

# Graduated Steps

Item #39038



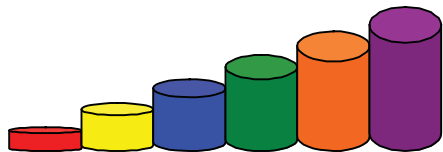
**What Are the Educational Applications?**

The Graduated Steps activity is an excellent beginning or addition to any movement program because the steps combine agility, directionality, strength, balance, coordination, concentration skills, games and/or core stability and plyometric (training that enhances a child's ability to increase speed of movement and improve power production) activities. Graduated Steps have a strong visual appeal and generate excitement and curiosity across all grade levels.

section while moving from one step to another (either by jumping to the next step or stepping down onto the floor first) from the starting base to the finish base. The distance between steps is based on the students' developmental level. Refer to the section "How Do I Make This Product Developmentally Appropriate For My Students?" for more information.

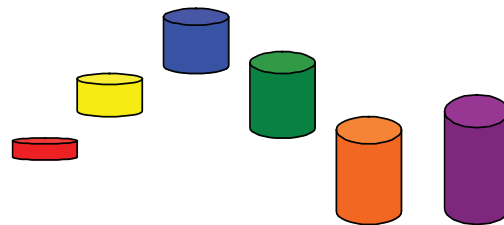
**BEGINNER COURSE CONFIGURATIONS**

**Beginner Configuration #1**

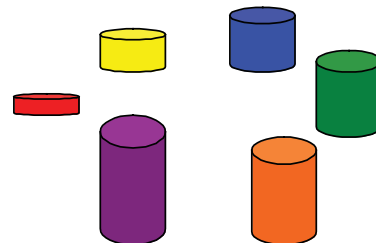


Students perform the activities listed in the "activities" section while moving across the steps two feet at a time on one step to another, from the starting base to the finish base. All steps should touch one another. This is the easiest pathway for beginners, visually as well as directionally.

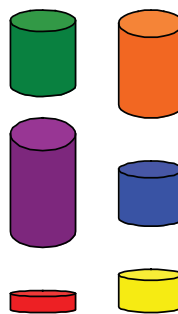
**Beginner Configuration #3**



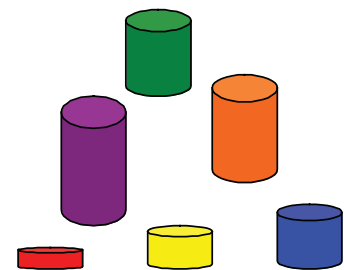
**Zig-Zag**



**Circle**

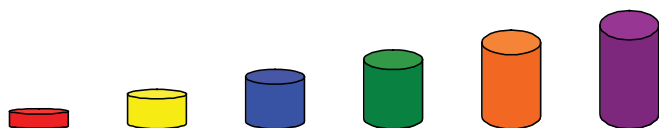


**Rectangular**



**Triangle**

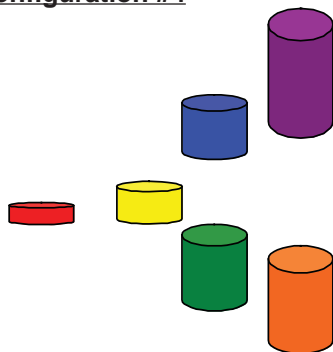
**Beginner Configuration #2**



Students perform the activities listed in the "activities"

Students perform the activities listed in the "activities" section while moving from one step to the other (either by jumping to the next step or stepping down onto the floor first) from the starting base to the finish base in a zig-zag, circular, rectangular, or triangular shape/pathway.

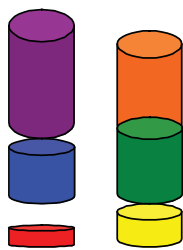
## Beginner Configuration #4



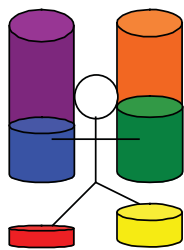
Students perform the activities listed in the “activities” section while moving across the steps (by either jumping to the next step or stepping down onto the floor first) from the same starting step to a different finish step. They choose which pathway to take when they reach “The fork in the road.”

