

What to do When Preschool Ed

By Rhonda Zaluckyj

Waiting is a term no one likes to hear. A study by a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor found that the average person waits for a total of two to three years in their lifetime! We wait at stoplights, to get food, at the grocery store and more. Waiting is even more difficult for kids.

In a perfect world, we would be able to help every student every minute of every class. So it is our job to keep our students busy, learning, progressing and having fun! Waiting in line should never be a planned part of your lesson plans, but you can create waiting stations while kids are in the gym, as well as ways to minimize wait.

Kids don't understand waiting. They are constantly entertained by a handheld device, video games or a movie in the car. If a child wants to

watch a certain movie, Mom can pull it up online in an instant. There is no more waiting for the movie to come out on a DVD in the stores. With that in mind, you know a 4-year-old boy in class may have trouble waiting for his turn to jump on the trampoline without possibly hitting someone, throwing something or running away. Designing waiting stations will not only make your class more enjoyable for the kids but will also help with classroom discipline.

The best waiting station:

1. Keeps the child busy
2. Improves the child's skill
3. Can be done safely by the child.

Remember the instructor or coach MUST properly instruct what the activity is and the expectations at that station/activity before it can become an activity completed by the students themselves. Give a verbal and visual explanation of that station/activity.

Eliminate Waiting with Some Great Things to Incorporate in Obstacle Courses

1. Use an incline — Once the child understands how to do the forward roll, have them practice on an incline, reaching up at the end.
2. Panel mats in the shape of a V are great for backward rolls. Roll back while the head goes in the V and pull toes over nose. (Figures A and B)

Waiting Stations/ Activities

1. Splits Station. Grab two small inclines and put them up back-to-back.



Figure A

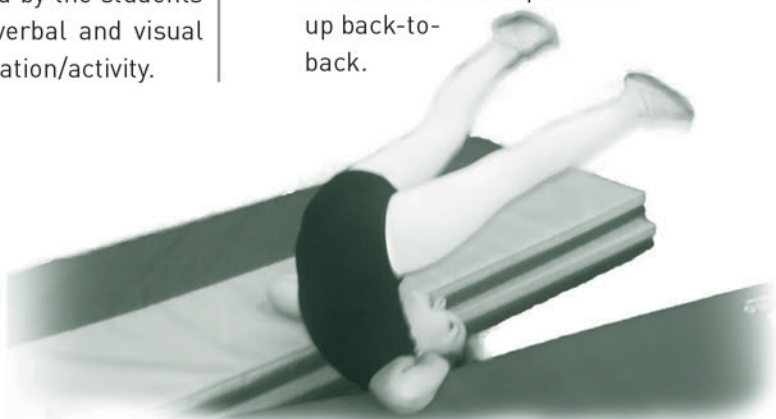


Figure B

While you Wait... Position

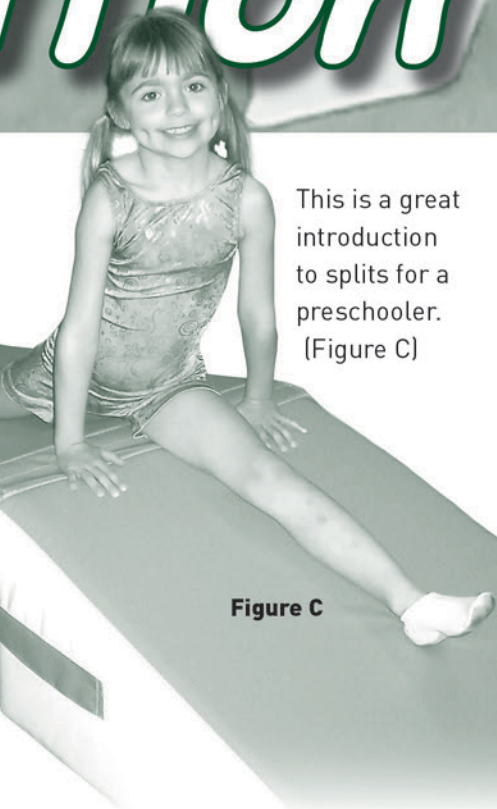


Figure C

This is a great introduction to splits for a preschooler. (Figure C)

...for Rolls:

2. To build stomach strength, try Rock-n-Roll Rockets. This is a rock and roll where the child tries to stand up and blast off like a rocket (like the last part of the forward roll). This can be done in front of a mirror or in front of stall bars. Hang beanbag animals at different levels and have the children try and reach for them out of the roll up phase. To make the rock-n-roll easier, roll back up an incline.
3. Place a beanbag between the gymnast's feet and have his

or her feet throw the beanbag over head while rocking backwards. After the gymnast masters the pull of the backward roll, add backward roll hand placement. TIP: This can be tricky for a preschooler. Start by having them hold their hands on the lower back part of their heads while they roll. (Figure D)

4. For a backward roll drill, rock-n-roll backward onto a trapezoid concentrating on placing hands back on the trapezoid.

...for handstands and cartwheels:

5. Horsey kicks (that's a donkey kick with each leg kicking one at-a-time) can be done with hands elevated on top of a block. The elevation makes it easier to manage the weight transfer. Otherwise you will notice the children trying to roll over.



