

ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10

# DEVELOP MOVEMENT COORDINATION & BALANCE

AN INTERACTIVE GUIDE FOR COACHES SUPPORTING THE  
DELIVERY OF ACTIVATE ACTIVITY AS PART OF EVERY  
TRAINING SESSION AND PRE-MATCH WARM-UP.



# CONTENTS

## 1. WHAT IS ACTIVATE?

## 2. THE BENEFITS OF USING ACTIVATE

## 3. U9- U10 ACTIVATE KIDS ACTIVITY:15 MINUTE FRAMEWORK

## 4. HOW TO COACH ACTIVATE KIDS

Guidance on how to introduce new activities and exercises and tips on how to deliver Activate Kids in order to experience the full benefits.

## 5. 'KEY ACTIVATE 8' EXERCISES

The 8 key coaching points that are consistently referred to across all the Activate exercises and which should be introduced as part of the U9- U10 Activate sessions to support the development of good body positions and correct technique.

## 6. PART A: RUNNING-BASED PREPARATION

1. [Turtle Tag](#)
2. [Rob the Nest](#)
3. [Partner Mirroring](#)
4. [Walking Crunch](#)
5. [Plant & Cut](#)

## 7. PART B: UPPER BODY

1. [Animal Crawls](#)
2. [Plank & Ball Roll](#)
3. [Stand & Roll](#)
4. [Ball & Body Movements](#)
5. [Standing Neck Lifts](#)

## 8. PART C: LOWER BODY

1. [Balance Holds \(Numbers Game\)](#)
2. [Hop & Spell Name](#)
3. [Cone Statues](#)
4. [Single Leg Balances with Ball](#)
5. [Partner Exercises](#)

The Activate programmes and activities are appropriate for players of all ages. Visit the [Activate Home Page](#) for more information on the U9-U10, U11-U12, other age grade and Adult programmes.

### THIS IS AN INTERACTIVE PDF.

Use this contents page and the footer to navigate to different sections.

The Activate 8 images and the images in Parts A, B and C are hyperlinks and will take you to the relevant video on YouTube.

This document is viewable on multiple devices. It is best viewed in Adobe Acrobat Reader.

## 1.

# WHAT IS ACTIVATE?

THE GAME OF RUGBY  
REQUIRES A NUMBER  
OF DIFFERENT  
SKILLS INCLUDING  
**AGILITY, BALANCE,  
COORDINATION, SPEED  
AND FUNCTIONAL  
STRENGTH.**

It is well known that players of all ages and abilities can develop and maintain these skills to help improve their rugby performance. Research now suggests that using a specific exercise programme which develops these skills can reduce the risk of injury.

The RFU launched the main Activate programme for U15 and above players in 2017; it extended it to include U13 and U14 in 2021. Research continues to evidence the benefits of using Activate regularly as part of training sessions and match-day preparations.

The Activate Kids U7-U12 resources use the principles of the main Activate programme to provide a framework for those coaching these age groups. The introduction of Activate at an earlier age offers the opportunity to support the development of movement control including **agility, balance** and **coordination** in young children. Something that is important for their general physical development outside of rugby and sport. It also introduces and progresses the players through exercises and practices that are aimed at injury prevention.

Evidence suggests that Activate Kids with its targeted exercises and challenging activities, can help children avoid injury while enhancing their performance. It is a focused and efficient programme to be used at the start of, or integrated into, every training session.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research has shown that developing a player's ability in these areas improves general fundamental movement skills and has the potential to reduce the risk of injury including concussion.

The RFU continues to progress the research and insight into injury prevention as well as to develop further understanding into different playing groups.

## SCHOOL BOY STUDY

**72%** ↓  
IN OVERALL MATCH INJURIES\*

**59%** ↓  
IN CONCUSSION\*





## 2.

# THE BENEFITS OF USING ACTIVATE

ACTIVATE HELPS PLAYERS TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE FOUR KEY AREAS.

### 1: GENERAL MOVEMENT CONTROL

Develops adaptability allowing for better 'physical' decisions and reaction around the contact areas.



### 2: PRE-ACTIVATION

The progressive nature of the programme improves muscle activation and enables them to respond better to the demands of exercise.



### 3: FUNCTIONAL CONDITIONING

Over time functional power and strength develops which increases flexibility and range of movement.



### 4: PHYSICAL ROBUSTNESS

Develops the muscles, tendons and ligaments ability to endure physical demands and forces placed on them during exercise.



## DEVELOPING THESE FOUR KEY AREAS CONTRIBUTES TO:

- Support the development of a player's ability, balance and coordination
- Build a foundation to prepare players for the physical demands of the game in future years
- Improve general rugby skills and playing performance
- Reducing the risk of injury including concussion.