## **ADVANCED COURSE CONFIGURATIONS**

### Advanced Configuration #1



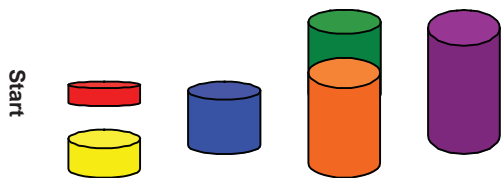
Without student



Student walking across each foot on different step

Students perform the activities listed in the “Intermediate Configuration #1 Activities” section while moving from the beginning steps to the end steps with each foot simultaneously on a different step. This is a more difficult task because they are balancing on different height steps at the same time.

### Advanced Configuration #2



Students step the first set of steps with the right foot on the right-side step, and the left foot on the left-side step, facing toward the steps. Students jump forward and land on the single step on one (or 2) foot. They jump to the next set of steps landing with the right foot on the right-side step and the left foot on the left-side step.

## **BEGGINER STUNT ACTIVITIES**

### Walking

- 1.Walk forward on knees.
- 2.Walk forward on feet.
- 3.Walk forward on tip-toes.
- 4.Walk sideways on knees.
- 5.Walk sideways on feet.
- 6.Walk sideways on tip-toes.

### Turning

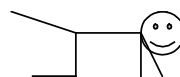
- 1.Perform a full turn (360 degrees) while kneeling on top of a step.
- 2.Perform a full turn while standing (taking small steps to turn the body 360 degrees) on top of the step.

### Balancing

- 1.Shift weight from foot to foot keeping the arms out to the side for balance. Keep shoulders and hips straight.
- 2.Bend knees and squat. Keep the back straight, the torso up, and extend arms out to the sides to help balance. Lower as far as comfortable (but not more than 90 degrees) and stand back up.
- 3.Balance on the right foot for “X” amount of time while keeping arms out to the sides for balance and the left leg in the air (bent at the knee and close to the body); then switch to the left foot.
- 4.V Seat. While sitting on the step, have hands behind the body and on the step, lift both legs, keeping the legs together/touching one another. Legs are up into the air and body is balancing on the buttocks, forming a “V” with the torso and legs.



- 5.Knee Scale. From a kneeling position with both knees and hands on the step: balance on the right knee and extend the left leg straight, upward, backward, and as high as possible.



### Core Stability/Strength/Plyometric Exercises

- 1.Place the body in a push-up position with the hands on the step. Keep the body straight as you bend the elbows and lower into a push-up. Push back up and repeat.  
Easier: Use the tallest step.  
More difficult: Use the shortest step. More than 1 student can perform push-ups on a step (but no more than 3 for safety).

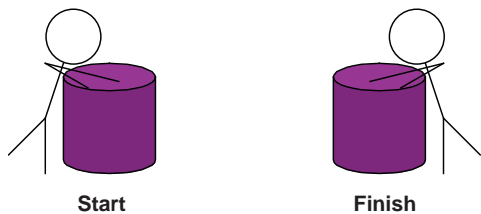
### Getting Off The Step

- 1.Step Off.
- 2.Jump Off. Take off and land on both feet at the same time. In all jumps, body weight should be forward; knees should bend, and then straighten after a safe landing.

## Games

1. **Step Forest (younger students):** Use any of the course configurations above with the steps spaced far apart from one another. Play music while the students weave in and out between the steps (so they are walking through the "Step Forest" rather than moving across the tops of the steps). Stop the music. Instructor calls out "I see a bear! Quick! Hide behind a tree!" Students hide behind a Step Tree. Music starts and the students weave through the step forest again. Music stops. "I see a snake! Quick! Sit on top of a rock!" Students sit on top of a step. Music starts, students weave through the forest. Music stops. "There are lots of fallen trees in our way. Let's jump over them like this!" Show and tell students to put two hands on the fallen tree step, lean forward so their weight is on their hands, push up off their feet and jump to the other side of the fallen tree step (like vaulting).

