

Obstacle Course Part 1

Spatial Words

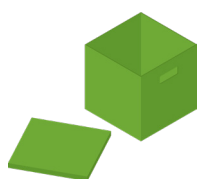
Players 1–4 Ages 4+ 10–15 min

GOAL

- Children learn and practice spatial words
- Set up the obstacle course

MATERIALS

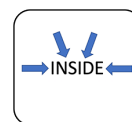
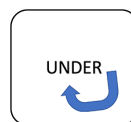
Any medium-to-large items (e.g., boxes, furniture)



One “mystery item” (e.g., toy, book)



Choose or create spatial word cards.



VOCABULARY

Over	Into	Across
Under	Through	
Around	Between	
Inside	Past	

QUESTIONS

Can you go over?
Can you go under?
Can you go around?
Can you go inside?

HOW TO PLAY

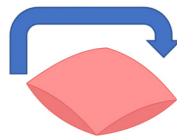
1. Clear a space for the obstacle course on the floor, in the hallway, or outside.

2. Arrange the items for the obstacle course in a path. *Optional:* Use masking tape, washable marker, or sticks to mark the path through the obstacle course.
3. Hide the “mystery item” at the end of the obstacle course.

Say, “I made an obstacle course! I hid a mystery item at the end. You get to choose cards that tell you what to do on the obstacle course. At the end, you can find the mystery item. But first, let’s practice our spatial words.”

4. Choose one item (e.g., a pillow) from the course to use when practicing the spatial words.

Hold up the “over” card and say, “What do you think this card means? This card means that you jump **over** something! Can you show me how you jump **over** the pillow?” Wait for the child to demonstrate **over**.



5. Then, practice the remaining spatial words. Hold up each spatial card, and wait for children to demonstrate its direction.



“Can you show me how you go **under** the pillow?”
“Can you show me how you go **around** the pillow?”
“Can you show me **inside** the pillow?”

6. Let children be creative in how they model each card (e.g., slithering **under** the pillow on the floor like a snake, poking the stuffing of the pillow to show **inside**, etc.). Once children have practiced each spatial word, move on to *Obstacle Course Part 2: The Course!*

TIPS FOR PLAYING

- You can also play this game by creating a mini obstacle course out of smaller objects, such as toys, books, or clothing. Instead of having the children navigate the course themselves, they can

guide a small figurine or toy animal through the course to find the mystery item. Playing this way saves space and can allow more children to play at the same time.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE LEARNING

- Early spatial skills predict children's later success in science, engineering, technology, and math.
- Spatial language helps us describe where things (or people) are in space: try using words like "above," "under," "between," "beside," "around," "up," and "down" when you describe the location of a person or object!
- Hearing, learning, and using spatial language helps children develop the spatial skills they need in elementary school.

MATH TOPICS

Spatial Relations

Measurement

VIDEO



Watch Game Video

View the QR code in your smartphone's camera app or QR code reader to watch a video that shows how to play *Obstacle Course Part 1*.

Obstacle Course Part 2

The Course

Players 1–4



Ages 4+



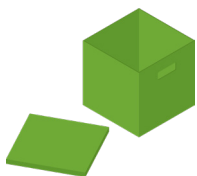
10–15 min

GOAL

Children use spatial language to move through an obstacle course.

MATERIALS

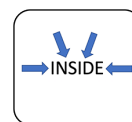
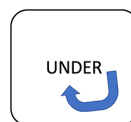
Any medium-to-large items (e.g., boxes, furniture)



One “mystery item” (e.g., toy, book)



Spatial word cards



VOCABULARY

Over

Under

Around

Inside

QUESTIONS

How did you know where to go?

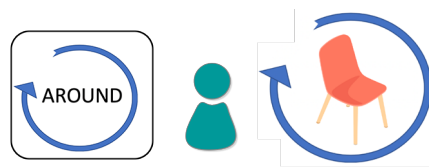
Can you describe where you walked?

