

Spatial Awareness

Skills and Activities



Dale H. Sarratt
SarrattsystemsPE.com

Introduction

Welcome to spatial awareness. I hope you find a couple of the activities helpful to your program. A basic concept and skill in physical education and sports is **personal spacing**; the ability to move effectively in a dedicated smaller area. For our discussion, **general spacing**, which is ability to move effectively in the entire spacing usually around other players within a play place, (lines/cones), the boundary areas is a main focus. Both are enormously important, but it's essential for kids to learn spacing skills and the ability of players to play in the larger space maintaining spacing without crowding and common bunching up. As they mature and games get complex, the ability to travel through this space, often at high speeds, while others are also traveling fast. This may seem like a paradox, or a problem, but it's not. It's foundational to all the court and field games and sports that children want and like to play.

Therefore this section is dedicated to developing superior foundation movement through space. Lastly, as you will read, the key ingredient is the character integration, it's the glue that holds physical education programs tightly together.

Eight simple activities/links:

- Bubble Game w/ Hula Hoops
- Body Shape Challenge and Games
- Anaconda Snake
- Blind Buddy
- 4 Area Scatter Movement Challenge
- Scatter Moving Skills and Eye Scanning Skills
- The Stopping Game
- The Big Space Game

Bubble Game (Grades K-1) (Sarratt/ et al.)



Introduction

Welcome to the Bubble Game! Bubble Game gets us started and helps youngsters learn about using personal spacing in a fun way. This is a very simple and foundational activity for both *personal* and *general* spacing skills. Children will be in their personal bubble space while exploring and expanding into the larger general space without going into No No land- good luck!

Why are we playing this game?

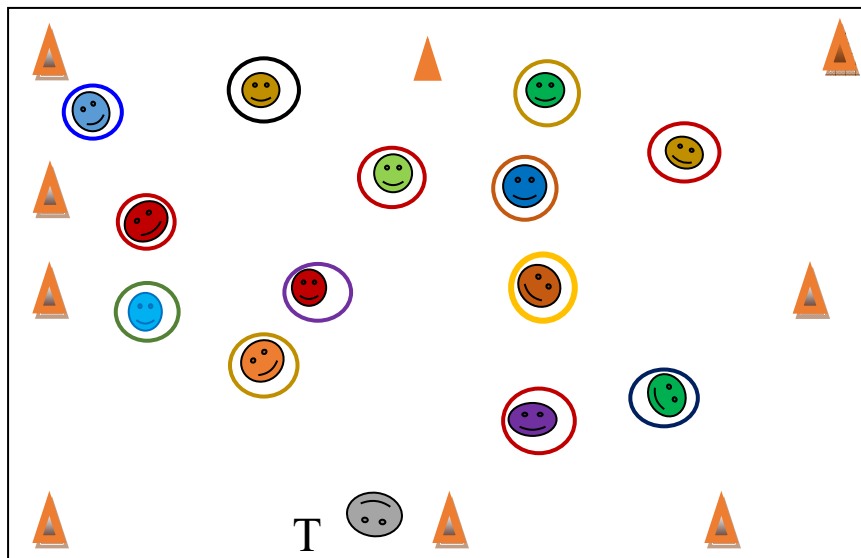
- ✓ To teach the skill of personal space
- ✓ To teach the skill of general space
- ✓ To teach of eye scanning skills- watching out for other students
- ✓ To teach the skill boundary line awareness- No No line
- ✓ To teach thinking skills such as problem solving-where to go, when to stop?

Equipment

- Bottle of blow bubbles (you can find these at toy stores, Walmart or online)
- Wall/gym or medium size (hand held) dry wipe board
- Small outside field/blacktop area
- Several small cones for the No No line
- Large hula hoops
- Beautiful classical, new age or yoga music

Organization

Review personal space play area. If needed, have students note the cones and No, No Land. A quick drill is for the youngsters (grades K-1) they can place their arms straight out wide to show you their personal space.



Students

holding on to their hula hoop in their personal space,
bubble space, in the general space.
(See diagram above)

How we play the Bubble Game (see diagrams above/below)



- **Start with a little show:** In front of the class, blow your ***blow bubbles*** high in the air showing how pretty they are! Next, pop a couple of them, oh no! *“We don’t want that to happen to any of you...”*
- *“Who would like to be a bubble today? Who can play without getting popped?”*
- Each student starts as an individual bubble. Spreads out standing inside the hula hoop in the play area.
- Play the beautiful music as the children walk, twirl, spin, and sway around the general space.
- Encourage various creative movement as they move and flow inside their hula hoop.
- Stop the music and they freeze their bubbles without getting popped!

Variations

- Several creative movements, might be best when not holding a hula hoop?

Teaching tip/review/closure

- What is personal and general space?
- What is No, No land?
- Where our eyes should be looking when we are traveling?

We now travel to **Body Shape Games!**

Body Shape Challenges and Games (K-5) (Sarratt and et al.)

Introduction

Welcome to Body Shape Challenges and Games! This is of the most fun challenges and games that kids enjoy while learning about using personal spacing. This activity could also be classified as gymnastics, cooperatives, or even dance and creative moves. So I wouldn't hesitate to use this activity in those units. This is a very simple, fun and foundational activity for both **personal** and **general** spacing skills. Children will be mostly working and playing in smaller spaces but at times those will be expanded into medium and larger general spaces.

For our older, grades 4-5, look to the below **teaching tips** for my specific **Body Shape Game** recommendation.

Body Shape Challenges and Games are introducing foundational personal and general spacing as well as thinking, listening, reading, writing, problem solving in our PE program.

Why are we playing this game?

