colours, these ribbons are stuck on the back of their clothes. The game consists in being able to undo the opponent’s ribbon and at the same time prevent them from undoing yours. The group that collects more ribbons wins.

**Specific aims:** improvement of sense-perception and visual abilities, space-temporal orientation; speed of action and reaction.

**Fundamental motor skills:** running.

**Number of participants:** group-class.

**Tools:** ribbons, head scarves or handkerchiefs.
Physical activity and motor development in preschool children relevant publications

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