

HOMEMADE JUGGLING BALLS & LEARNING TO JUGGLE!

MATERIALS

- 9 balloons, 11 inches in diameter (inflated)
- Roughly 2 pounds of lentils (or similar filling)
- Funnel
- Scissors

STEPS

1. Stretch the first balloon to size by inflating it halfway, holding it for about 30 seconds, then deflating it.
2. Insert the funnel into the balloon and pour in a third of the lentils. As you fill, press the funnel's spout down and up to force the lentils inside. Once the balloon is filled, set it down on a work surface, neck side up.
3. Cut off the balloon's thick rubber lip, leaving the neck attached. Cut off the entire neck of a second balloon. Insert three fingers from each hand into the hole, gently stretch the opening, then carefully work the second balloon over the first, guiding it forward with your thumb tips. When you're done, the two neck openings should be at opposite sides of the sphere. If an air bubble appears, try kneading it out.
4. Cut off the entire neck of a third balloon, stretch the opening, and work it over the other two.
5. Repeat to make two other balls. Stand relaxed, elbows by your sides, palms out. Cradle one ball in the palm of one hand and practice tossing it into the air with a gentle scooping motion. The ball's arc should carry it to just above eye level and then down into your other hand. Practice tossing in both directions. Hint: Keep your eyes in a soft-focus stare and watch the ball with your peripheral vision.
6. Cradle a ball in each hand. Toss the ball in your right hand in an arc toward your left (vice versa if you're left-handed). Just after the ball peaks, toss the ball in your left hand in a similar arc to your right, so it passes under and just to the right of the descending ball. As you follow through with your toss, catch the first ball. Then catch the second.

Once you've mastered the exchange, you're almost there. Juggling is really just a series of exchanges.

1. Start with two balls in your right hand, one in the left.
2. Toss the forward ball in your right hand in an arc toward your left. As it starts to descend, toss the single ball in your left hand and catch the descending ball, as in the exchange. Hint: Don't panic. You have more time than you think.
3. As your second ball descends, toss the remaining ball in your right hand in an arc toward your left, then catch the second ball. Toss and catch with the other hand and just keep going. You're juggling!

Troubleshooting!

PROBLEM: YOU JUST CAN'T DO IT

It takes time. Keep practicing, but stop when you get frustrated. Try putting on upbeat music. (Pete and I juggle best to The Beatles. But, hey, whatever gets your beanbags flying.)

PROBLEM: YOU KEEP LURCHING BACK AND FORTH IN AN EFFORT TO CATCH THE BALLS

You're doing the "beginner's walk." The long-term solution is to perfect your throws so they go up, not out. In the meantime, try standing in front of a wall or door.

PROBLEM: THE BALLS SEEM TO BE COMING TOO FAST FOR YOU TO CATCH

Try tossing the balls a little higher. High tosses give you more time for catching. The downside is they are harder to control. As you practice, you'll be able to shorten your tosses.

PROBLEM: YOU FIND YOURSELF CONFUSED BY THE RIOT OF FLYING THINGS BEFORE YOU

Use your peripheral vision. That way you can watch all the balls at once, giving your hands a better shot at catching them.

PROBLEM: YOU'RE TIRED OF BENDING OVER TO PICK UP DROPPED BALLS

Try juggling over a bed, couch, or table.