- ✓ To teach the skill personal space
- ✓ To teach the skill general space
- ✓ To teach of cooperation with others, such as sharing and taking turns
- ✓ To teach the thinking skills such as problem solving, reading and writing

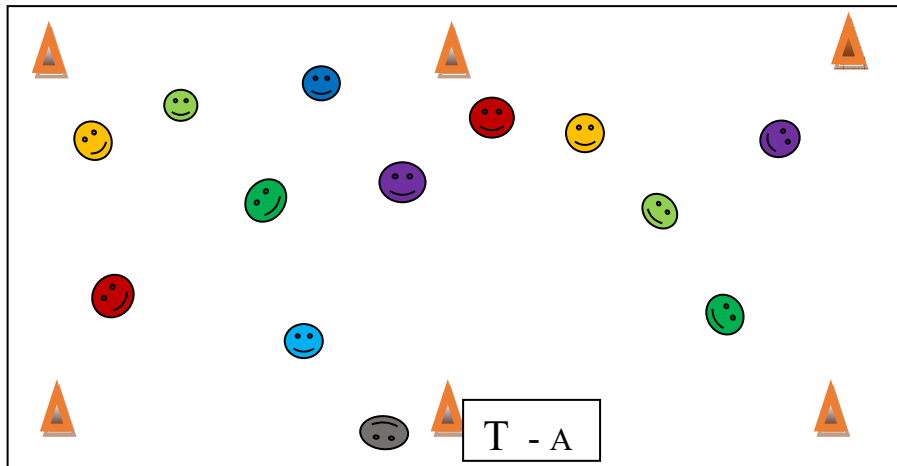
Equipment

- Wall/gym or medium size (hand held) dry wipe board and markers
- Several small cones for the NO NO line

Organization

Find a personal space play area. Have students note the cones and NO, NO Land. For youngsters students grades (K-1) they can place their arms straight wide, out to show you their personal space. (See diagram and picture below)

Body Shape Challenge



Teaching holding dry wipe board- writing the “trick -A”
Students laying down getting ready to perform the “trick”

How we play (see diagram above)

Younger grades

- **Individual Challenge:** Students start as individuals. Spread students out in the play area. They are laying on backside with feet toward you and head away; they can see you with this procedure.
- With your dry wipe marker and board ***secretly*** write a **shape**, **letter**, or a single **number**. There is fun anticipation to all of this. Some of these are easier than others and you'll learn them fast.
- Hold up board high and walk around so they can see it. They give a go! While *laying down*. They don't stand up.
- Repeat this process many times, changing and progressing to various letters, shapes, and numbers challenges until you feel they are ready for the next challenge! Maybe next class?
- **Partner Challenge:**
 - Repeat the same process with the partners.
 - Some shapes are great for partners. Check partners when they are complete.
 - D, J, K, T, V, X (X gets the most giggles...)
- **Small Group Challenge:** groups of 4:
 - Have your groups call you over when complete.
 - Create shapes like square, heart, diamond, triangle, circle, oval, long line
 - Difficult numbers: W, M, B, E, R, Z
- **Variations: Big Team Challenge Older Students/grades**



1. Have each team choose a creative shape/the creative movement. Gives students agency/voice.
2. Students draw shape on dry wipe board and turn over, so other teams or teacher do not see the shape.
3. Team begins building the shape; cooperatively communicating and working together.
4. When shape is complete, team calls the instructor, “*Mr. Gym! Mr. Gym! We’re done!*”
5. Mr. Gym guesses the shape. And congratulates the team along with challenging the team for another fun shape!
6. Teams share roles throughout the process.
7. Switch partners / each class for new cooperative / creative movement etc.

Teaching tip

Standing Shape Challenge - Grades 4-5:

- Students are in larger groups (6-8) for more difficult challenges.
 - Give each team a dry wipe marker and board.
 - Students do not lay down but stand up or squat down for this challenge.
 - Step 1: They create their own word team, write it down on the dry wipe board.
 - Step 2: If they have seven people on the team it has to have seven letters. It’s okay to let them slide if they use six letters and use explanation points or period for the last letter of the word.
 - Step 3: They call you over to read their **shape** word when done! Can you read it?
 - Step 4: Next challenge!
- **Closer/Reflection Questions:**
 - What did you like about the activity?
 - What helped you to succeed (complete) the challenge?
 - We now travel to South America to handle the **Anaconda Snakes!**

Anaconda Snake (Grades 1-5) (D. Glover/D. Midura/Sarratt)

Introduction



Welcome to Anaconda Snake! For sure this one most unusual and super fun spatial awareness movement challenges and games that kids love to play each year that also enforces personal spacing concepts. This is the next level of challenge and could also be classified as cooperatives or creative moves. So I wouldn't hesitate to import this activity in those units.

This is one of my favorite personal space/cooperative activities every year. It's an activity for both **personal** and **general** spacing skills. Children will be mostly working and playing smaller spaces, but now expanded to medium and shared spaces. However, as we progress the challenges, the kids can be expanded into larger spaces, their general space especially for 4th and 5th grades. For our older, grades 4-5, look to the below, **teaching tips**, for two team challenges and longer ropes recommendation.

Anaconda Snake Challenges and Games are introducing foundational personal and general spacing, thinking, listening, reading, writing, problem solving in our PE program.

I first learned about the game, ***The Snake***, from the book *Team building Through Physical Challenges* by Glover and Midura, 1992. I made up the story, some new rules and progressions. Let's get to snake handling...

Why are we playing this game?

- ✓ To teach the skills of personal space and general space
- ✓ To teach the skills of cooperation with others, such as sharing and taking turns
- ✓ To teach the thinking skills such as problem solving, reading and writing
- ✓ To teach the skills of handling a rope carefully

Equipment

- Several sized length jump ropes, class set. 7, 8, 9, 10, 14 ft. lengths.
- Home Depot sells 3/8 thick rope ___ long for a few dollars. Cut several of these down long lengths as needed for challenges.
- Several tug of war ropes 4th and 5th level (borrow from a neighbor's school)
- Wall/gym or medium size (hand held) dry wipe boards
- Several small cones for the No No line

Organization (See diagram and picture below)

Story and book time of Anacondas: *"Once upon a time we went on a field trip to discover how PE is done in **South America**. When we got there, we saw Anacondas Snakes, yikes! (Show pictures) We were so scared, we thought they would squeeze us! (Kids wraps arms around themselves, and twist legs! Ugh... blow out air...) But they are not going to hurt us; in fact they are not feeling well, they are sick. They have a cold and the flu. This one here (show jump rope) is named **Andy the Anaconda**, is very sick and needs our care and warming up. Do you think you can help him?"*

Start with individual jump ropes, each player finds a personal space.

