

HOMEMADE TOYS

For children from birth to 5 years



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Key consulted sources:

- Care for Child Development Counseling Cards (World Health Organization, UNICEF, 2012, adapted by PATH, 2015)

Technical Support:

- Pre-school-age children department, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, Mozambique
- Nhapupwe Association, Mozambique
- Pedagogical University, Mozambique
- Team of physiotherapists and occupational therapists of the Provincial Hospital of Matola, Mozambique

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INTRODUCTION

Children are born with many capabilities. For these to develop, they need to be stimulated. The first years of life are a very special time because this is when the child learns and develops fastest.

Young children learn primarily through their senses and by interacting with things and people around. **They need to touch, move, pick up and drop, open and close, insert and remove things, to understand how the world works.** They need to participate in conversations with family members, to observe and imitate their actions. Through these actions, they learn to move, to speak, to think, and to relate to others.

Children infected or exposed to HIV, malnourished children or children with low weight at birth, children with special needs, and orphans are more likely to have certain problems in their development, and therefore need toys and stimulating activities more than other children.

This catalogue offers ideas to clinical and community providers who deal with young children and families, of **simple playthings that can be found or produced easily using existing materials**, and how these toys can be used to stimulate the development of children.

The toys and activities described in this catalogue can be used:

- ❖ at home
- ❖ in the community (during home visits, at mother-baby playgroups, and in ECD centers)
- ❖ in the hospital (in-patient and ambulatory pediatric services).

These toys can encourage **caregiver-child play** and promote better development. Seeing how a child responds to a toy can also help caregiver **check if the child has any delays or disabilities**, and seek help if needed.

REMEMBER THAT...

- ❖ Toys should be safe to play with. For example, avoid sharp objects, things that are easy to swallow (too small), flammable, etc.
- ❖ Toys should be attractive. Young children love bright colors, objects that make sounds and that can be manipulated.
- ❖ Toys should match the child's age and interests.

A single toy can be used in many ways by children with different ages and capabilities. For example,

- the rattle sound is interesting to 3 month-old-babies;
- a 12 month old baby can try to open the rattle and remove or put things inside;
- by the age of 3, the child can use the same bottle (rattle) to count the objects inside, separate them by color or shape, etc.

WHEN INTRODUCING A NEW TOY OR ACTIVITY, HELP THE CAREGIVER...


- ❖ Attract the child's attention
- ❖ Show the child some activity with the toy
- ❖ Let the child continue with the activity.
- ❖ Observe the child and ask questions (what is this, where is it..., what is this for...)
- ❖ Praise the child's effort.


1. HANGING TOYS

Age: From 2 to 6 months (before sitting down)

Stimulates: Vision, hand-eye coordination, thinking.

How to play:

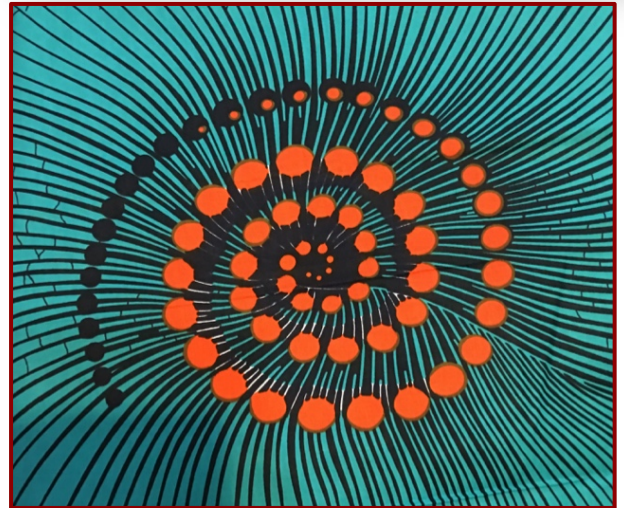
 Tie or hang the toy on the child's wrist or ankle, or above the child's head (better outside where the wind can move the toy)

 Let the child look at and try to hit or grab the toy



How to make:

- Observe what attracts the child (what kind of objects, colors, etc.), and use these to make a hanging toy
- Hang colorful objects such as cloth pegs, bottle rings, large beads or strips of material.
- Hang a colorful cloth with large drawings and contrasting colors where the child sleeps



2. RATTLES

Age: From 2-3 months (held by an adult); from 6 months (the child can hold)