# 3.

## U9- U10 ACTIVATE KIDS ACTIVITY: 15 MINUTE FRAMEWORK

U9-U10 AGE GROUPS CAN ADD UP TO 15 MINUTES TO THE TRAINING SESSION TIME TO UNDERTAKE ACTIVATE KIDS ACTIVITIES.

It is important to note that the 15 minutes extra time MUST only be used for Activate Kids activities (as per the table below).

Coaches should use the following framework to design and deliver the Activate 15 minutes at the beginning of each training session and as part of a match day warm-up.

Each 15 minutes should be split into 3 parts of 5 minutes, with a particular focus in each part.

Sections 6 - 8 of this resource provide some examples and ideas of exercises and activities that coaches can use during each of the different parts.

Using only one or two different activities in each part (per 5 minutes) is recommended to allow time to concentrate on the focus areas.

There are loads of ways to introduce the focus areas, so get creative!

More examples and ideas are available on the [Activate Kids U9 - U10 YouTube Playlist](#).

Part	Focus	Time
A	<b>Running-based Preparation</b> Running technique, agility, coordination and change of direction. Starting, stopping and landing to develop balance and movement control.	5 mins
B	<b>Upper Body (Head/Neck, Shoulders, Arms, Upper Core)</b> Movement control, balance, functional strength and range of motion.	5 mins
C	<b>Lower Body (Ankles, Knees, Legs, Hips, Lower Core)</b> Movement control, balance, functional strength and range of motion.	5 mins

## 4.

# HOW TO COACH USING ACTIVATE KIDS

## ACTIVATE FOR U9-U10'S IS FOCUSED ON DEVELOPING THE PLAYERS' MOVEMENT CONTROL.

In order for the Activate activities and exercise to have the most benefit the focus should be on **quality over quantity**. Coaches should look to correct technique and body positions to develop appropriate control and balances.

Activate Kids U9 - U10 is about continuing to develop the key movement patterns introduced in the U7 - U8 age groups.

Ask questions and set challenges to encourage players to start to develop their own understanding of how to move and control their body.

Creating good habits at a younger age can have a beneficial impact on players performance as they get older. This requires coaches to play a key role in monitoring and developing their players. Ask players questions so they learn and understand how to control their bodies through balance and coordination. Encourage them to focus on technique quality and to communicate the key coaching points that will improve performance.

More examples and ideas are available on the [Activate Kids U9 - U10 YouTube Playlist](#).





# REMEMBER, EVERY SESSION SHOULD BE:

## ACTIVE

Your sessions should include as much activity time as possible, and your practices should involve all of the players all of the time. Avoid any practices which involve players waiting for their turn to participate. If you notice players are struggling to get involved, amend the rules or provide challenges for players to increase their engagement with the session. Using games as the basis for your sessions should help with this.

## PURPOSEFUL

Every session and activity within that session should have a purpose. Let the players know what the purpose is and ensure it is relevant to the Age group you are working with.

## SAFE

If you abide by the codes of practice (applicable to **Age Grade Rugby**) and provide purposeful activities and plan effectively, your sessions should be as safe as possible. You should not, under any circumstances, join in as a player, or ask the players to do anything that is outside the rules of play for their age group. For example, you should not be playing 15 a side matches. If you wish to use rules from earlier age groups this is permissible, but you should not exceed the rules for your age group.

## ENJOYABLE

If you get the **Active** and **Purposeful** right your session will more often than not be Enjoyable. However, enjoyment can be increased by adding individual and group challenges and an element of competition. Players may not enjoy their rugby if the session doesn't have high activity levels and if they don't feel they are improving. As a coach/referee you set the tone for this, so you need to enjoy your rugby experience as well.

# 10 TIPS ON HOW TO DELIVER ACTIVATE KIDS:

1.

Take time to become familiar with the framework and plan the activities and exercises before starting each session.

2.

Use players to demonstrate certain exercises and to talk through the key coaching points for the whole group to see.

3.

Get creative! Think about how you can make it fun and engaging. To develop skills the repetition of exercises and body positions is important but they can be delivered in many different ways.

4.

Focus on only one or two key coaching points or Activate 8 positions at a time.

5.

Consider the introduction of a ball or other suitable equipment as a way to challenge players.

6.

Watch players carefully to identify and correct any incorrect technique. If needed, provide feedback. Remember that quality over quantity is the priority.

7.

Ask players questions to help develop their understanding of Activate and why it is used.

8.