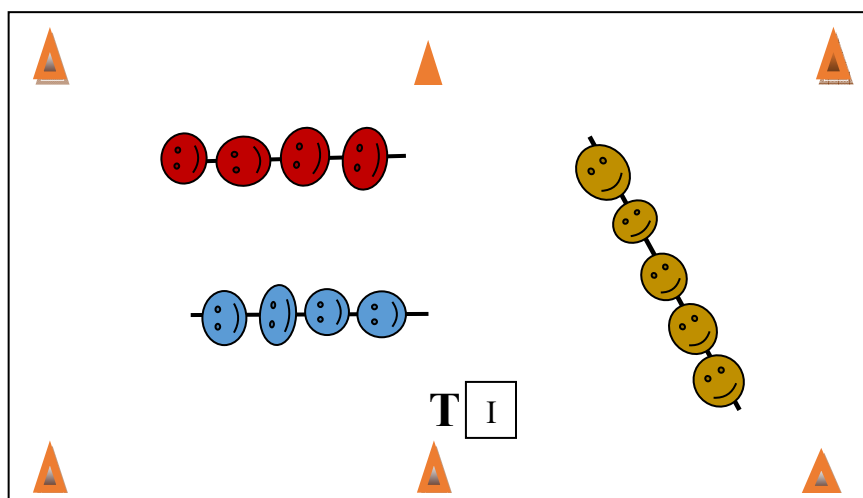
Rules and Safety:

1. No shaking, tugging or pulling on the ropes. Safety. Care of *Andy*.
2. Make the shape as challenged.
3. All group members lay on the rope to help calm *Andy the Anaconda*.
4. There should not be big gaps between players. *Andy* is getting cold!
5. Call teacher over when done to show how you did, and get your next shape challenge!
6. Encourage each other! Share jobs.
7. **LPE**: Listen, Praise and Encourage each other!

How we play Anaconda (see diagram below)

Rules and procedures

- **Individual Challenge:** Students start as individuals. Spread students out in the play area. They are laying down on the jump rope.
- Just like with *Body Shape Challenge*, use dry wipe marker and board, and *secretly* write a **shape**, **letter** or a single **number** down. There is fun anticipation to all of this! Some of these are easier than others and you'll learn them fast. Progress with easy challenge shapes first depending on age/grade. Learners will discover they can fold JR at the ends or middle to cover *Andy the Anaconda*.
- Hold board up high and walk around so they can see it! They give a go!
- Repeat this, process, changing and progressing various letters, shapes, and numbers challenges until you feel they are ready for the next challenge! Maybe next class?
- **Partner Challenge:**
 - Repeat the same process with the partners and next size up JR.
 - Some shapes are great for partners.
 - D, J, K, T, V
- **Small Group Challenge:** groups of 4-6: (See diagram below)
 - Have your groups call you over when completed.
 - Create shapes like square, heart, diamond, triangle, circle, oval, long line
 - Difficult numbers: W, M, B, E, R, Z



Large Group Challenge: groups of 8 or more and/or dividing class into two or three larger groups: (4th or 5th grade challenges only)

- Using the **Home Depot** ropes, make longer ropes or use tug of war ropes.
- Creates shapes like square, heart, diamond, triangle, circle, oval, long line etc.
- Difficult numbers: W, M, B, E, R, Z
- Have your groups call you over when completed for next challenge.

Variations

- Students can create first letter of each member name.
- Have the students choose and demo a creative shape/the creative movements.
- Gives students agency/voice.
- Switch partners / each class for new cooperative / creative movement, etc.

Teaching tip

For **grades 4-5** classes:

- Students are in larger groups (6-8) and much more difficult challenges.
- Give each team a dry wipe marker and board.
- Step 1: All players circle up, discuss and choose their own team shape. They draw it on the dry wipe board. Hey, we got art integration!
- Step 2: They physically create the shape with the rope working together, taking turns and sharing jobs. The shape should match the dry wipe board. They will need to lay down on it as they make the shape. Is it too big, or too small? The genius and art of the game is it needs a tad bit of adjusting as all players lay on it and see if works okay. The spacing and sizing of every shape!
- Step 3: They call you check out their shape when done! And are ready for the next challenge!

Closer/Reflection Questions:

- What did you like about the activity?
- What helped you to succeed (complete) the challenge?

So sorry, but we now are going to hospital and need our buddies to help us out!

Blind Buddy (grades 3-5)



Introduction

How important are your eyes? Before we turn the youngsters loose to run in more advanced PE games, it might be important to have our little charges appreciate the importance of visual abilities, to improve the use of vision, by taking them away. What! You know, the expression: *“you never knew what you had it until it was gone.”* Blind Buddy has that effect on the kids and improves their visual skills and their secondary senses.

Start with a story:

So not to worry the children, share a story that sometimes a child must undergo a simple corrective eye operation like **Lasik Eye Surgery** and have a bandaged eyes and are temporality blind for just a couple hours. Have the kids’ partner-up. Explain that your blind buddy has just had this operation. Ask the students if they would be willing to assist their friend in helping him or her to get around. In fact, the blind buddy would like to go outside for a stroll, a nice little walk, and get some much needed exercise after being cooped up in the hospital. However, they need their trusty companion to escort them **slowly** and **safely**. Of course, the little darlings are obliged to help out.

Why are we playing Blind Buddy?

- ✓ To help our buddy get around safely. To take our buddy for a walk in the play area without allowing the blind buddy to bump or touch players, step out of bounds or touch the pins.
- ✓ To develop trust, caring and empathy for others.
- ✓ To learn to appreciate our vision and use our vision better. Eye line skills.
- ✓ To develop communication skills, talking and listening.
- ✓ Gentle touching.