Stimulates: Hearing, vision, fine motor skills

How to play:

- ① Allow the child to hear different rattle sounds. Turn the rattle slowly, so the child can see the pieces falling.
- ① Make a song with the rattle and dance with the child on your lap.
- ① Move the rattle so that the child can try to reach it by stretching out her hand or crawling towards it.
- ① Always praise your child when she/he can reach the rattle.
- ① From 1.5 years, let the child open and close the



How to make:

- ① Use clean and transparent bottles or mesh bags for children to see objects inside the rattle.
- ① You can also thread the objects on a string or on a wire. Hide sharp ends of the wire.
- ① Use colorful objects, such as caps, pegs, buttons, seeds, and glossy paper, for the rattle.



3. WATER AND SOAP

Age: Playing - from birth; blowing bubbles - from 2 years

Stimulates: emotional and social development, voice/the ability to speak, imagination, thought.

How to play:

- ① Play with the child during bath time or when washing dishes or clothes
- ① Let the child pick up, hold and blow bubbles.
- ① Ask the child: Where should we put some bubbles? On your knee? On your head? On your tummy? Let's rub them now!
- ① Give a 2 year old child her own shirt to wash. Ask if the shirt is already clean. Praise the child.
- ① From 2 years: Mix water with a little soap in a cup, and show the child how to make soap



4. PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE BACKYARD

Age: From 3 months (watch the leaves moving); from 6 months or when the child is sitting (see and touch the flowers, animals)

Stimulates: vision, touch, smell, taste, emotions, thought, language, care for nature

How to play:

- ① At 2-3 months, put the child to rest under a tree, for her/him to see how the leaves move in the wind.
- ① From 5-6 months, show the child backyard animals; say the names and make animal sounds; help the child to pat the animals.
- ① Take the child to see, touch and smell the flowers; say the names and colors of the flowers to the child.
- ① From 1.5 years, ask questions to the child, for example
 - *What sound does a goat make? And the cow?*
 - *What grows on a tree?*
- ① At the age of 3, play guessing games about plants and animals (*"It is a big and orange fruit, it grows in our yard, What is it?"*)
- ① At the age of 3, cover the child's eyes with a cloth and give her/him several things to smell or taste (for example, a lemon, a garlic, an onion, a flower). The child must guess what it is.



5. MOVING TOYS

Age: From 6-7 months, or when the child has started to pick up things with his hands.

Stimulates: Vision, hearing, finger movements and body, thought.

How to play:

- ☉ Children learn through touching and exploring. Prepare some toys that can roll and/or have moving parts.
- ☉ Model 1: let the child pick up the bottle, explore the objects that are tied to the strings, and hit and roll the bottle.
- ☉ Model 2: let the child pull the fabric strips from one side to the other, or put all the fabric strips inside the tin and let the child find them by pulling off the lid.
- ☉ Model 3: let the child touch and move the colorful cloth pegs as wanted. With children aged 2 or more, ask them

How to make:

- ☉ Model 1: Make small holes in a bottle and pass the string through the holes, attaching some colorful large objects on the ends. These can be bottle caps, pieces of rubber, etc.
- ☉ Model 2: In a plastic or metal tin, pierce the holes in the lid and on the bottom and make long strips of fabric pass through both holes. Attach colorful caps on the ends. The fabric strips should move through the holes easily.
- ☉ Model 3: Attach 4-5 brightly colored cloth pegs on a piece of string and tie the string in a loop with



6. "SHINY TOYS"

Age: From 6-7 months, or when the child has started to pick up things with his hands.

Stimulates: Vision, finger movements, body movements, thinking

How to make and play:

- Give the child a piece of glossy paper (the one that is left from a snack or from a gift wrap, for example). Let the child move, fold and tear the paper.
- Or put glossy paper in a tea box or a toilet paper tube, and show how to put it in and take out the paper. The paper should be larger than the box/tube, to create a challenge for the child!
- Cut glossy paper into pieces and put in a bottle. Fill the bottle with water up to half. Let the child roll and to follow the bottle.



7. BABY BASKET

Age: From 6-7 months, or when the baby is already sitting.

Stimulates: Finger movements, touch, thought, and language.

