



Reader's Theater Exercise 16: Synchronize Reading with Movement to Improve Skills

This free activity focuses on the important link between learning and physical movement, with a fun mini ball routine for practicing alongside a rhyme in Reader's Theater format. The rhyme was designed to accompany our new story announced above, *How Sandy Got Her Spin*.

The Concept Behind the Activity:

A teaching method known as "brain gym" has taken off in some schools, and is designed to integrate the left and right side of the brain to maximize learning in many areas of academic study, including language acquisition. The concept is that physical movements help build neural pathways that improve cognitive performance.

At Donald E. Cline Elementary school, students prepare to learn in conjunction with a physical routine. They cross their arms and slap their thighs while marching around two hula hoops lying on the ground. Next, they trace the same figure eight pattern around their eyes. Children also use a technique called "finger spelling": drawing invisible letters in the air as they say the letters aloud, then holding their fists to their chests. **One Cline student says, "It helps us hook our brains together. It helps us think." Cline Principal Shelli Wilson states, "It's like learning to ride a bike. When the entire body is involved, children remember the skill better."** Reading teachers at Cline explain that incorporating physical movement not only boosts brain power; it also helps students to relax, which is very important for struggling readers who may be nervous about practicing their skills.

These teaching strategies are making a difference in reading fluency for students at Cline. Students **starting both below grade level and at grade level for reading made significant improvements when studying with the brain gym method!** The value of physical movement in academics is backed up not only by success, but by scientific knowledge of the brain. **Movement increases blood flow, bringing more oxygen and nutrients to the brain, and optimizing the capacity for effective learning.**

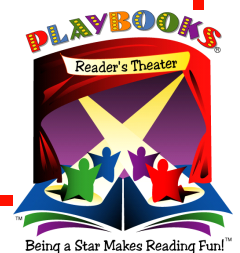
Teacher Instructions:

The next two pages contain a rhyming poem, along with directions for a routine students can practice with a mini basketball or other small bouncing ball. The activity may take place either outside on a cement or blacktop surface, or in the classroom if there is space. First, have students practice reading the rhyme aloud in the classroom so they may become familiar with the words and actions they will be performing. Since this is a Reader's Theater activity, encourage students to read with expression and excitement, both during preparation and later practice.

Next, divide the class into groups of six and instruct each group to stand and form a circle. Take note of the player order diagram on the next page. A student's position in the circle will determine which part he or she will read and perform. Using the diagram, explain to students the order in which they will pass the ball, and which parts each person will perform.

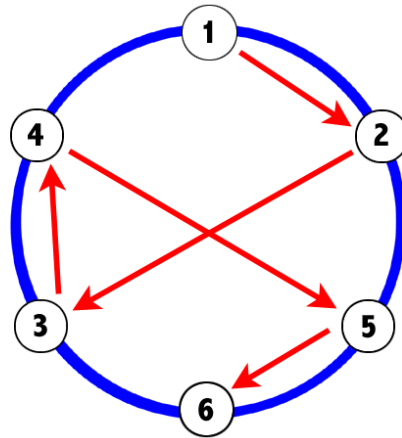
Have the students begin by practicing passing the ball in the correct order. When they are comfortable with this, have them simply read the rhyme aloud in an expressive chant or rap style and pass the ball to the next person at the end of their part.

Finally, students are ready to begin acting out the routine while reading their parts. At first, students will need a script visible on the ground in front of them to help with remembering their lines, as well as the ball routine. Later, students will easily have memorized the words and actions and can perform the routine without scripts. The goal of this exercise is for students to perform the routine and rhyme fluidly and confidently! **Students will have fun while optimizing their brain power and their capacity for building fluency!**



BASKETBALL CIRCLE ROUTINE

The picture to the right shows you who to pass the ball to at the end of your turn.



Player 1

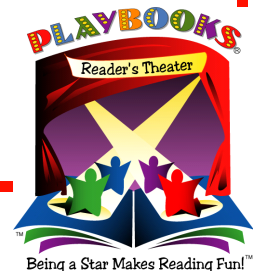
Around to the left, *(rotate ball around body)*
 Spin to the right. *(Spin yourself around to the right with ball in right hand)*
 Figure eight makes it tight. *(rotate ball in figure eight pattern around both legs)*
 Now take it up,
 Stretch to the top. *(rotate ball around the head and then bring ball over head)*
 Pass it on,
 Just don't stop. *(pass ball to next player)*

Player 2

Dribble it front, *(dribble ball 2 times in front of you)*
 Dribble it back. *(dribble ball 2 times in back of you)*
 Switch it in your hands
 And stay on track. *(pass ball quickly from left to right hand, like a hot potato)*
 Bounce it on the ground, *(bounce ball on the ground)*
 Pass it up high, *(lift above head, get ready to pass to next player)*
 All the way over
 To the next guy. *(pass ball to player on opposite side)*

Player 3

Around to the left, *(rotate ball around body)*
 Spin to the right. *(spin yourself around to the right with ball in right hand)*
 Figure eight makes it tight. *(rotate ball in figure eight pattern around both legs)*
 Now take it up,
 Stretch to the top. *(rotate ball around the head and then bring ball over head)*
 Keep it moving,
 Just don't stop. *(pass ball to next player)*



Player 4

Toss it up high, *(player throws ball up and catches it)*

Bounce it down low. *(dribble ball low to the ground)*

Keep it bouncing;

Give it a go! *(bounce ball until ready to pass as directed by next line)*

Now get ready

To jump real high, *(player gets ready to jump with ball like shooting a basket)*

Shoot it now

To the opposite guy. *(shoots ball to player on opposite side)*

Player 5

Around to the left, *(rotate ball around body)*

Spin to the right. *(Spin yourself around to the right with ball in right hand)*

Figure eight makes it tight. *(rotate ball in figure eight pattern around both legs)*

Now take it up,

Stretch to the top. *(rotate ball around the head and then bring ball over head)*

This is cool,

Just don't stop. *(pass ball to next player)*

Player 6

Spin the ball around, *(circle ball around body)*

Don't let it drop. *(continue circling)*

Catch it in the air with a very cool hop. *(catch in air with a jump)*

Juggle on your left, *(toss into left hand)*

And juggle on your right. *(toss into right hand)*

Bounce it across,

But keep it in sight! *(bounce ball on ground to next player)*

At the end, the person who started with the ball has the ball again. Pass the ball to your left and start again so everyone can perform a new part!