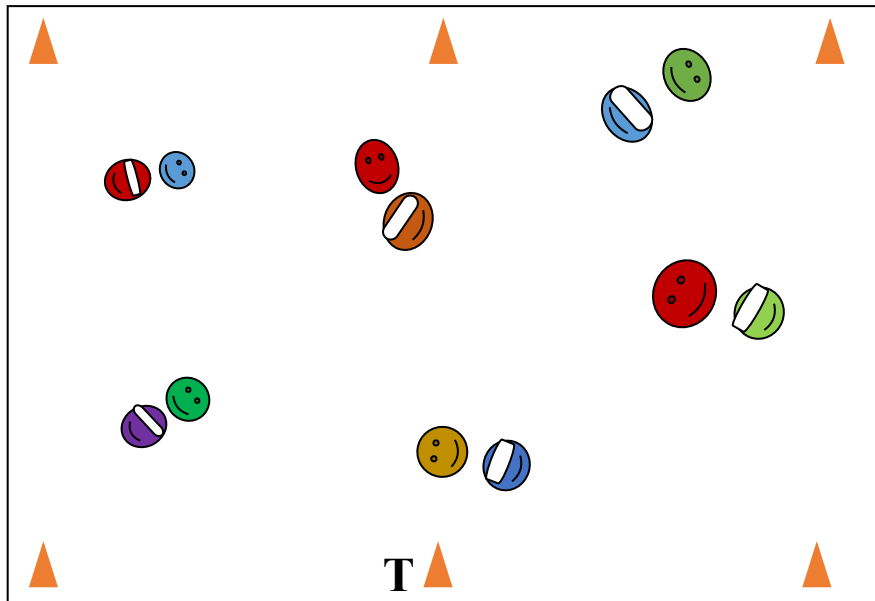
Equipment

- Safety traffic cones, No No Land, 10-20 challenge pins, blind folds

Organization

Students are paired up, one is the **blind buddy** and one is the **assistant** or **helper**.

Blind Buddy with blindfolds and Assistant



How we play Blind Buddy Game: no blindfolds

Student must first prove the character skill to be trustworthy and **safe** before progressing to the blindfolds. One partner is **Blind**, without a blindfold, just **eyes closed** at this time; the other partner is the **assistant**. The assistance's job is to use quality **verbal directions** while walking behind and within one step her partner so that at any impending "emergency" moment he/she is close enough to be heard, and can reach out and if needed, lightly touch and gently hold he/she blind buddy shoulders. Light shoulder grabbing shouldn't happen if he/she is doing an effective job as an assistant and using quality verbal directions.

It is recommended to demonstrate by choosing a student as the blind buddy and the teacher being the assistant. Then have the pairs try it. "*Walk forward, stop, now turn left, slow down, stop, wait, walk forward etc.*" Remind each assistant to speak quietly to his/her "blind" partner because of their blind buddy's enhanced hearing and not to talk over the other blind buddies. This will keep the class quieter and assists the experience.

Kids are astounded how poorly they do at this game at first. Every year, every class. It shocks them. It is difficult. Go easy on them. This is difficult for seasoned adults with training in communication skills if you have ever tried in a class or workshop.

Partners switch rolls after a minute or so. With this game it's best to allow the players to remain partners for several turns to develop enhanced communication and trust before switching to new partners. Also, stop the action and allow partners to discuss among themselves how to improve their communication skills and confidence.



Blind Buddy without blindfold - eyes closed and walking safe
Stay away from the No Man's Land...
Watch out for the other kids...

Variations and Progressions

Add blindfolds

After several turns blindfold can be used if the students are on task and moving carefully.

Challenge pins: Adding a few challenge pins. Scattered around the room to further challenge the partners.



Blind Buddy with Blind Folds walking within one step and careful

Teaching Tips:

Switch partners when you feel players are ready for a new partner.

Reflection Questions:

- How did taking away your eye site help you to become better listeners?
- Did you have really use good speaking skills?
- Did you ever have to reach out and touch and save them in an emergency? Why?
- When “blind” did you gain any extra sense or feeling of space around you?
- With your eye site back, do you think you will be better at seeing your space/position better?

4 Area Scatter Movement Challenges: (Pre K-1 grade) (Sarratt)

Well to 4 Area Scatter Movement Challenges.

This is a very simple, fun and foundational spatial awareness activity. Maybe you have introduced your youngsters to scatter type movements and let’s say, like me, they were, well, quite scattered....things were not going too well. Don’t fret, I’ve been there a few times and got you covered. I created this activity just for this occasion. We are going “*reduce to ridicules*” as they say and get these little youngsters moving so well in personal and general space its going to put smile on your face! It did for me.

Now, class structure is fundamentally changed into four groups with four start/stop zones, better said - lines. Blue, red, yellow, green. And we use progressions to challenge these much smaller group of learners to move through space. They will do much better, after **4 Area Scatter Movement Challenges**. Please note: It’s not meant to take all class period, only part of this routine needs to be done at a time. However, keep practicing this daily with locomotor skills and most importantly excellent stopping skills. They need lots of practice and it can be done in a flash! That’s the hallmark of this activity. They will learn spatial skills so well!

Why are we playing this game?

- ✓ To teach the skills of scatter movement and personal spacing
- ✓ To teach the skills of boundary line control
- ✓ To teach excellent stopping skills