How to make and play:

- ① For children aged 6-7 months, put about 10 interesting things in a basket or a bowl. These should be attractive, large objects of different types, for example, tin lids, yogurt cups, toilet paper tubes, etc.
- ① For children aged 12 months or more, prepare a basket with more than 10 things, to meet the child's curiosity.
- ① Put things that interest him/her. For example, you can put a few ribbons, shells, bottles with colored cloth pegs inside etc.
- ① Let the child pick up, remove and put objects back in the basket. The child can bang on things, put in the mouth, etc.
- ① Ask the child to give you something from the basket, and praise her/him. Offer things for her to put in the basket.
- ① At the end, help the child to put everything in the basket and keep it always in the same place.
- ① Once a week, put something new in the basket

MAKE SURE YOUNG CHILDREN DO NOT SWALLOW OR PUT THINGS IN THE NOSE!



8. "HIDE AND SEEK" GAMES

Age: From 9 months

Stimulates: thinking, memory, language, touch.

How to play:

- ① Cover with a cloth something the child likes and ask the child to look for it. Ask the child what he/she has found, and where it was.
- ① Cover your face and ask, "Where's mama/papa?" Wait until the child "finds" you. Then you can help the child "hide" under the cloth and "find" her/him.
- ① Hide a little figure or object in a container, attached to the tip of the stick. Ask the child: "where is the doll, etc." Then poke the figure out of the cup on a stick in order to surprise the child.
- ① For children aged 2 and a half, put 3 to 5 things on the floor. Cover them with the cloth and ask what is under the cloth. The child may



How to make:

- ① Make a small hole in the bottom of the metal or plastic container or yogurt cup, so that a stick can pass through it. The container should not be transparent. On top of the stick fit a colorful object (you can draw a face of a person or animal on it). The object should move through the container with ease, popping up and "disappearing"



9. “DRUMS AND COOKING”

Age: From 9 months

Stimulates: Hearing, hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, thought, speech, and social development.

How to play:

- Let the child bang the plate with a spoon; imitate the sound and let the child imitate as well
- Stamp feet or clap hands while the child is banging the plate.
- Put some objects on the plate and let the child stir them with a stick, as if cooking.
- Ask the child what she/he is doing; ask



How to make:

- Find an old plate or a pot and a spoon, or use coconut shells, sea shells and sticks. You may also cut out a base of a 1.5 or 5 liter bottle.
- Help the child find something to put in the plate to “cook” and to fill and empty, such



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10. BALLS AND BALLOONS

Age: From 1 year

Stimulates: Gross motor skills, thinking, and interactions with others.

How to play:

- Let the child hold the ball to feel its texture and shape; ask what it is.
- With the 9-month-old child, sit on the floor one in front of the other, and roll the ball between the two of you.
- Throw the ball to one side and ask the child to bring the ball back.
- Throw or kick the ball to one another; or throw the ball at a target (bucket, hole in the ground).



How to make:

- Look for recycled paper, banana tree leaves or plastic bags, to make a ball.
- Shape the material like a ball. You can put a plastic over.
- With a thick string (synthetic, made of banana leaves, etc.) wrap around the ball to give it a round form.
- To make a balloon, fill the plastic bag with



11. DOLLS

Age: From 1 year

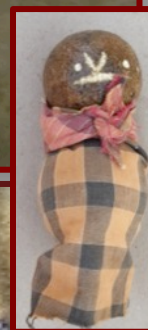
Stimulates: Language, thought, social development, fine motor skills.

How to play:

- Ask the child the name of the doll, how old it is, what it likes to eat, where it lives, if it has short or long hair, what it is wearing, whose daughter or son it is, where the brothers or sisters are, etc.
- Ask if the doll is happy or sad, and why.
- Let the child play with the doll: ask her to feed and pat the doll, put it to sleep, bathe it, take it for a walk, and braid its hair. Do some

How to make:

- Use a single color cloth and cut out the fabric based on the doll's body shape. Sew it all around, leaving a small hole. Turn the fabric to the other side. Fill the doll with dry grass, rags, sponges, plastic or newspapers. Sew the hole.
- Using a pen, draw the eyes, mouth, and nose. You can also sew these on. Use buttons to make the eyes. Add some hair so the child can braid the doll, and some clothes, so the child can dress and undress the doll.
- You can also use shells, dried pumpkins, bottles or other objects to make simple dolls.



