

PROBLEM SOLVING WEEK: Game Time!

This week at Camp Tinkergarten, **we are learning, inventing and playing games.** Even the simplest games of childhood offer children a playful way to develop problem solving skills. This will give your family the opportunity to:

- Explore the myriad games that kids can play and create using balls.
- Learn and play games with balls at every age and stage of development.

BALLS!

After “mama” and “dada,” “ball” is the most common first word babies say. From the littlest baby who is fascinated by watching a ball roll, to the big kid who kicks a winning goal, children are universally drawn to balls. Roundness connotes joy and delight for everyone, but especially for kids.

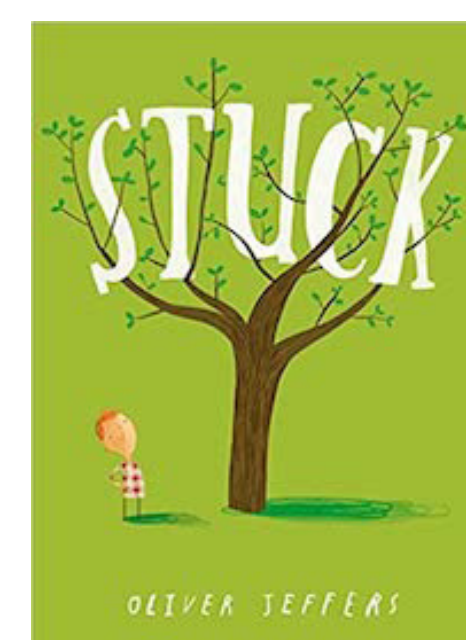
No need to buy any new balls for this week of activities. But if you are interested in just how many different fun types of balls there are, check them out [here!](#)

MORE ABOUT PROBLEM SOLVING

When we talk about problem solving, we mean the ability to solve a problem in which the solution is not obvious and the possible paths are many. This ability calls on many skills, including confidence, persistence as well as flexible and strategic thinking. Kids get better and better at problem solving the more chances they get to solve problems at just-right challenge levels in playful ways. This week, as you play games with your child, welcome them to approach games in their own way and look out for how your child’s approach to each game changes as they play—problem solving at work!

To find out more:

- [Problem Solving as a Skill for Littles](#)
- [How to Support Your Little Problem Solver with STEM](#)



AALIYAH READS!

This week, our fantastic nine-year-old summer reader Aaliyah will read *Stuck* by Oliver Jeffries.

Watch and listen [here!](#) You can also purchase this book for your home library [here](#).

Preschoolers are beginning to find their way into the world of formal game play. They can start to identify and orient towards a goal in a game and can follow a simple set of rules, though they're often still more comfortable when rules can be changed according to their whim as they play. Once we introduce a game to preschoolers, they can often play that game independently for stretches of time, return to the game on their own and even iterate on the game to make new games.