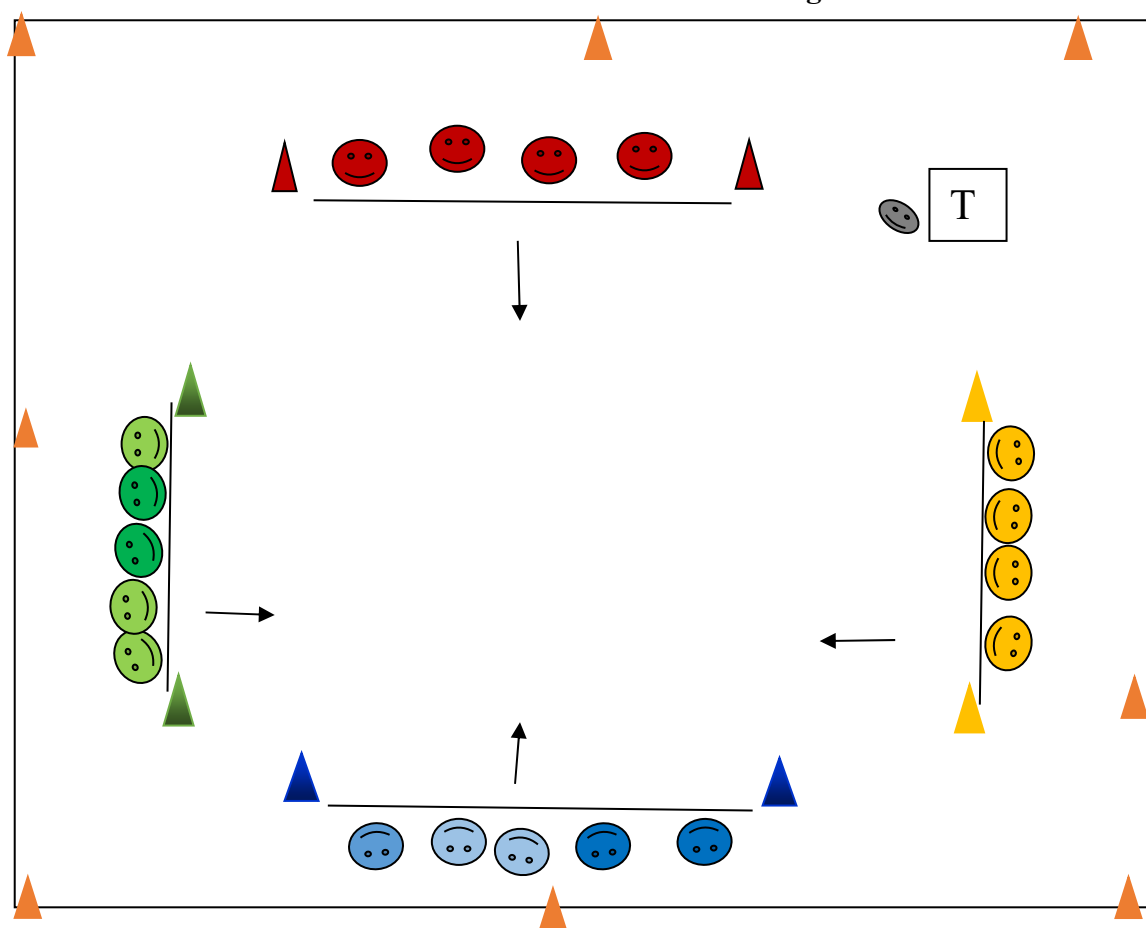
Equipment

- Task cards/vocabulary terms for each exercises/locomotor skills
- Cones for the No No line
- tambourine
- wooden block and stick or tom tom and stick
- Four sets of cones
- Color coded mini Cone Folders & Posters (optional)

Organization (see diagram below)

- Divide your class into four groups.
- Have students note the cones and NO, NO Land.

4 Area Scatter Movement Challenge

**How we play**

- Goal is to use scatter movement and by chunking and scaffolding the skills/information.
- Using your tambourine / drum & wooden block and voice, challenge each group through fun skill program. Each group, one by one, is called out for a short challenge then come back.
- Tap your drum as you sing a song, *“red group time for you, come to life, skip a Lou!* Movements are only 15-30 seconds or so.
- Like fitness routines, we are careful of spacing and pacing.
- Like everything, it’s best to use progressions and buildup.
- Use your best judgement to cycle in age appropriate fun activities from list below.
- **Locomotor Skills:** start with slower ones then faster more challenging. Skipping, galloping, side-sliding, jogging, etc.
- **Stopping skill:** review this skill with the groups over and over again. Excellent upright core and balanced.
- **Test Time-Personal Spacing:** arms out test! Anyone in your personal space?

Variations and progressions

- Each group comes out by themselves, showing their best moves and do stops and stands tall, goes back to stops on start/stop line, no knee slides.
- Combine groups: red and blue, green and yellow.
- Red and green, blue and yellow.
- Three at a time. One groups stays home.
- Have each group choose and demo a creative movement. Gives students agency/voice.
- Keep this simple so you have time for your other activities.
- Progress to partner / cooperative / creative movement, etc.

Teaching tip

- First class, introduce scatter moving and excellent stopping skills. Focus on stopping skills and reporting back to their start/stop line.
- Encourage each group to show you their best.
- Other three groups clap for the performing group!
- Progress to combining groups. (See next **Scatter Movements**.)
- Have a blast with this one.

Closure

Students are ready for Scatter Movement with Eye Scanning Skills.

Scatter Movement with Eye Scanning Skills (K-3 / review for grades 3-5)

Introduction

Well to Scatter Movement with Eye Scanning Skills. This is a very simple, fun and foundational activity. For the younger learners, like K-2, it's the natural progression from **4 Area Scatter Movement Challenges**. We are using the larger space like the gym or field and usually have the entire class moving at the same time.

For older learners in grades 3-5 we are just occasionally reviewing and teaching quality scatter movement and stopping skills. For instance, it's foundational for our entire PE program for fitness, dance, cooperatives, JR, gymnastics, tag, adventure and sports games.

How can we teach the kids to move and run through space without bumping into each other and not out of bounds? By using the **eye scanning** skill. It's easy to neglect the physical and mental skills of using our eyes as a devise. We tell our kids to "*Look where you are running!*" and expect the kids to know what to look for. Pardon the pun. We have our kids do countless movement activities in the gym, but are they really trained for seeing and for looking out for others? A better term to use is **eye scanning**. This is a skill pilots are trained to use while flying a plane. Pilots scan the instruments and scan outside of the cockpit. They call it performing **the scan**. It takes practice and hard work for both pilots and kids. When I was learning to fly, it was exhausting when first learning. Kids really like this analogy of pilots, and it gives credence to our common expression, "*Look where you are going.*"

For younger students we also use a much simpler expression of "*Turn on your headlights,*" as though they are driving a car at night. In the previous game we took the

older kids eyes away from them. In this activity children are to over-train their eyes by looking in the direction they are traveling, to the floor, for open space, for the boundary line to make sure they don't travel into No No Land / and for younger students.

Why are we playing this game?