12. TOY CARS

Age: From 1 year

Stimulates: Language, thought, fine and gross motor skills, social development

How to play:

- Allow the child to push the toy car; open and close doors and windows; put in and take out people and luggage.
- Ask the child to bring something (small) for you, using the car.
- Encourage the child to share the car with another child. Praise for sharing!
- Ask the child while he/ she plays with the car: What is it? What sound does the car make? Where are the wheels? Where is the steering wheel? How many wheels does it have? Does it go fast or slow? Where are you going? What are you going to do

How to make:

- Use boxes (eggs or juice boxes for example), as well as bottles and cans, as well as tins.
- Make holes on the sides with wires and attach the wheels.
- The wheels can be made of r bottle caps.



13. "ROLLING CARTS"

Age: From 1 year or when the child begins to walk

Stimulates: body movements, coordination, thought (cause and effect), concentration

How to play:

- ☻ Show the child how to roll the toy pushing it in front or pulling behind the child.
- ☻ Ask the child to watch and show which part turns around in the toy.
- ☻ Have the child walk slowly / fast with the toys, walk around the house, etc.

How to make:

- ☻ Make a hole on each side of the can. Insert the wire.

Attach a stick to one side of the wire to ensure the child can hold and push the car.

Turn the other side of the wire upwards and put a second can on it.

While the child is pushing the "car", the top can will be turning as well!



14. BOOKS AND DRAWINGS

Age: From 1 year (but you can start showing pictures to the child from the first months of life)

Stimulates: language, thought, fine motor movements, social development

How to play:

- Ask your child questions about the pictures on the packages, in the shopping flyers, and on the posters in the health facility. Ask: What is it? What color is the boy's shirt? Etc.
- With children aged 2 and a half years and older, create and tell them a story about the child in the drawing. Ask the child to tell the story back to you.
- Teach your 3 year old child how to open the book and how to flip the pages. Stop at

How to make:

- Cut 3-4 squares from a box. Using a string, tie the squares together to make a booklet.
- Draw some pictures on the pages, or cut and glue pictures from flyers and magazines. Choose the images of the objects that the child likes.
- Look for various pictures (in newspapers, books of siblings, on the packaging) to show the child



15. SAND AND CLAY

Age: Sand: from 1 year. Clay: from 2 years.

Stimulates: fine motor movement, imagination and thought, emotional and social development

How to play with sand:

- ☉ Show your child how to make shape sand, make holes etc.
- ☉ Give some cans, bottles and sticks to the child, show her/him how to fill with sand and "cook."
- ☉ Make some holes in the can or bottle, so the child can make the sand run through the holes.
- ☉ Bury something in the sand and let the child find it.



How to play with clay:

- ☉ Show the child how to make simple things like balls, worms, etc.
- ☉ Ask the child to make a small ball and a large ball. From 3-4 years, show the child how to make small plates, animals, cars, etc.
- ☉ Give some cans and sticks to the child, show how to "cook", "cut clay" etc.
- ☉ Talk and ask questions to the child.



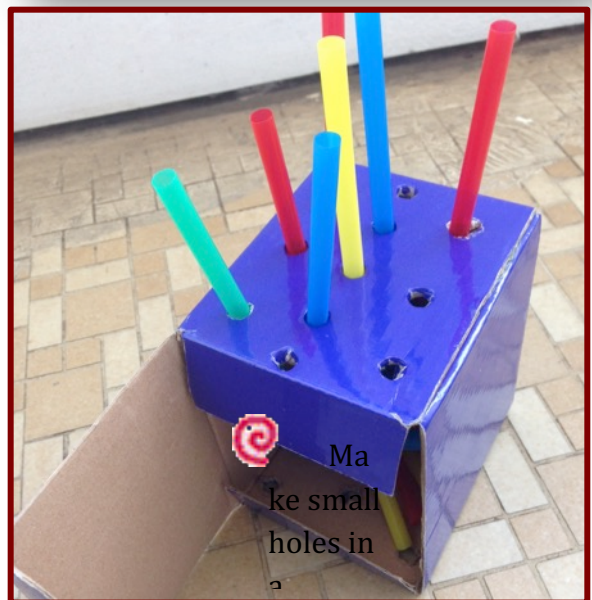
16. MYSTERY BOXES

Age: From 1 year onwards

Stimulates: thought, speech, fine motor skills

How to make and play:

- From 1 year: Give your child a simple box with a lid, and with some things inside. Let the child open and close the lid, remove and put things in.
- Give the child an empty egg carton. Together, collect flowers and other small things, and put them inside the egg holes. Ask the child to name what he/she has collected.
- Make a hole in the box so the child can put his/her hand through. Place interesting things inside the box. Let the child touch the objects and guess what they are.
- From 2 years onwards: cut 2 or more openings of different sizes on the box, and give different objects to the child to fit in the right openings.



