

Friendship Ball (Levels A-B)

STAY ACTIVE

To support early communication, social confidence, and connection by practising simple turn-taking with a soft ball in a circle setting.



Learning Intentions

Follow Simple Directions:

Practise Turn-Taking: Students will explore giving and receiving by rolling, passing, or handing a ball to a peer.

Attend and Explore:

Use Simple Communication: Students will use a sound, gesture, smile, or AAC word as they pass the ball.

Build Confidence:

Build Social Connection: Students will notice their peers, participate in the circle, and enjoy positive interaction.



Success Criteria

Students attempt to roll, pass, or hand the ball to another student.



Students use a simple word, sound, gesture, or AAC message when passing.

Students show engagement, looking toward the ball, smiling, vocalising, or waiting with support for their turn.



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Duration: 5 minutes

Objective

To support early communication, social confidence, and connection by practising simple turn-taking with a soft ball in a circle setting.

What You Need

1 - 2 soft balls or sensory balls

Optional: soft toys for students who prefer holding items

AAC devices with symbols such as: "hi," "friend," "go," "your turn," "my turn," "thank you"

Setup

Arrange students in a circle, sitting on chairs, the floor, or in wheelchairs.

Teacher models passing the ball gently while saying a word ("Family," or "friend" or "pasta").

Ensure all students can reach the ball or have support to help them participate.

Gameplay / Activity Steps

Step 1: Start the Circle

Teacher begins by showing the ball and saying:

"I'm going to roll the ball to a friend and say a word that makes me feel happy!".

The teacher gently rolls or hands the ball to a student while saying a simple word (e.g., "pasta!," "friend," "movies!").

The teacher then rolls or passes the ball to a student and says a word that makes them happy.

Students may echo the word, smile, or make a sound.

Step 2: Student Pass

The student who receives the ball now chooses another student or teacher in the circle to roll or pass the ball too and says a word out loud, a word that makes them happy.

Students can communicate when passing the ball by:

- saying a word ("hi," "food," "music")
- making any joyful sound
- smiling to the student or the group
- waving to the student or the group
- pressing AAC ("friend," "hello," "your turn")

Then they roll, pass, push, or hand the ball to another student.

All communication attempts count.



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Step 3: Keep the Ball Moving

Continue until each student receives a turn of rolling the ball. You can have multiple balls being used at the same time if desired.

- adult support provided as needed
- celebrate every pass
- encourage gentle rolling or handing

Teacher narrates to build connection:

“Look! You gave it to Sam and food makes you happy!”

“Great passing!”

“Your turn is coming soon!”

Reflection Prompts

Use visuals and simple questions:

- “How did you feel when the ball came to you?” (happy, excited, calm)
- “Show me your favourite passing word!”
- “Was it fun to play with friends?”
- “Do you want to play again?” (yes/no visuals)

Any response, gesture, smile, AAC, eye gaze is valid.

Sensory-Seeking Learners Variation

1. Sensory Balls

Use a ball with texture:

- squishy
- spiky
- soft fleece
- light-up ball

Helps engagement and regulation.

2. Add a Movement

Before passing, students can:

- clap
- stomp
- wiggle
- raise arms
- tap knees

3. Use Rhythmic Passing

Teacher uses a drum beat or chant:

“Pass... the... ball!”

Students pass on each beat.



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4. Sensory Toy Alternative

Students who avoid balls may pass:

- a soft toy
- ribbon
- beanbag
- sensory cube

AAC-Specific Supports

1. Prepare Vocabulary

Include symbols for:

- hi
- friend
- your turn
- my turn
- thank you
- food, music, playing, park, dog etc
- more
- finished

2. Aided Language Input

Teacher models:

“My turn.”
“Your turn.”
“Friend.”
“Thank you.”
“You passed the ball!”

3. AAC Choice-Making

Teacher offers two symbols:

“Hi or Friend?”

Student responds by pointing, pressing, or looking.

4. Participation Without Movement

Students may press “your turn” or “friend” while an adult helps pass the ball on their behalf.

5. Reflection via AAC

Students press:

- happy
- more
- finished
- friend