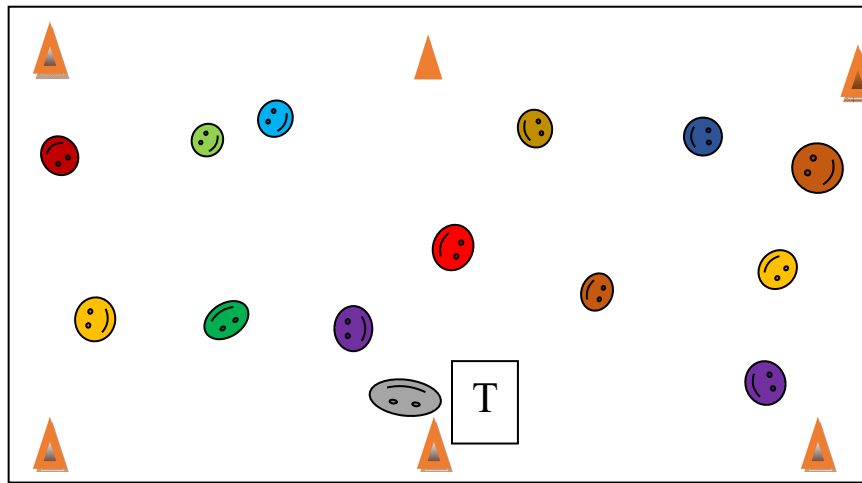
- ✓ To teach the skills of scatter movement skills and personal spacing skills while and eye scanning skills
- ✓ To teach the skills of concept of boundary line awareness through movement
- ✓ To teach stopping skills

Equipment

- Task cards/vocabulary terms for each exercise
- Small cones for the No No Line/No Man's Line
- Tom-tom, wooden block and stick or tambourine for movement

Organization

Find a personal space play area. Have students note the cones and NO, NO Land. Younger students grades (1-2) they can place their arm straight wide, out to show you their personal space. (See diagram and picture below)



Using eye scanning skill/Awareness Skills
Steady and syncopated beats

How we play

Boundary line awareness is a skill and concept that needs constant practice and is used in so many games. Very young learners like kindergarteners and first graders, as difficult as it may seem, do not actually see the lines on the gym floor at first. They are invisible. They do not honor them as mature elementary pupils do; they simply just don't see the space and the lines on the floor like older kids.

Therefore, we need to overtrain youngsters with muscle and mental memory on the lines and boundary line areas. On first awareness, honoring them and respecting them. Of course there are lots of cute little line walking games. That's not what this is about, we are going one level up from all the cuties.

Movement challenges:

Scatter Walking Game: Use music, drum or tambourine. Start easy by slowing walking, if a student is about to turn left or right he/she are to turn his/her head and eyes to left or right to make sure to not step out of bounds (No Man's Land). They should also practice looking specifically for other movers that may be coming at them and to turn away to open space, slow down, or stop. This concept may sound like common sense to adults, but younger kids do not think of it and don't perform it without specific training and, again, lots of over training.

Drum drill: With your drum and stick have the students practice over and over, walking, power walking, skipping and slow jogging through space while eye scanning the space in front of them to actively look for other students, and to look to the direction before they turn, being aware of No No Land.

Stopping! On a harder single beat they stop and freeze and try to balance. Stop them frequently to remind them to use their eyes like head lights or like the pilot of a plane. *"Where are your eyes?"*

- **Stopping skill:** review this skill with the students over and over again. Excellent upright balanced stopping skills.

Stopping and Eye Scanning



Stopping and Eye Scanning!
Space Awareness!

At this time and with this drill slower speeds are fine for eye scanning only.

- Have the students choose and demo the creative movements. Gives students agency/voice.
- Keep this simple so you have time other for your other activities.
- Progress to partner / cooperative / creative movement etc.

Variations and progressions:

- **Creative transportation movements:** (K-2) such as, airplanes, jets, cars, motorcycles, boats, trains, etc.

Scaffolding of the play area (compress / expansion of space theory)

- For various reasons, we may want to scaffold or progress the spacing and student numbers for additional challenge.
- **Compacting Space:** reducing the space to $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ to your whole gym size.
- **Student numbers:**
 - Break groups into the smaller numbers and rotate them in to practice in smaller groups one at a time. (limited space)
 - Or create four equal size movement spaces with lines and cones; smaller of four groups at all at time. Smaller spaces.
 - Expand to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gym, (remove some cones) combine two groups, two groups of two move about only their $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gym.
 - Switch their sides. They move about on other side.
 - One group moves off and observes. Create a $\frac{3}{4}$ space and one group moves about in this larger space.
 - Switch groups. They are now challenged in in the $\frac{3}{4}$ space.
 - Whole gym space: $\frac{1}{2}$ group moves about this larger space.
 - Next $\frac{1}{2}$ group moves about the whole larger space.
 - Combine both groups, and challenge to complete all your moving, stopping eye scanning skills. Being aware of the other students and the boundary lines.

Teaching tip/review

- Introduce eye scanning and boundary and practice for a few minutes with younger students each day.
- For larger classes, one half can stand against the wall watching (learning) and/or jogging in place, while the other half plays. Switch every minute. Using traffic cones in the corners and a few cones down the lines is helpful, it bring the lines to life. With eye scanning drill practice, the students will dramatically improve.
- Students are now ready for slightly faster running, turns and stops.
 - First class introduce just scatter moving and stopping. The concept of; *“Where are you in space?”* and *“Where are you going or traveling in space?”*
 - Have a blast with this one!!!
 - Next, we are going to teach kids how to become world class stoppers!



The Stopping Game (grades K-5) (Larry Gordan/Dale Sarratt)

Introduction

Welcome to the Stopping Game! It's a progression from **Scatter Movement Challenges** and leads into next activity quite naturally. We can teach many of these activities in one class for older students as a review.

We don't think about it, but stopping skills are just as important as starting and turning skills. As for safety, along with eye scanning skills they may be one of the most important skills youngsters need to keep themselves out of health room. For older learners we are teaching quality scatter movement and stopping skills that are foundational to our entire PE program such as fitness, dance, cooperatives, JR, gymnastics, tag, and adventure and sports games.

Why are we playing the Stopping Game?