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17. LITTLE BUILDER GAMES

Age: From 1.5-2 years

Stimulates: Fine and gross movements, spatial thinking and imagination

How to play:

- ☻ Show your child how to build houses, fences, corrals for animals, railways, etc.
- ☻ Talk to your child while he/she is building. For example, ask her/him to give you a big or small can, a thick or thin stick.
- ☻ Count together the "floors" or "windows" of the house.
- ☻ Ask the child:
 - *What are you building?*

How to make:

- ☻ Look for coconut shells, corncobs, cans, yogurt cups, plastic bottles, empty boxes, sticks or other things that can be used for building. Collect some small and some big objects.
- ☻ Check that the cans do not have sharp edges, and that the edges of the wood pieces are smooth, to prevent injuries.
- ☻ Arrange the materials in a box or an old basin for the child to use whenever wanted



18. BUILDING & STORING TOWERS

Age: From 1.5-2 years

Stimulates: Fine and large motor movements, spatial thinking and imagination

How to play:

- Help the child pile up cans or yogurt cups. Try various forms: towers, pyramids etc.
- Help your child fit the cans or cups one inside another. The child will need to pay attention to sizes. Praise the child.
- Ask the child about the color, shape and size of cans or cups.

How to make:

- Look for cans, yogurt cups, empty boxes that can be piled up or fit one into another. Collect small, medium and large objects.
- Check that the cans do not have sharp edges, to prevent injuries.
- Arrange the materials in a box or an old basin so the child can use whenever wanted.



19. MOVING AROUND

Age: From 1.5-2 years

Stimulates: coordination, imagination, collaboration with others

How to make and play:

- 🌀 Find a large box, a basin or large *jerrycan* that is not fit for use. Arrange a safe place for the child to sit in (it is better to use a box or a basin for children under 2.5 years).
- 🌀 Or use a rice bag and tie a string to it, to pull the child.
- 🌀 Let the child have rides in it, or ask older brothers to push and pull small children.
- 🌀 Talk to the child while riding her/him:
 - *Where are we going? To the neighbor's house? To the chickens?*
 - *Let's turn to the right, now let's ride around the house...*
 - *The next stop is ... Grandmother's chair!*
- 🌀 Encourage your child to give a ride to



THIS ACTIVITY GREATLY PROMOTES
COLLABORATION BETWEEN CHILDREN!

20. DRAWINGS

Age: From 2 years onwards

Stimulates: Fine motor skills, thinking, memory and imagination.

How to play:

- ☉ Show your child how to make lines, waves and circles in the sand using a finger or a stick.
- ☉ Later, show your child how to draw a house, a sun, a face, etc.
- ☉ You can show the child how to draw with a piece of charcoal on a box, a tree bark, a brick or a cemented floor.
- ☉ With children aged 2 and older, start drawing something, then stop and ask what it will be. Let the child guess.
- ☉ Show the child how to make simple drawings with stones, shells, seeds, leaves or sticks. Let the child imitate.
- ☉ With a 3-year-old, use the cooked corn to draw the way to grandma's or aunt's house. First do this for the child, and then ask the child to do by him/



Making pathways on the maize cob is a traditional Mozambican game to train memory in young children.

21. "THE ORGANIZER"

Age: From 2.5 years

Stimulates: thought, speech, fine motor skills.