### Jumping over the fallen tree



Make up your own adventure walking through the Step Forest.

2. **Before, On, After (younger students):** Set up the steps using beginner configuration #3 circle, rectangle or triangle shape. Have students move in a clockwise pattern around the outside of the step shape when the music starts. When the music stops, students put their hands on the nearest step. Call out any of the questions below. Students answer the question. Continue playing the game in this manner (play the music, students walk clockwise around the outside of the shape, music stops, students place hands on the step closest to them, teacher asks one of the questions, students answer, music starts, etc.) until all the questions are answered or students start to lose interest in the game.

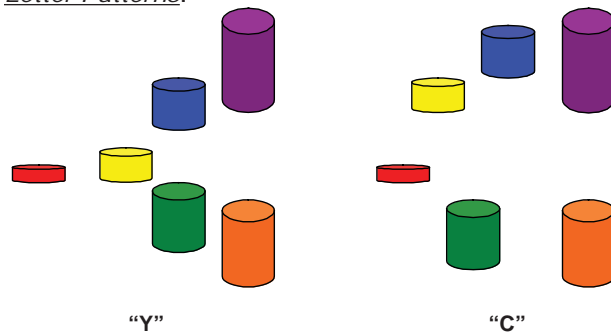
- Which color is before "X" (where "X" is any of the step colors)?
- Which color is after "X" (where "X" is any of the step colors)?
- Ask one student in the class to answer the following questions:
  - Name one classmate who is before the color "X".
  - Name one classmate who is after the color "X".
  - Name one classmate who is on the color "X".Variations: Have the students:
  - weave in and out of the steps instead of just

- walking around the outside of the shape.
- perform different locomotor movements around the step shape: walk forwards, backwards, skip, hop, crawl, slither, etc.

3. **Shape, Colors, Patterns Oh My! (any age students):** Create large poster-sized Flash Cards of shapes, color patterns, height patterns, letter patterns, etc. (examples given below). Have 2-3 students' stand next to each step. Show the student's one card. Students must work together to put the steps in the shape, color or height pattern on the card. Make the activity harder by:

- Imposing a time limit (e.g. complete in 1-2 minutes).
- Showing the students the card for 30 seconds. During this time they study it, memorize it. Do not show the card again until they think they have completed the task to see if they were correct.
- Placing blindfolds on  $\frac{1}{2}$  the class. The sighted half looks at the card directs the blindfolded students in creating the pattern on the card. The sighted students must not tell the blindfolded students the pattern they are trying to create. They are only allowed to give directions on where to move and place the steps.

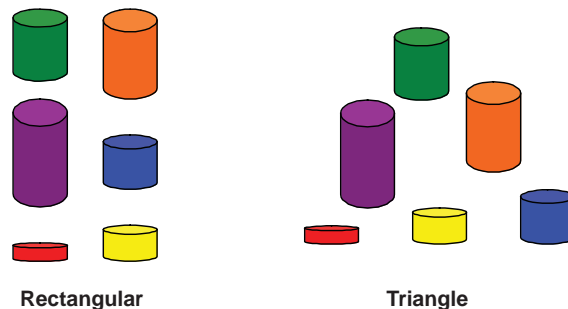
### Letter Patterns:



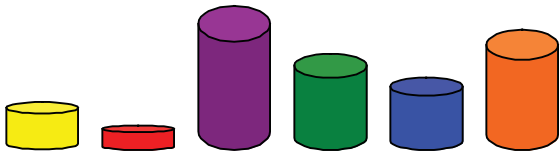
### Color Patterns

Purple, Yellow, Blue, Red, Green, Orange

### Shape Patterns



### Height Patterns



## ADVANCED ACTIVITIES

(USE a SPOTTER for these activities)

Use the beginner course configurations to perform the following activities:

INDIVIDUALLY (one student at a time)

### Walking

1. Stand on the favorite (dominant) foot and hop forward from the highest step to the lowest step on the same leg. Perform the same activity using the non-dominant leg.
2. Hop forward from the highest step to the lowest step alternating legs.
3. Hop sideways from the highest step to the lowest step on the same leg all the way across, then perform again on the other leg.
4. Walk backwards from the highest step to the lowest step on knees.
5. Walk backwards on feet either from the highest step to the lowest step or from the lowest step to the highest.
6. Walk backwards on tip-toe from the highest step to the lowest step.