Share your ideas. Talk to other coaches both in your own and other clubs to share ideas about Activate activities that work well and what the players enjoy.

9.

Support player development through setting individual player challenges in the different activities/exercises.

10.

Try to differentiate activities for individual players. If a player(s) struggles with some of the activities/exercises:

- > regress and adapt appropriately
- > encourage the player(s) to continue with the exercises as over time they should improve.

More examples and ideas are available on the [Activate Kids U9 - U10 YouTube Playlist](#).



# 5.

# KEY ACTIVATE 8 EXERCISES

The 'Key Activate 8' are the foundation of the coaching points consistently referred to across all the Activate programmes. They form the basis for good form and correct technique.

At the U9-U10 age group, the Activate 8 should be introduced to the players more, and coaches should refer to the Activate 8 and how they are used to develop safe and correct body positions in the Activate exercises.

The Activate 8 provide the foundation for good rugby specific techniques and skills, introducing and developing these positions early in players develops their general athletic ability which can improve their physical readiness for rugby and other sports.

Coaches are encouraged to start to develop the Activate 8 with their U9 and U10 players in a fun and engaging way.

## 1. HEAD NEUTRAL OR HEAD LIFT

 WATCH VIDEO



## 2. CHEST-UP

 WATCH VIDEO



### 3. SHOULDER PINCH

SHOULDER PINCH



 WATCH VIDEO

### 4. ENGAGE CORE

ENGAGE CORE



 WATCH VIDEO

### 5. SHOULDER & HIPS LEVEL

 WATCH VIDEO



### 6. HIP, KNEE & ANKLE IN-LINE

 WATCH VIDEO



### 7. SOFT KNEES

SOFT KNEES



 WATCH VIDEO

### 8. KNEE ABOVE TOES



 WATCH VIDEO



# ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10: PART A

# RUNING-BASED PREPARATION

⌚ DURATION **5** MINUTES

RUNNING TECHNIQUE, AGILITY, COORDINATION AND  
CHANGE OF DIRECTION. STARTING, STOPPING AND  
LANDING TO DEVELOP BALANCE AND MOVEMENT CONTROL.



ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10 EXAMPLES & IDEAS

# 1. TURTLE TAG

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY PLAYERS CAN YOU 'TAG'?
- HOW MANY PLAYERS CAN YOU RELEASE?
- WHO CAN BE A TURTLE THE LEAST AMOUNT OF TIME?



## FOCUS:

- Evasive running and quick movement to 'turtle position'
- Once tagged hold balance: head neutral, chest up and soft knee on balancing leg
- In the turtle position: engage core, keep shoulders and legs off the ground.

## COACH TIP:

- Encourage players to explore different balance holds in the 'tagged' position
- Be creative with ways you can release a tagged player or the length of time they can hold the turtle hold.



## 2. ROB THE NEST

 WATCH VIDEO



### PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY BALLS CAN YOU ROB FROM THE NEST
- HOW MANY PLAYERS CAN YOU TAG TO STOP THEM ROBBING YOUR NEST?

### FOCUS:

- > Head neutral and chest-up when running
- > Use good body positions (e.g. shoulder and hips level when doing bear crawl) when retrieving the ball from the nest

### COACH TIP:

- > Be creative and use different movements to collect the ball in the nest
- > Encourage side stepping to evade being tagged.

# 3. PARTNER MIRRORING

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU LOSE YOUR PARTNER THROUGH EVASIVE MOVEMENTS
- CAN YOU KEEP UP WITH YOUR PARTNER WHILST KEEPING GOOD FORM?

## FOCUS:

- > Keep on balls of feet
- > Move with soft knees
- > Change direction and pace quickly.

## COACH TIP:

- > Get player to follow and mirror partner face to face.
- > Encourage player to look forward / keep their head neutral and chest-up.



# 4. WALKING CRUNCH

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU HOLD AND PAUSE THE MOVEMENT AT THE TOP OF THE CRUNCH FOR 2 SECONDS?

## FOCUS:

- Shuffle two steps then raise one leg
- Opposite elbow and knee touch and engage core
- Keep head neutral and chest-up.

## COACH TIP:

- Encourage players to keep their chest-up as much as possible when bringing their knee up
- Encourage players to keep their raised leg straight.

# 5. PLANT & CUT

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- KEEP YOUR CHEST-UP AND TRY NOT TO LOOK AT THE FLOOR WHEN PERFORMING THE MOVEMENT.



## FOCUS:

- Keep hips square and chest-up
- Emphasise plant and cut, keeping hip, knee and ankle in-line
- Knee above toes on planted foot

## COACH TIP:

- This is not a sidestep, break the movements down at the start in order for the players to plant correctly before the cut.
- Focus on the form rather than speed.

# ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10: PART B

# UPPER BODY

**HEAD/NECK, SHOULDERS, ARMS & UPPER CORE**

 **DURATION 5 MINUTES**

**MOVEMENT CONTROL, BALANCE, FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH,  
AND RANGE OF MOTION.**



**ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10 EXAMPLES & IDEAS**



# 1. ANIMAL CRAWLS

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU CRAWL FORWARD WHILE BALANCING A CONE ON YOUR BACK?



## FOCUS:

- Keep shoulders and hips Level
- Engage core and controlled movements
- Keep head neutral

## COACH TIP:

Get players to look up through their eyebrows when in this position and not to lift their head



## 2. PLANK & BALL ROLL



WATCH VIDEO

### PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU ROLL THE BALL FROM ONE HAND TO THE OTHER WITH AS LITTLE MOVEMENT IN YOUR BODY AS POSSIBLE?



### FOCUS:

- Keep shoulder and hips level
- Head neutral and engage core to keep body still
- Roll the ball and keep it under control.

### COACH TIP:

- Encourage players to have minimal movements in hips and legs
- Focus on good body form more than ball movement.

# 3. STAND & ROLL

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU RETURN TO YOUR FEET AFTER ROLLING?

## FOCUS:

- > Stand tall then lean forward and tuck head and shoulder towards one side
- > Roll forward onto tucked shoulder and return to feet.

## COACH TIP:

- > Make sure players roll on their shoulder not their head
- > The lower players can get to the floor from standing the less impact it will have on the shoulder.



# 4. BALL & BODY MOVEMENTS

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU KEEP A GOOD BODY POSITION WHEN MOVING THE BALL?
- HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU MOVE THE BALL AROUND YOUR BODY OR THROUGH YOUR LEGS?

## FOCUS:

- > Keep head neutral and chest-up when moving around
- > Bend at knees and keep hips facing forward.

## COACH TIP:

- > Be creative, use different movement with body and ball
- > Focus on good form rather than the ball.



# 5. STANDING NECK LIFTS

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- SLOW EACH MOVEMENT DOWN?
- HOW FAR CAN YOU MOVE YOUR HEAD, WHAT'S YOUR RANGE OF MOVEMENT?



## FOCUS:

- Start with the chin on the chest, hold for 10 seconds
- Move head to limit of range of movement upwards and sideways and hold
- Keep chest up and engage core.

## COACH TIP:

- Get players to keep their chest-up when performing the movement
- Make sure players don't over-extend each movement.

# ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10: PART C

# LOWER BODY

ANKLES, KNEES, LEGS, HIPS & LOWER CORE

⌚ DURATION **5** MINUTES

MOVEMENT CONTROL, BALANCE, FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH  
AND RANGE OF MOTION.



ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10 EXAMPLES & IDEAS



# 1. BALANCE HOLDS (NUMBERS GAME)

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU MAKE THE NUMBER ON YOUR OWN OR WITH OTHER PLAYERS?
- HOW LONG CAN YOU HOLD THE BALANCE FOR?



## FOCUS:

- Focus on form when in balance holds:
  - If standing – keep chest-up, head neutral and soft knees
  - If horizontal – keep shoulders and hips level

## COACH TIP:

- Give players time to come up with ideas to make the numbers
- Focus on body positions / good form
- Give points for being creative and good form.



## 2. HOP & SPELL NAME



### PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU SPELL YOUR NAME USING THE HOP AND 'STICK' THE LANDING WITHOUT LOSING BALANCE?

### FOCUS:

- > Keep facing in the same direction when hopping
- > Keep head neutral and looking forward with chest-Up
- > Keep the knee hip and ankle In-line.

