

About Walking on the Line



“There is also a secret key to the perfecting of the most varied types of movements. And this key is balance. We have therefore devised a means which can assist small children to secure their balance and at the same time perfect their most fundamental movement, that is, walking.”

—Maria Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*, p. 89.



Walking on the Line

Material Description

The Walking on the Line activity invites children to walk steadily on a line as a means of refining their balance and learning to control their movements. The line the children walk on is usually a large ellipse, marked on the floor with tape. As a rule, the line is about 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide, so the children can concentrate on placing their feet on the center of the tape and still feel like they are balancing. The size of the ellipse itself depends on the space available in the classroom. However, it is advisable to have approximately 1 yard (1 m) of clearance around the taped area.

Discovering More

- Walking on the Line satisfies a need of young children who are in a sensitive period for coordination of movement starting at 2.5 years old.
- Walking on the Line is a full body exercise. It refines muscular coordination, helps align the spine, and develops poise and body control. In addition, the activity promotes cognitive development as the child must concentrate greatly to control movement and body position in relation to others.



Children center their feet on the line as they walk

- As they walk on the line, children often gain a sense of harmony and relaxation in response to the combination of intense mental concentration and body control required to complete the activity.
- Children are often invited to walk on the line after or between work cycles. After periods of intense focus and concentration, they need time to use their minds and bodies together.
- Children are invited to participate in Walking on the Line, but they are never forced to join. If a child chooses to sit out or leave the line, she is able to do so as long as she does not disturb the participants.
- The activity gives children the opportunity to learn directionality, gauge distances, and practice spatial awareness.
- Walking on the Line is also a lesson in grace and courtesy, as children must practice manners and awareness of personal space to make the activity successful.
- Teachers sometimes find it helpful to tape a second, smaller ellipse inside the first. Children who walk slower may find it easier to walk on this smaller ellipse.

Guidelines for Walking on the Line

- Stay in the same order during the entire walk.
 - Remain at arm's length from one another.
 - Sit silently in a designated area if you would prefer to watch.
 - Join the line if you wish, but wait until there is enough room between children.
-



Young children are in a sensitive period for coordination of movement

Activity Walking on the Line

Age

- 2.5–3 years old

Direct Aim

- To walk calmly and steadily.

Indirect Aims

- To develop coordination and control of movement.
- To develop and refine a sense of balance.
- To develop concentration.

Control of Error

- The line.

Points of Interest

- Keeping feet on the line.
- Staying balanced.

Vocabulary

- Walk.
- Line.
- Silent.
- Ellipse.

Notes

- Make an ellipse on the classroom floor using tape. Keep a clearance of approximately 1 yard (1 m) around the taped area.
- If children have difficulty, break the presentation into smaller parts (e.g., present only how to stand on the line). Working with smaller groups of children may also be helpful.



Walking on the Line

Purpose

To help a child learn to walk calmly and steadily.

Material

Tape, 1-inch (2.5 cm) width.

CD player or digital music player.

Music.

Presentation

- Invite the children to the line to learn how to walk on it.
- Show the children how to place their whole foot on the line, heel first, and walk slowly along the line. (Later, you can show the children how to place their heel right against the toes of their other foot for each step.)

- Encourage the children to slowly and carefully walk on the line.
- Introduce soft background music, such as a lullaby, and invite the children to continue the activity.

Extensions

Carrying Objects

- Invite the children to walk on the line while carrying an object, such as a flag, tray, or basket. Demonstrate how to hold the object in front of you, keeping it as still as possible.
- Invite the children to walk on the line while carrying a movable object, such as a glass of colored water or bell. Encourage the children to walk as steadily as possible, so the water will remain in the glass or the bell will be silent.
- Invite the children to walk on the line while holding an object in each hand.

Following Instructions

- Invite the children to listen to your instructions as they walk on the line.
- Quietly call out suggestions of different ways of walking, such as, “walk quickly,” “walk slowly,” “walk with big steps,” or “walk with your arms up high.”
- Add creative suggestions, such as “walk like you are under water,” or “walk like a monkey.”

Playing I-Spy

- Invite the children to play I-Spy as they walk on the line.
- Choose items in the room that the children will be able to see as they walk on the line.
- Remind the children that they need to concentrate on walking on the line as they look for the object.



Carrying an object



Carrying a movable object

Montessori Moment

Maria Montessori observed that there is a natural inclination for children to want to walk in challenging and difficult places: along a fallen tree, on a narrow plank, or following the lines of a sidewalk. Montessori introduced the Walking on the Line activity to satisfy this natural curiosity and propensity, and to help the child develop coordination of gross motor movement.

Introducing Rhythmic Movement

- Invite the children to walk on the line to the beat of music.
- Change the beat of the music from a march to a slower waltz, or introduce an uneven rhythm for skipping and galloping.
- Always end the extension with a slow pace to calm the room.

Balancing an Object

- Invite each child to walk on the line with an object on her head, like a beanbag, book, or basket.



Balancing an object