### Balancing

1. Shift weight from foot to foot keeping the arms out to the side for balance. Keep shoulders and hips straight. Add a challenge: Can you keep your balance while your (a) arms are raised overhead and/or (b) eyes are closed?
2. March on top of the step by shifting weight from foot to foot. Keep shoulders and hips straight.  
Easy: keep arms out for balance  
More difficult: keep hands on the hips
3. Balance on the right foot for "X" amount of time while keeping arms out to the sides for balance. Perform one or more of the challenge activities listed below. Then perform the same or different challenge activity listed below on the other foot. Repeat for "X" number of sets on one step, or have the students move to another step and continue with a different challenge. Use spotters when performing the activities listed below because the activities are risky and advanced.
  - a. Close eyes.
  - b. Lift the non-support leg straight out behind the body (gymnastics scale).
  - c. Play a game of catch (to self or with another student) using a bean bag (stand on 1 and/or both feet).
  - d. Draw numbers, letters and shapes in the air with non-support foot.

e. Hold onto a volleyball (easy) or basketball (harder) with both hands in front of the body with elbows bent. Twist to the right, then to the left (standing on 1 and/or both feet).

f. While standing on the step (on 1 and/or both feet), raise heel off step (a.k.a. toe raises).

4. While standing on the step (on 1 and/or both feet), bend forward at the waist (bending the knees is OK) and touch the toes with the fingers.

### 5. Intermediate Configuration #1 Activities

a. Students step onto the first set of steps with the right foot on the right-side step and the left foot on the left-side step facing toward the steps.

Students jump forward from one set of steps to the next.

b. Same as above, but face away from the steps and jump backwards.

### Core Stability/Strength/Plyometric Exercises

Children and adolescents should develop an adequate baseline of strength before participating in a plyometric training program. Students should only perform 1 set of each activity and need adequate rest and recovery between one activity to the next (e.g., 2-3 minutes) in order to replenish energy necessary to perform the next activity with the same intensity. Students should stop immediately if they feel any pain in their joints.

1. Place the body in a push-up position with the feet on the step. Keep the body straight as you bend the elbows and lower into a push-up. Push back up and repeat.

Easy: use the shortest step;

More difficult: use the tallest step. More than 1 student can perform push-ups on a step (but no more than 3 for safety).

2. Jump forward over a step (or series of steps) taking off of both feet, keeping the knees to the chest when clearing the step, and then landing softly on the balls of both feet, while bending at the knees, on the other side of the step.

3. Jump forward, then backward over 1 step. Remember to land softly on the balls of your feet by bending the knees slightly upon landing.

4. Jump from side to side over 1 step. Remember to land softly on the balls of your feet by bending the knees slightly upon landing.

5. Facing the step, jump up from the floor and land on the step, with 2 feet. Jump back down off the step. Do this as quickly as the student can for 5 seconds. Remember to land softly on the balls of your feet by bending the knees slightly upon landing.

### Getting Off the Last Step

1. Jump Off, ¼ Turn. As students jump off, they perform a quarter turn in the air and land with their shoulder parallel to the step.

2. Jump Off, ½ Turn. As students jump off, they perform a half turn in the air and land facing the step.

3. Straddle Jump. As students jump off, they perform a

straddle (legs straight and away from each other) in the air and land with their legs together.

4. Tuck Jump. As students jump off, they perform a tuck jump (knees bent, tucked into chest) in the air and land with their legs together and slightly bent.

### ADVANCED ACTIVITIES

Use the beginner course configurations to perform the following activities IN PARTNERS (students hold hands).