### COACH TIP:

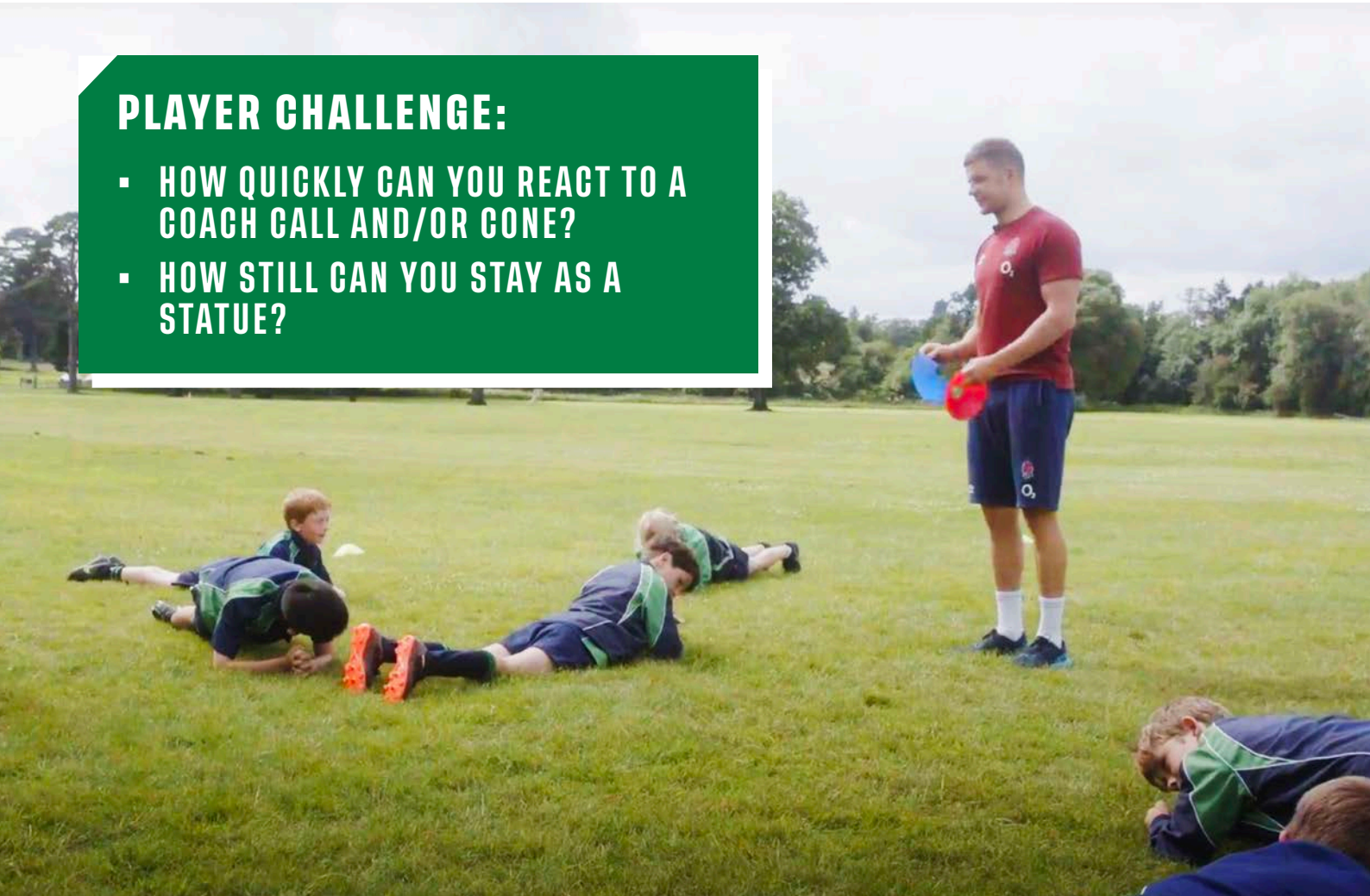
- > Encourage players to work on the 'stick' and hold the finish after the hop
- > Reduce the distance of the hop to ensure good quality.

# 3. CONE STATUES

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU REACT TO A COACH CALL AND/OR CONE?
- HOW STILL CAN YOU STAY AS A STATUE?



## FOCUS:

- > Keep head neutral and chest-up when moving around
- > Good form when in balancing / holding position as a statue

## COACH TIP:

- > Use cones with 'coach call' to start and then cones only
- > Be creative, get players to come up with different positions when a statue



# 4. SINGLE LEG BALANCES WITH BALL

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU LAND SOFTLY, WITHOUT MAKING A NOISE?
- HOW FAR CAN YOU JUMP WITHOUT LOSING BALANCE?

## FOCUS:

- > Keep soft knee on balancing leg
- > Keep chest-up and head neutral.

## COACH TIP:

Encourage players to use their arms if they are struggling for balance.



# 5. PARTNER EXERCISES

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW LONG CAN YOU HOLD THE BALANCES FOR WITH YOUR PARTNER?
- WHEN JUMPING, CAN YOU BOTH LAND ON YOUR FEET AT THE SAME TIME?

## FOCUS:

- > Work with partner to balance, counter-balance and/or perform exercise with good form
- > Chest up and engage core during balances.

## COACH TIP:

Get partners to support each other and correct each other's form.

ACTIVATE KIDS U9-U10

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