Figure D

6. Walk feet up the wall. Hold for a certain amount of time. Always give goals when doing a static skill such as, "Can you hold your age?" (Figure E)
7. Walk feet up a large octagon on its side. This can

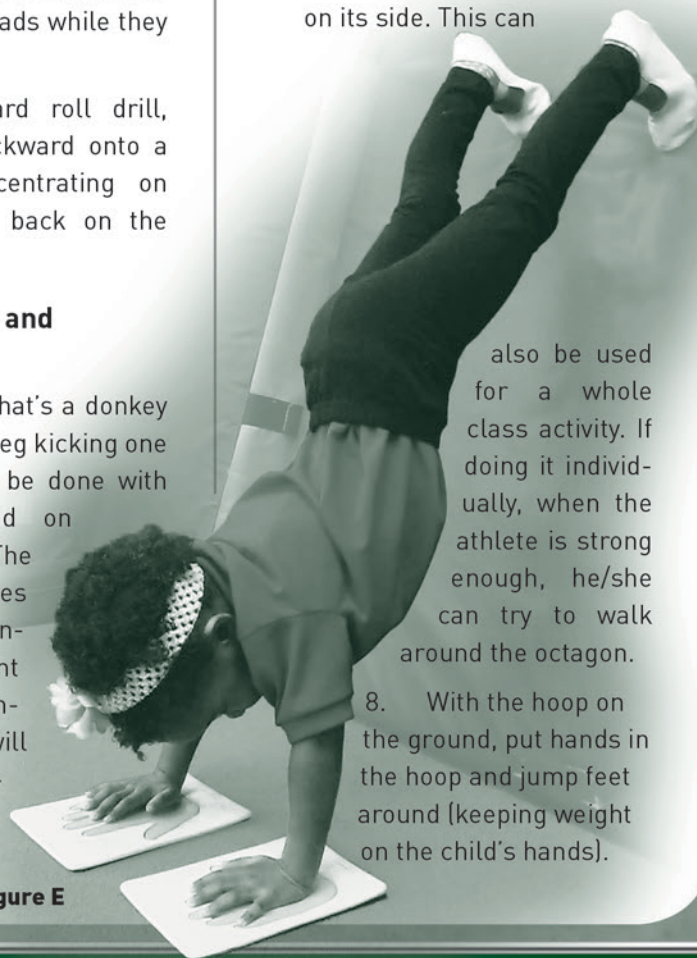


Figure E

also be used for a whole class activity. If doing it individually, when the athlete is strong enough, he/she can try to walk around the octagon.

8. With the hoop on the ground, put hands in the hoop and jump feet around (keeping weight on the child's hands).

What to do While you Wait... Preschool Edition ...continued

- Add props to jump over.
- To practice the 'back kick' of a cartwheel, set up two cones and balance a 'French fry' between them. Lunge with the back leg under the French fry. Kick the French fry in the air. (Figure F)



Figure F

Return to Line Activities

- Sound Steps — Sound Steps by Flaghouse are great connectors or a station by themselves. The steps are flat round spots that squeak.
- Hopscotch — smaller kids can jump their feet open-to-close in the hopscotch pattern. Then, transition to traditional hopscotch by hopping on one foot. You can also use the hopscotch numbers to make a cartwheel station. For example, "Lunge your foot on the number 1, place your hands on the 4, and step your feet out on 7 and 10."
- Floor beams — make patterns to walk on.
- Small block or traps — make jumping patterns, up and down.
- Cones or hoops — bear walk around in a pattern. Bear walk is the



Figure G

first step to inversion, so this makes a great station for forward rolls.

- Frisbees/sliders — push the Frisbees with your hands/feet around cones or in a pattern. (Figure G)

Stations with Props

- Launchers — Hand-eye coordination skill and the athletes love it! You can also add steps or patterns to make stations more interesting. "Launch the bean-bag, catch it, and hop to put it in the bucket." (Figure H)
- Hoops and cones — Toss the hoops over the cones. This can easily be themed to be witches hats or clown hats.
- Balance boards — Surf's up. (Figure I)
- Mirrors — kids love looking at themselves, so set them up to do jumps while watching in a mirror.
- Slides — Slide down and land in the "safe landing position" and

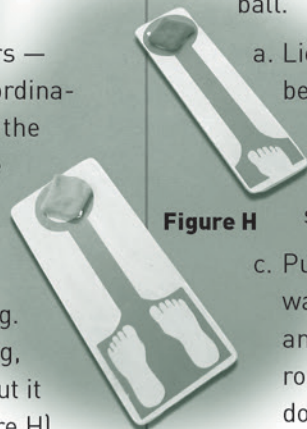


Figure H



Figure I

stretch! To make this more challenging, before sliding down, have each child hold an L-support by pushing down on the handles.

- Balls — You don't want to cause problems by giving balls in class, so give instructions as soon as you give a child a ball. TIP: You know they will want to throw it, so start with that! Here are some other suggestions to do with a ball.
 - Lie on the ball and try to be a superhero!
 - Sit on a large ball and balance for core strength.
 - Put the ball between the wall and the child's back and have them do squats rolling the ball up and down the wall.

Waiting for a turn is no fun for a child and a concern to a parent. Keep your parents happy by creating movement opportunities that will benefit the child. Inform the parents of the benefits of the activity. These are just a few ideas, and remember to use your own experiences to adjust your lesson plans and maximize movement!

For more information on working with preschool children, visit the library at USAGymnasticsUniversity.org.