#### Walking:

One partner leads, the other follows. Switch roles each time through the course so the same student does not always lead/follow.

1. Walk forward on feet
2. Walk sideways on feet.
3. Walk backwards on feet either from the highest step to the lowest step or from the lowest step to the highest.

#### Balancing

With each partner on a different step, both holding each other's hands, one partner performs an activity listed below first, then the other partner performs the same or different activity.

1. Shift weight from foot to foot. Keep shoulders and hips straight. Add a challenge: Can you keep your balance while your eyes are closed?
2. March on top of the step by shifting weight from foot to foot. Keep shoulders and hips straight.
3. Balance on the right foot for "X" amount of time while performing one or more of the challenge activities listed below. Then perform the same or different challenge on the other leg.
  - a. Close eyes.
  - b. Lift the non-support leg straight out behind the body (gymnastics scale). Make sure no one is behind you!



c. Draw numbers, letters and shapes in the air with non-support foot.

d. While standing on the step (on 1 and/or both feet), raise heel off step (a.k.a. toe raises). Perform "X" number, or for a time limit (e.g. 3 seconds).

e. While standing on the step with 1 or both feet, bend forward at the waist (bending the knees is OK) and touch the toes.

4. Perform the skills listed above with each partner performing the skill at the same time.

### How Can I Use This Product With My Students?

Configure the Graduated Steps using the diagrams presented in the "Course" section based on the children's developmental level and/or your learning objectives (beginner or advanced courses). Use the Beginner or Advanced activities (in the "Activities" section) to choose:

1. Individual beginner stunts to perform on the steps including: balance, strength, directionality, coordination.
2. Beginner games to play using the steps.
3. Beginner core stability and plyometric activities that the students perform using the Graduated Steps.
4. Individual advanced stunts to perform on the steps including: balance, strength, directionality, coordination.
5. Partner advanced stunts to perform on the steps including: balance and coordination.
6. Advanced core stability and plyometric activities that the students perform using the Graduated Steps.

### How Do I Make This Product Developmentally Appropriate For My Students?

#### *1. Course Layout:*

This product is appropriate for all ages and developmental levels depending on the course layout used (refer to the course layout diagrams below).

a. Beginner Course is designed to familiarize students with the skills of balance, agility, directionality, strength and coordination through individual stunts and game play.

b. Advanced Course challenges students by having them either:

1. walk on parallel miss-matched/different height steps at the same time.
2. alternate jumping and hopping between one step to 2 parallel steps like hopscotch.

#### *2. Introduce Consequences:*

You can make the challenge more difficult by introducing consequences if a student falls off a step. There are two possible consequences (listed below). The consequence you choose is based on the students' developmental level.

- a. If a student falls completely off one of the steps, s/he must go back to the beginning step and start again.
- b. Setting a limit on how many touches a student is permitted before s/he must return to the beginning step and start over (e.g. three touches = return to

the beginning step and start again).

### **3. Step Spacing:**

Spacing of the Graduated Steps depends on the: (1) student's age/developmental level (with the rocks placed closer to each other for younger/beginner students and further apart for older students), and (2) available activity space.

### **4. Choose Appropriate Movement Activities:**

Decide whether students will perform beginner (easy) stunts including balancing, strength, directionality and coordination activities; core stability/plyometric exercises; and/or games and/or advanced (harder) individual stunts; partner stunts; core stability/plyometric exercises. Refer to the "Activities" Section for more information and descriptions.

## **How Does This Product Relate to Current Educational Thinking?**

Depending on the developmental level of your group, use one or more of the following items to assess student learning at the end of the class or at the completion of the activity.