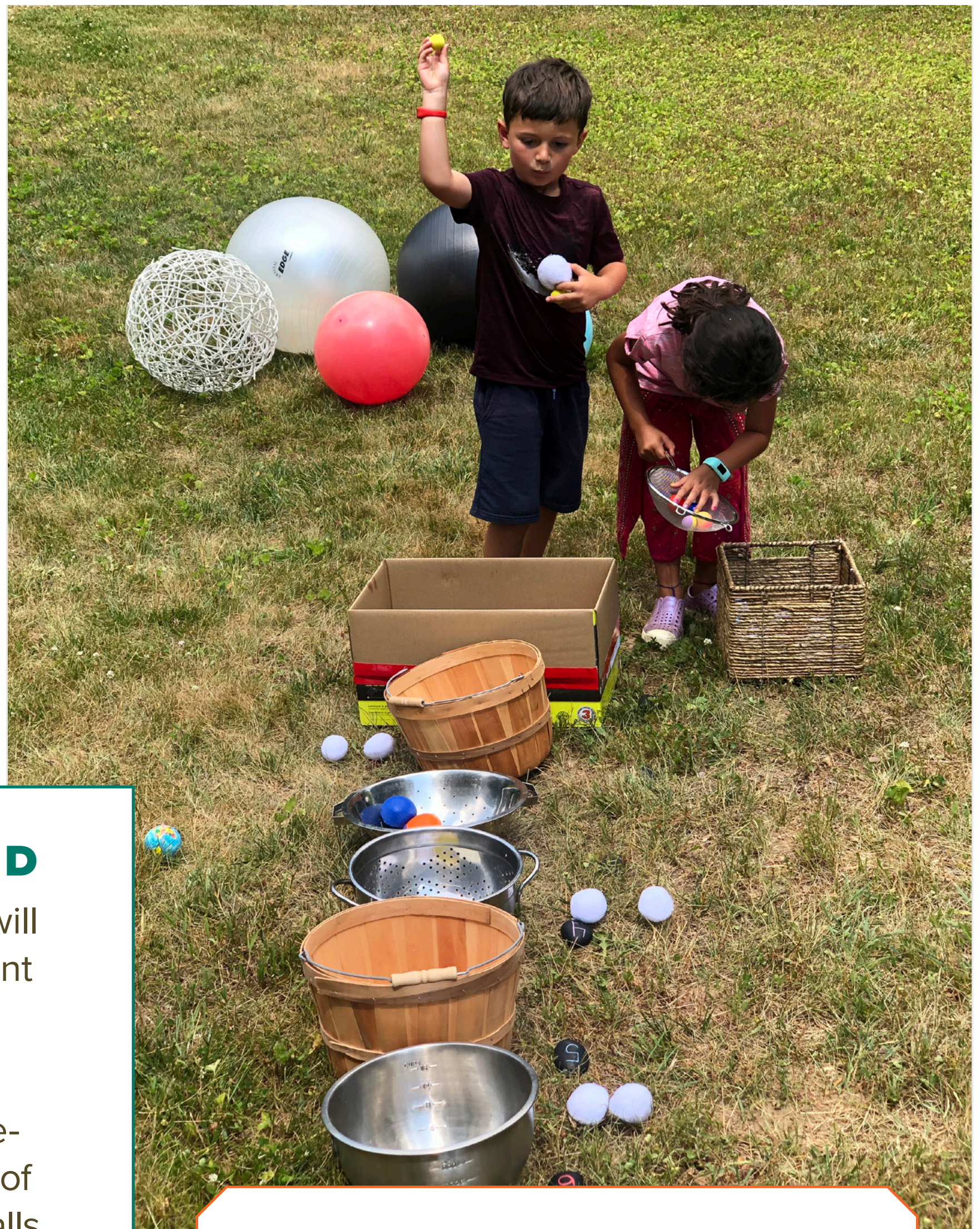
BODIES, BALLS AND BUCKETS

Materials

- Balls of various sizes (See our [Balls! shopping list](#))
- Containers of various sizes (bucket, bowl, box with a large hole cut out)
- Other fun stuff you have around (hoops, sporting equipment, stuffed animals)

Set up

- Find an open indoor or outdoor space.
- Transport materials to the space.



STEPS TO GET PLAY STARTED

In this game, you and your preschooler will have fun inventing and mimicking different play challenges with balls...get ready!



- To start, simply offer your pre-schooler one of the smaller balls. Place a couple of the receptacles (bucket, container) on the ground.

Then, take a ball yourself and toss it into the bucket. Welcome them to try. Continue taking turns back and forth for a while, varying the distance and ball size.

- Then, on one of your turns, change the action, or add another item into the mix.
- Your child may follow your lead and repeat one of your actions, or they may choose something new entirely. It's so instructive and fun to see where their brains and bodies go.

OTHER OPTIONS THAT YOU CAN SUGGEST

- Find a hard surface and try bouncing the balls so they land in different containers.
- Each container is worth a different amount of points. Get your ball in that container, and those points are yours!
- Make the cardboard box into a goal and kick the ball in instead of throwing it.
- One person holds a container and the other throws a ball and tries to make a basket.
- Play bocce style where you use one ball to hit another ball to make it travel farthest or go into a hole.
- Create an obstacle course using the same materials. You have to jump over the big bucket, pick up the orange ball and throw it into the bowl, spin three times, etc.

SUPPORT AND EXTEND PLAY

- Don't set out all of the materials at once. Try starting out with just a few of the materials and let kids try doing different things with them.
- Don't be afraid of lulls in play! Moments that may look like boredom or daydreaming are often moments of budding inspiration in disguise!



OTHER GAMES FOR PRESCHOOLERS

KEEP IT UP!

- Throw a big, colorful beach ball into the air and...don't let it hit the ground! Kids can play this with other kids, with an adult or with themselves.

SPONGE CHALLENGE

- You'll need two small buckets, two large buckets filled with water, and two sponges. Establish a start and finish line.
- Make two teams (of at least one person each and up to as many as you want.) Each team gets a small empty bucket and a large sponge at the starting line. The two larger buckets filled with water go at the finish. When you say "Go!", the first person in line must grab their sponge, run to their water bucket with their sponge, dunk it, run back with it and squeeze all the water from the sponge into their empty bucket.
- Whoever fills their smaller bucket first, wins!
- If it's really warm out, have people carry the wet sponges above their heads as they run. Refreshing twist to game play!

ANIMAL CHARADES

- Pretend play is big at this age. In Animal Charades, they get to use their bodies, faces and voices to act out different animal behavior. You can either have them think up the animals on their own, or make some simple animal cards yourself and kids can pick a card and act out the animal. Great game for social distancing!

Share photos and stories of your experiences and time outside this week using #tinkergarten and #outdoorsall4 or in our free [#OutdoorsAll4 Facebook group](#), and we may just feature your photos in next week's email!

ABOUT TINKERGARTEN

Tinkergarten® is your guide to purposeful outdoor play—the kind of play that helps kids become healthy, capable and confident learners.