

Z-Ball GAMES

Creative Games for Z-Ball, Z-Ball Plus, and Rock Balls

Joe Dinoffer

Introduction:

Just say the words quick reflexes or quick reactions and it gets your adrenaline pumping. Every single movement sport requires them. But, just where do quick reflexes come from? Studies show that reflexes and reactions are an acquired skill and can be improved upon, even for the most successful athletes. Although there are many exercises that focus on quick reflexes, few work on catching reflexes, visual reactions, plus movement and balance, all at the same time. The new, larger, and redesigned multi-color Z-Ball meets this challenge and more!

Used in conjunction with an overall fitness program, Z-Ball practice will improve performance in all sports where quick reactions are essential. The ten specific skills Z-Balls develop are:

1. **Balance** – To maintain and recover equilibrium.
 2. **Bilateral Movement** – Using both sides of the body (arms and legs) with equal efficiency.
 3. **Depth Perception** – Judge the distances of objects and move accurately in relation to them.
 4. **Eye-Hand Coordination** – Seeing an object **and** coordinate the hands in relation to it.
 5. **First Step Quickness** – Moving to an object quickly and accurately.
 6. **Focus** – Maintaining concentration.
 7. **Focus Change** – The ability to look from near to far and vice versa without momentary blur.
 8. **Peripheral Awareness** – Seeing and interpreting what's happening in your side vision while aware of what is going on in front.
 9. **Tracking** – Following a moving object smoothly and accurately with both eyes.
 10. **Dynamic Visual Acuity** – Tracking a moving object, judging its movement and applying a skill like catching relative to that moving object.
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1. **Partner Catch** – For this first game pair up the young athletes six to eight feet apart and place a hula hoop or draw a circle with chalk between them. Tosses must be underhand and soft and bounce in that circle. Players alternate tossing to one another and points are scored for each player by catching the ball on one bounce. Play games until one player reaches eleven points.
 2. **Triple Catch** – A fun extension of the first game is for three instead of two. In this variation, one player tosses underhand into the circle, and the other two players try to catch it. The catcher receives a point and then tosses the next one. The ball must be caught on one bounce. If it isn't, the same player tosses again. Play until one player reaches eleven points.

3. **Solo Wall Catch** – This skill-builder just needs a wall, a Z-Ball, and enthusiasm. Have the athlete adjust their distance from the wall and the speed of the toss to their age and skill level. Then, simply toss the ball against the wall, and let it bounce before trying to catch it. For a challenge catch it five times in a row.
4. **Partner Wall Catch** – Have two young athletes tossing against a wall, and add a target on the wall for the toss to hit, such as taping up a hula-hoop. Have the players alternate soft underhand tosses from a designated starting line. Points are scored when the receiver catches the ball after one bounce and play games to eleven points.
5. **Triple Wall Catch** – A natural extension of the last game is with three athletes. One tosses underhand into the wall target to the other two. The other two try to catch it after one bounce and the catcher receives a point and then tosses the next one. The ball must be caught on one bounce. If it isn't, the same player tosses again.
6. **Solo Wall Bounce** – The athlete has to toss the ball against the ground first and then, after it bounces off the wall, has to catch it out of the air. For a challenge try to catch it five or even ten times in a row. For variations with two or three athletes, see drills numbers four and five.
7. **1, 2, 3 Catch** - Have two players line up across from one another on opposite sides of a hoop or with two lines separating them. They take turns softly tossing to chest height underhand in the designated area. The receiver can choose to let the ball bounce one, two, or three times before catching it and is awarded that number of points if successful. If the player drops the ball, the same number attempted is given to the server. Play games until twenty-one points.
8. **Funny Tennis** – This next exercise is both challenging and a lot of fun. Use a Z-Ball instead of a racquet to play a regular set of tennis. All balls must bounce once and only one underhand serve is allowed. Points are lost when a ball is dropped or tossed outside the boundary. As an option to tennis scoring, you can score like ping pong or volleyball. Any type of court with a net in the middle can be used.
9. **Grounders** – This next skill-builder is perfect baseball training. With from one to five athletes, have one throw or hit groundballs, and the others field. Practicing this game with baseball gloves and then without to develop all the right skills for quick hands. To compete, rotate players and score one point for ball caught.
10. **Seeing Double** – This next game is a challenge, even for world-class athletes. Pair up the athletes and have one toss two Z-Balls at the same time. Have the partner catch both balls at the same time, one in each hand. Sound easy?
11. **Seeing Triple** – Give a pair of athletes three Z-Balls. One partner tosses all three up at the same time. Between both players, all three balls must be caught after one bounce. To make this drill competitive for a larger group, see how many three-ball catches each pair can cooperatively make in sixty seconds.

- 12. Two-Ball Complexity** – This next game adds a new dimension to the previous exercises since it uses the unpredictable Z-Ball with a tennis ball at the same time. Pair up two young athletes and have each toss two balls, one Z-Ball and one tennis ball, to the partner at the same time. This is obviously a cooperative game, but to make it challenging, see how many two-ball catches each pair can successfully make in 60 seconds.
- 13. 180-Degree Spin and Catch** – Here’s another cooperative game with the players organized into pairs. Give each team one Z-Ball and have them toss to each other with one unique feature. The catcher starts off turned away from the feeder and only turns when the feeder calls out their name. This game also doubles as a great way to get group participants to learn each other’s names quickly, or as an opportunity for the coach to eavesdrop a little to learn the participants' names as well.
- 14. 360-Degree Spin and Catch** – Another exercise that helps develop agility as well as quick hands is this simple drill which any child or even older athlete can perform by themselves. Simply have them toss the ball up into the air and make a 360-degree spin before catching the Z-Ball after the first bounce.
- 15. 360’s in Pairs** – A natural variation of the last game is to pair the young athletes and have one toss to the other. The feeder calls out “spin” as the ball is tossed into the air. To make it competitive in a large group setting, simply have the players keep track of how many successful catches they can make in sixty seconds after making a full 360-degree turn.
- 16. Dizzy Ball** – Let’s finish with a solo skill-builder that will challenge even the most agile athlete. Have the athlete toss the Z-Ball up in the air and then immediately make a 720-degree spin. After completing the full double spin, they have to catch the ball after it’s first bounce. And, again, to make it challenging in a group setting, have each player count how many times he or she can successfully accomplish this task in sixty seconds. Like all the other games in this we have listed, this exercise is both fun and skill building, all at the same time.