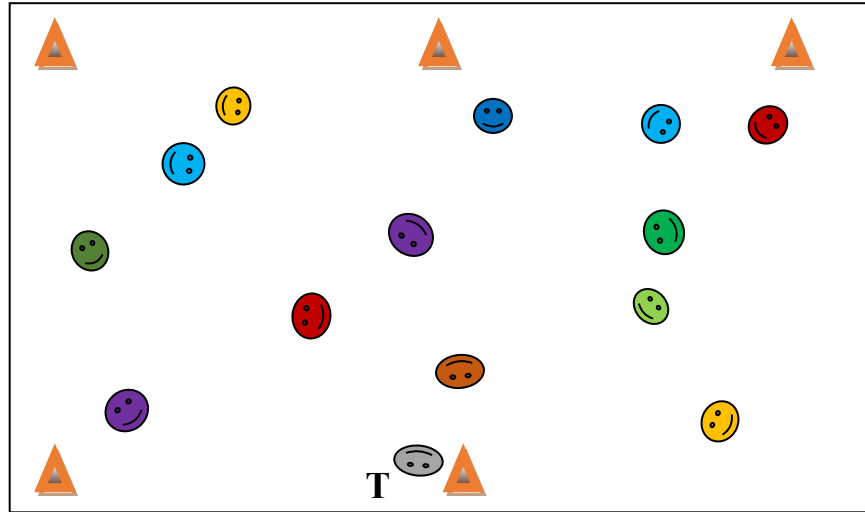
- ✓ To teach the skill of stopping with upright balance and the use of core stability

Equipment

- Lots of small cones for the NO NO line, No Man's Line
- Drum and stick
- Mini poster rules

Organization

Find a personal space play area. Have students note the cones and NO, NO Land. For youngsters students grades (1-2) they can place their arm straight wide out to show you their personal space. (See diagram and picture below)



**Teacher using steady and syncopated beats-boom!
Stopping Skills!**

How we play the Stopping Game

Game Goal

Once the kids practice eye scanning and spacing, it's time to learn how to turn up the speed and to test their superior stopping abilities. Let's see how they do!

Teacher Verses Students

Explain to the kids, great athletes are excellent at moving fast and stopping instantly. We've done lots of practice, now it's time to test them. What better way than a game!

If all the players can stop and freeze, then they win. If even one student moves or takes an extra step the teacher wins. What!

Using your drum and drumstick start tapping the beat for slower jogging. They move to the beat. Sing out loudly a silly little song, *"Who wants to be the winner of the stopping game, the stopping game, the stopping game today..."* as the kids are scatter jogging and moving to the beat of your drum and your silly song. On a hard single loud beat, boom, they all stop on a dime! They need to jam on the breaks like a Porsche breaking and not to fall down. Remind students to maintain excellent **core stability** and **upright athletic balance** to assist their stops. They suck in their stomachs and tighten their core as they stop. It's important the kids to keep their head up, and not let it tip-over upon stopping. (See diagram below)



Stopping Skills

Head tipping over - losing balance... needs a little more practice...

“Deceleration Theory”

Use the gymnastic phase, “*Where your head goes, your body follows*”
as a teaching cue to redirect the tippers.



Stopping Game: Excellent deceleration, stopping skills, balance, core stability and eyes up too!

Note: using excellent *knee stabilization* skills.

A game breaks out! Praise the excellent stoppers and ignore the players who tip over and fall down upon stopping. Some will naturally get silly and playful the first game or two until they realize that every time they tip over and fall or take that extra balance, step the teacher wins the game! Oh no! Yep, you won the first game, Mr. Gym! One point Mr./Ms. Gym! Zero points, kids. (They will all get it, don't worry!)

Silliness suddenly turns into seriousness to defeat their rival, Mr./Ms. Gym. If all the kids are successful - the point goes to the class! Yep! Point kids! However, teachers, be exact and don't be apprehensive with winning this game for the first several classes, particularly on the youngest kids and especially if the players who are not taking it seriously, make the students earn it. *"Boys and girls the score is 6 for me and only 4 for the students... ready... next game..."* In fact, in my program each year, the kindergartners and first graders did not win the first class. But, as the student stopping efficiency improves after a few classes, and they will, because every student wants to defeat Mr./Ms. Gym. It's that fun yearning coming into the class to win against their rival!

- **Variations and Progressions**

Once the students start to master the stopping game and winning more games against their arch adversary, it's time to progress into faster jogging/faster running challenges. Encourage the students who are staying in bounds and who are spacing out. Remind them of eye scanning when needed. Try some deception by speeding up and slowing down the beats.

This game can become very athletic and intense. After many games over several classes, the students will become competent stoppers and remarkably prepared for more challenging activities and games.

- **Teaching tip/helpful hint:** The Stopping Game is one those games that is played recurrently throughout the year. It's not once and done, or just part of unit, but played as part of instant activities and introductory activities. It's ideal to develop class control and rule-following skills. Once the kids master it initially a few stopping games per class from time to time is an ideal refresher.
- It's utterly amazing how fast they learn the skill of the Stopping Game with these challenges.
 - **Transferring the concepts:**
 - Stopping skills/games transfers to our other activities, games and sports as you will see throughout the website.

We move on to the last SA challenge, the **Big Space Game!**

The Big Space Game (Larry Gordan/Dale Sarratt) (Grades K-5)

Introduction

This is the final piece and lesson, the Big Space Game, and it leads into Tag and Adventure Running and Chasing Games as well as other activities quite naturally.

As a review: two key spatial awareness skills needed in many, if not most activities and games are:

- ✓ **Personal Space:** a player's individual & safe space
- ✓ **General Space:** (or kid friendly term) **Big Space**, this is large court or field where students are playing. It changes depending on game, court/field, position, etc.

Game Goal: Our goal is simple for this game but not easy: teach all youngsters to safely use both these skills and to challenge them to find their biggest *personal space* within the *Big Space*!

Why are we playing this game?

