

How to Make a Backyard Obstacle Course

BY [DAVE ROOS](#)



Building a backyard obstacle course is a fun and easy way to help your kids stay active during the summer and promote the development of important physical and mental skills. The best part about making a backyard obstacle course is that it doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. For [preschoolers](#) and other young children, you can build a perfectly thrilling backyard obstacle course from objects you already own, like hula hoops, jump ropes, lawn chairs, [balloons](#) and more.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that children get at least 60 minutes of [physical activity](#) daily, preferably "vigorous" activity that raises their heart rate and respiration. A backyard obstacle course is a great way to disguise vigorous exercise as a fun game. Not only will your kids break a sweat, but they will develop some of the following skills [source: [Excelligence Learning](#)]:

- Gross motor skills – running, jumping and throwing
- Bilateral coordination – developing and using both sides of the body
- Agility – quick, targeted movements
- Coordination – eye-hand and eye-foot coordination
- Balance – muscle coordination to maintain equilibrium
- Spatial awareness – tracking the relative location of objects

The great thing about a backyard obstacle course is that you can adapt it to meet just about any situation. An obstacle course makes a great addition to a birthday party or a family reunion. You can incorporate objects already on hand, like basketball hoops or climbing gyms. You can make it a competitive team event or just let the kids run through it for fun. As a parent, it's also a great opportunity to be creative and put some of those less-popular toys to good use.

Keep reading for specific obstacle ideas for different age groups starting with toddlers and preschoolers.

Backyard Obstacle Course: Ideas for Toddlers and Preschoolers



Toddlers and preschoolers love backyard obstacle courses, no matter how fancy! The key is to engage their imaginations. Instead of instructing them to walk along the curving jump rope and then climb on the picnic table, tell that they're going on a safari through the jungle where they'll have to wade through a river teeming with crocodiles and then climb a rocky mountain peak.

Here are some common household objects and ideas for transforming them into exciting challenges for toddlers and preschoolers:

Jump rope, rope or string

- Lay the ropes in a curving path and tell kids to walk heel to toe over the string, trying to keep their balance.
- Have kids hop over the rope, both forward and backward, five times in a row.
- Set two ropes a small distance apart and have kids "leap the brook."
- Hang rope or string from a tree branch or swing set just above the kids' heads and have them jump to reach it.

Hula-hoop

- Lay the [hoop](#) on the ground and have kids jump in and out of it.
- Lay several hula hoops in a row and have kids jump down the line.
- Have kids roll the hoop from one point to another.
- If kids are big enough, they can try to hula hoop for three or five seconds.

Balls

- Dribble a [soccer ball](#) from one point to another.
- Dribble a [basketball](#) 10 times.

- Throw a football through a hoop.
- Toss small plastic balls into a laundry basket, bucket or wading pool.

Long Piece of Wood

- Lay it on the ground and use as a balance beam.
- Lay it across two chairs and have kids crawl under it.
- Have kids walk the length of it with one foot on either side.
- Put one end on a chair and have kids roll a toy car down the wood.

Cardboard Box

- Toss balls or bean bags into it.
- Open up the ends and use it as a tunnel.
- Tell kids to cover themselves with the box and crawl a certain distance like a turtle.
- Have kids step into two shoeboxes and shuffle from one point to another.

Wagon, Tricycle or Bicycle

- Draw a twisty path on the driveway using chalk and have kids pull the wagon along the path or ride their bike.
 - Have kids load the wagon with stuffed animals and transport them across a "river."
 - Draw a "start" and "finish" line on the driveway and have them race to the finish.
- Now let's look at some obstacle course ideas for older kids.

Backyard Obstacle Course Ideas for Grade Schoolers

Kids can use a hula hoop for jumping or skipping as well as hula-hooping

Grade school kids, ages 6 and older, are up for a challenge, so you can raise the difficulty level of the backyard obstacle course. This does not mean you have to go out and buy expensive props or build your own climbing wall. Here are some simple but fun obstacle ideas designed around common household objects.

Balancing Obstacles

- Have them walk across a balance beam while balancing a book or bean bag on their head.
- Balance an egg on a spoon and weave through a series of cones or lawn chairs.
- Walk across a balance beam backward or hopping on one foot.

Hopping and Jumping



- Lay a wooden ladder on the ground and have kids hop like bunnies through the rungs or hop on one foot.
- Place a series of hula hoops on the ground several feet from each other. Have the kids jump, leap or hop from one hoop to the next.
- Jump rope while counting to 20.

Strength and Fitness

- Have kids stop and do 10 pushups or 10 sit-ups.
- Incorporate a series of monkey bars or have kids do three pull-ups.
- Have them do cartwheels or forward rolls across a long distance.
- Teach them how to do "high knee"-style running in place and do it for a count of 30.

Teamwork

- Make a sponge bucket brigade. Fill one bucket with water and give each kid a large sponge. Have them work together to soak up the water from the bucket and squeeze it out in another bucket.
- Play "steppingstones." Give a group of three kids four pieces of paper. Have them cross the backyard by only stepping on the pieces of the paper. They must work together to pass the free piece of paper to the front.
- Make a "mummy" obstacle by having one kid wrap a friend from head to toe in toilet paper.

Water Fun

- If you have a small wading pool, you can have kids "fish" for metal objects with magnets on a string or bob for apples.
- Using a hose, have kids "shoot" down a series of objects from a fence.
- If you have a rotating sprinkler, have them practice their timing by running past the sprinkler without getting wet.

Even though you can make a perfectly fun backyard obstacle course from cheap and plentiful household items, there are some people who just cannot resist constructing something big. For those folks, we have the next page: building permanent obstacles in your backyard.

We can't wait to see your incredible obstacle courses!
 Post photos on Facebook and tag us at Machane Tba!
 How fast can you finish your obstacle course?