How to play:

- ① Ask your child to give you something of a certain color, size, or shape. For example: *Give me a white cap.* Or: *Give me a round stone.*
- ① Count the bottle caps, shells or cloth pegs, together with the child.
- ① Help your child separate the pieces by color or by size.
- ① Show your child how to make a pattern (for example, small-big or green-white). Ask to copy or to make her own.
- ① For children 4-5 years: Make a half drawing, with covers, shells, or springs. Ask the child to make

How to make:

- ① Look for stones, covers, shells or springs of different colors and shapes. Have at least 10 pieces of each.
- ① Put objects in a bag, box or plastic, so that



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22. HOMEMADE PUZZLES

Age: From 2-3 years

Stimulates: thought, speech, fine motor skills

How to play:

- ① Model 1: Ask the child to fit the pieces cut into their places, in a slipper or a box with cutouts.
- ① Model 2: Shuffle the pieces and ask the child to put the pieces together to get something (a face, a person, an animal).
- ① If the child cannot do it, patiently encourage her/him and give a bit of help.
- ① Talk to the child: *What are you doing? Where does this piece fit? What is still*

How to make:

- ① Model 1: Cut different shapes in a rubber slipper, a plastic or a cardboard box.
- ① Model 2: Find or draw a picture on a box and cut into different parts which the child can fit together.
- ① For children aged 2-3 years, make puzzles with 2-3 pieces, and puzzles like in Model 1. For older children you can make puzzles with more pieces. Observe the children's skills to decide on the number of pieces!



23. STRINGS AND CHAINS

Age: From 3-4 years onwards

Stimulates: Fine motor skills, thought, speech

How to play:

- ① Show the child how to thread different objects on the string or the wire to make bracelets and necklaces.
- ① Show the child how to vary the colors and sizes of objects on the string (making patterns), and ask her to copy you.
- ① Ask your child to explain what she made: the objects used, how many, the colors used, etc.

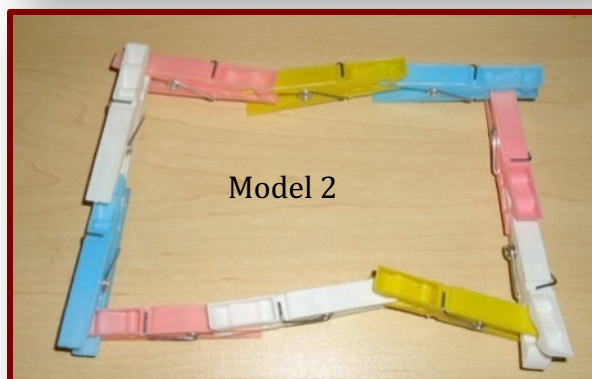


How to make:

- ① Model 1: Look for different colorful objects (bottle caps, rubber pieces, leaves, flowers ...). Look for different shapes and sizes. Give the child a piece of string, and objects with holes. You can put a hair clip at the end of the string so the child can thread the things more easily.
- ① Model 2: Prepare at least 8-10 cloth pegs which the child can connect together. It is always better to use colorful cloth pegs.
- ① Model 3: Fold the wire into a spiral or into other shapes. You may decorate the wire with colorful string. String 2-3 bottle caps of different



Model 1



Model 2



Model 3





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24. HOME SWINGS




Age: From 6 months (Model 1, with back support); other models - from 3-4 years.

Stimulates: Coordination and balance, positive emotions

How to play:

-  Swing and sing to your child.
-  Swing the child around first slowly and then faster.
-  Count the times the child swings, or sing: *up - down, or to the sun - to the ground!*
-  Ask the child to swing the doll, siblings, etc.

How to make:

-  Model 1: Use a car tyre. Cut out the tyre to provide back support for the child, and make the handles not too thin. Turn the tyre on the other side, and tie in a tree branch, close to the ground.
-  Model 2: Tie a thick rope around a strong thick stick. Tie at a low height for a child aged 3, and higher for older children.
-  Model 3: Get a wide tree trunk and bury part of it in the sand. Get a board to put on top, to use as a swing. **Stay around to prevent**



Model 1



Model 2



Model 3

25. "GOAT FEET"

Age: From 3 years

Stimulates: Balance and coordination, body movements

How to play:

- 🌀 Show the child how to walk in the "goat feet". Let the child try.
- 🌀 When the child is already walking well, you can give her/him different tasks: walk up to the house, walk to the aunt, make a circle etc.
- 🌀 Ask the child to pretend to be a goat or a horse. Ask what color he is, whether he is small or large, what sound he makes, what does



How to make:

- 🌀 Look for coconut shells, metal tins, or wood blocks. Make holes to thread a thick rope (sisal rope). Tie the rope inside the shell/ tin, and stretch the rope to a good height so the child can hold it.