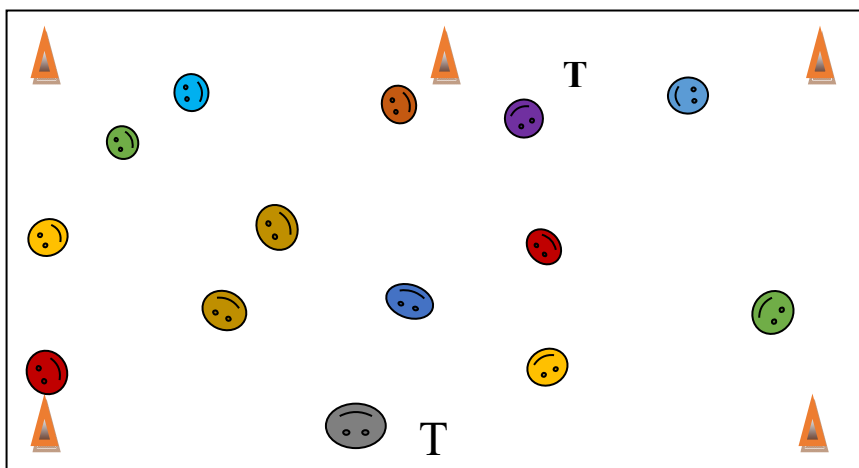
- ✓ To practice being honest
- ✓ To practice personal spacing skills
- ✓ To practice general space skills/staying in bounds
- ✓ To practice stopping skills
- ✓ To practice eye scanning
- ✓ Show respect for the winner

Equipment

- Lots of small cones for the No No line/No Man's Line
- Drum and stick
- Mini poster rules and diagrams

Organization

All learners find a **personal space** in the **general / big space**. (See diagram and picture below)



*Why do we play games?
To practice being honest!*



Who's going to be the winner of the Big Space Game today!

How we play

How can we teach students the skills of **traveling through space** or to find a **personal space** instantly? By making a game out of it! Before kids can play or work in space, play tag and most other activities and games, they must be able to travel through play areas without all the common bunching up, crowding and honor the boundary lines as we discussed with eye scanning. However, now and this may sound like an oxymoron, but in games like tag, they need to be able to travel through space at a very high rate of speed, but without common crowding and crashing. The only way this is achieved is by avoiding other kids that are, also moving at a high rate, hence personal spacing skills.

Like with the Stopping Game, using a drum and stick and start tapping the beat to set the speed and locomotion mode. By now, jogging or running is recommended mode and the entire class is scatter jogging or running about the gym/field while staying **in bounds**. Students will further test their eye scanning skills in this game by continuously searching for the largest open space. On a hard single beat, “boom,” they stop on a dime just like in the stopping game!

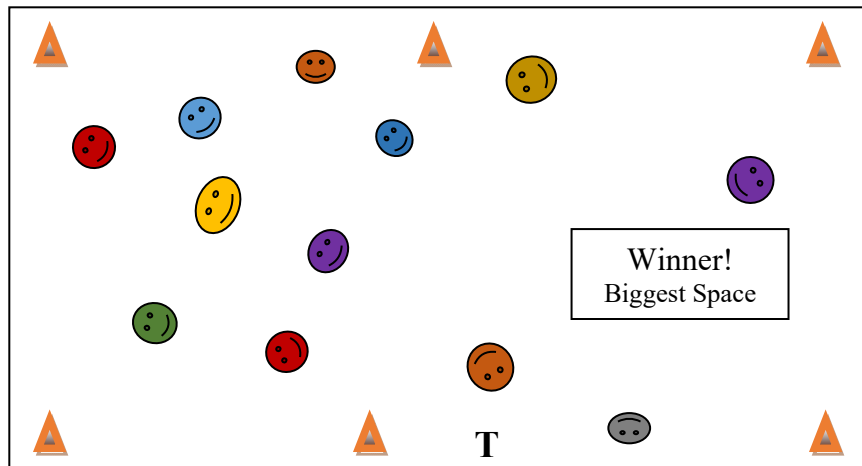
Why do we play games? To practice being honest! This is our character / honor code of games. Every student knows it and honors it.



Stop and try not to move a muscle...

It's an honesty game...

They don't move a muscle while the teacher methodically walks around the gym looking for the largest space. Make it suspenseful and fun and declare the winner, which is: the child with the largest personal space. **The Big Space!** After the teacher announces the winner(s), the teacher walks over to the winner(s) and gets a high five or receives a handshake.



The rest of the class claps for the winner(s), showing respect for the winner, the game and also acknowledging all the honesty players. And the larger moral and character lesson is that a class can handle success and slight setbacks. This may seem trivial but is vital especially for new students to your program or the youngest pupils.

Play many more games! Motivation is intense to be a big space seeker and your kids will scurry for the coveted opening. Winning is good but the anticipation for the mysterious big space is priceless. Boom! And they got it! Wow!

Play multiple games and give detailed compliments for positive good thinking and behaviors. Seek out the kids that need extra attention and motivation, get them on your side, and most importantly, have them be your helpers as early as possible.

Variations and Progressions

Only when the class has proven excellent personal space, increase the speed of movement to faster running, using the drum to set the mode. After a few games, and certainly with the older kids, two or three kids win per game. Oh, they are getting good!

After practice and experience all kids become so spread out that it will be indistinguishable to determine the winner. They all win! When this is the case, the class has proven something quite profound; excellent stopping, moving through space and personal and general spacing skills all while exhibiting extraordinary *honesty*.

Teaching Tips

Large classes: divide the class into two groups.

- One half at time can play and then switch.
- Watchers/waiters clap for the winner(s)!
- The winner(s) stays out with the new group!

It's utterly amazing how fast they learn the concepts of personal and general/big space with these games.

➤ **Transferring the concepts:**

Big Space transfers to our other activities and sports games.

- Soccer dribble challenges and games
- Basketball dribble challenges and games
- Scooter riding challenges and games
- Lacrosse control challenges and games
- Tossing and Catching object into Mr. Air (not falling down) and games
- Rackets/paddles volleyball
- Spreading out on yoga mats
- Gymnastic mats: spacing on gym mats
- Jump ropes
- Hula Hoops (pre K and K level)
- How to spread out along Mr. Wall for wall rebounding skills/play
- Partner Play (The proper procedure)
 - How to partner-up and spread-out quickly and properly
 - Partner practice to game play in a flash!

Closure to Spatial Awareness Skills and Activities

There it goes, just eight simple activities for spatial awareness. Maybe one idea or activity can assist your program. I wish you all the best! *Dale*