1. Have students comment (either written or verbally):
  - a. What did participating in this activity teach them about balance, coordination, concentration, perseverance/patience, agility and/or cooperation?
  - b. How did they feel, both as an individual and as a group, during the experience?
  - c. Allow students to create a picture of what they did or learned. Display pictures on a bulletin board for all to see.
2. Take Polaroid/Digital and/or video pictures of the students in action during the lesson. At the end of the lesson, show the students the photographs/video and compare what you see to what they see.
3. Have students create their own Graduated Step activity. The best learning environment is one where students are involved in the learning process. They learn best when they are allowed to make choices and are given numerous opportunities for cooperative learning. Therefore, help students learn and assert their individualism and use higher order thinking skills by having them create their own Graduated Step activity. In doing this, you are introducing the teaching/educational philosophy known as progressivism. Progressivism allows students to come together and explore a problem in terms of how it relates to their own experiences and ideas as well as those of their group members. They will take the knowledge from the groups' discussions on game development and create something uniquely their own based on the groups' abilities.

**In view of COPEC'S (Council on Physical Education of Children) position that all activities have both appropriate and inappropriate practices, please list**

**and describe a few appropriate practices regarding how this item or these activities are valuable to a physical education program.**

1. When first introducing The Graduated Steps to students, allow them to individually walk on the steps, through the course, especially for young and/or beginner learners. Doing so gives them much needed practice time before they participate in the actual activity. Also, it allows the instructor to visually observe the students to see which students are skilled at balancing and which ones may need extra practice time or help and care when participating in the activity in partners.
2. Younger students move through each course, as well as developmental levels, in sequence. Students must go through and be successful with the beginner activities before they perform the more difficult advanced activities. Progressively moving students from easier to harder tasks keeps the students motivated and interested in the task. It also allows them to be successful before moving onto something more difficult before they are ready.
3. Set up the Graduated Steps course BEFORE students enter the activity space. If you set up after the class gets there, that dead time is both a waste of your precious PE time and an invitation for trouble to start.
4. Supervise students as they participate in the activity. Make sure the students are on task, cooperating with one another, and adhering to the rules.
5. Give positive reinforcement and feedback to the students as they participate in the activity.
6. Demonstrate what you want the students to do before they are told to participate in the activity. Some children are auditory learners, many are visual learners. Give them both. Be sure to demonstrate exactly what you want them to do.
7. Check for student understanding of how to play the game and the rules before allowing them to participate in the activity.
8. Stand where everyone can hear when you talk. It will save having to repeat yourself. It will eliminate confusion when the activity begins (confusion is breeding ground for misbehavior). If you have a quiet voice, or prefer not to shout, allow the students to sit close to you in a semi-circle formation when you need to say something.

### **Safety Issues & Concerns**

As with all activities in Physical Education, safety and making sure the environment is safe and conducive to learning is critical to the student's well being and success. Follow these steps before and during each class to greatly reduce the chance of an accident occurring.

1. When in partners, do not allow students to pull each other along the steps.
2. To decrease the likelihood of students twisting their ankles while participating in the activity, perform

- ankle warm-up exercises prior to starting the any Graduated Steps activity.
3. Tell students "THIS IS NOT A RACE!" Have them take their time moving across the steps so they can become more skilled at balancing, etc.
  4. Practice all activities (easy and difficult) on the floor first before moving to the Graduated Steps.
  5. Check to make sure that the area where activities will occur is safe from debris, obstructions or any potential obstructions.
  6. Monitor students when the Graduated Steps set is in use. Constantly reinforce the positive actions of students and redirect any actions that are not acceptable.
  7. Set limits with classes before activities begin. Explain if they choose not to follow the rules and directions then they might hurt themselves or others. Not following the rules means they will not be able to participate.
  8. Novice students performing easy or difficult movement activities may need a spotter. A spotter is someone who stands or walks beside the performing student and offers a hand if s/he needs to keep his/her balance. Spotter must not take the student's hand, for this may pull him/her off balance.

**Tell students before they play:**

1. Always be aware of the person in front of you at all times.
2. You may step up onto the first Step when the person in front of you has left first Step.
3. Only move to a Step when the person in front of you has left that Step.
4. It's OK if you fall off a Step. Just get back on and keep going! (If you are not incorporating consequences for falling off a step).

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*Please direct your questions or concerns regarding this product to the appropriate office listed below between the hours of 8AM-6PM Eastern Time*

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