

Prone activities

When performing prone extension exercises, you lie face down on the floor and lift your chest and legs off the floor. This action builds strength in the shoulders, back, buttocks and hamstrings. For children, this movement requires considerable strength and coordination. Using imagery makes these exercises more kid-friendly.

Seals

Having the children imagine they are seals works on the upper body component of the prone extension exercise. Tell the children to imagine they are circus seals that balance balls on their noses. This will encourage them to lift their heads to the vertical position. Then, supporting their bodies with their lower arms, ask them to walk forward and backward on their “flippers,” still keeping the balls balanced on their noses. For an additional challenge, ask the children to clap their hands while still keeping the imaginary balls balanced on their noses.

Superman

Ask the children to imagine that they are Superman flying through the air while they lift their legs, arms and heads off the floor. In order to fly higher, ask the children to lift their arms and heads as high as they can. To fly lower, ask them to lift their legs. Invent fun, imaginary obstacles such as skyscrapers and castles. Explain to the children that in order to avoid the obstacles, they must turn by lifting the same arm and leg located on one side of their bodies.

Other Ideas

To make the children more engaged with the exercise, use music and incorporate combinations of movements into the exercise. For example, if you are doing the seal exercise, have the children balance the ball for eight counts, walk forward for eight counts, walk backward for eight counts and clap their hands for eight counts. For the Superman exercise, you could ask them to fly in a straight line for eight counts, alternate flying higher and lower for eight counts, alternate flying left and right for eight counts and then fly in a straight line for eight counts.

Assessing the Position

You can assess the child’s progress by testing their prone extension. In the ideal position, the child’s head should be vertical to the floor and their legs should be completely straight. If you notice that the child’s knees are partially bent, you can gently tickle the backs of their knees so that they straighten. The child should be able to lift both sides of their trunk equally off of the floor so that they are not leaning toward one side. Keep working on the fun exercises until the child is able to hold the ideal position for at least 20 seconds