HOW TO PLAY

1. Set up the obstacle course from **Obstacle Course Part 1** with the “mystery item” hidden at the end point.

2. Say, "Now it's time for you to go through the obstacle course! There is a mystery item at the end of the obstacle course for you to find. You get to choose how to move through the obstacle course by choosing a spatial card at each step."
3. Have the child approach the first item in the obstacle course. Hold out the four spatial cards, and ask the child to choose one card. The child navigates the obstacle according to the spatial word.

"You chose **around**! Can you show me how you go **around** the chair?"



4. Once the child completes the motion on the spatial card, have them go to the next step of the obstacle course. At each remaining step, have the child choose a spatial word card and navigate the step according to the card.
5. At the final step, have the child look for and retrieve the mystery item. Ask,



"Where was the mystery item? Was it **inside**, **next to**, or **between**? Can you describe your path through the obstacle course using spatial words?"

Note: You can help children by asking questions like, "Did you jump **over** or **under** the pillow?"

6. Once all children have had a turn in the obstacle course, move on to *Obstacle Course Part 3: The Map*!

TIPS FOR PLAYING

- Children can use the spatial word cards more than once or not use them at all. Either way, encourage them to talk about how they are moving through the obstacle course.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE LEARNING

- Hearing, learning, and using spatial language helps children develop the spatial skills they need in elementary school and beyond.
- When children say spatial words *and* act out spatial motions, they are practicing both their mathematics and their language skills.
- Use more challenging spatial descriptions as children are ready. For example, use multiple spatial words in the same sentence: “Can you pick up the sock? It is **under** the table that is **next to** the window.”

MATH TOPICS

Spatial Relations

Measurement

VIDEO



Watch Game Video

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Obstacle Course Part 3

The Map

Players 1–6 Ages 4+ 15–20 min

GOAL

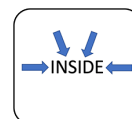
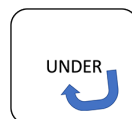
Draw a map of your obstacle course.

MATERIALS

Art materials



Spatial word cards



VOCABULARY

Map
Course
Path

QUESTIONS

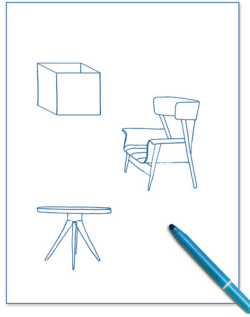
How did you know where on your paper to draw that?
Can you describe your map?

HOW TO PLAY

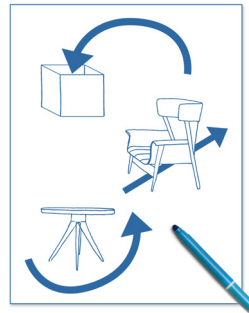
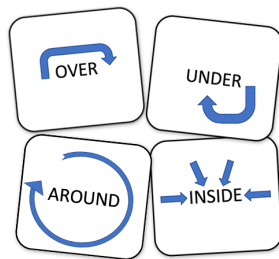
1. Make sure the obstacle course from *Obstacle Course Part 1* is still set up.

Note: If you were not able to make a large obstacle course, you can still do the mapping activity! Just create a mini-obstacle course on the floor or table using figurines, blocks, spoons, or other small objects.

2. Have children look at the entire obstacle course from 1 to 2 feet away. Say, “You finished the obstacle course! Now, can you draw a map of the obstacle course on paper? Once you draw your map, we will use it to help us walk through the course one last time.”



- Children can use the spatial cards to describe their path through the course. Suggest they draw lines or arrows on their paper to show their path.



- Finally, have children use their maps to walk through the obstacle course. At each step, prompt children to use spatial language to describe the step (e.g., “**Now you’re at the chair. Where does your map say to go?**”).

TIPS FOR PLAYING

- Drawing a map takes a lot of practice and experience. Let children gain this experience without helping too much. As children get more experience, you can talk with them about making a plan for their map before they start drawing.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE LEARNING

- Mapmaking is an important skill for preschoolers to practice! Help children learn what maps are by pointing out the maps at bus stops, in stores, and in parks. As you walk around, help children see how the objects and landmarks in front of them correspond to points on a map.

- When children create their own maps, they are representing their 3-D world in a 2-D picture. This helps them build spatial reasoning skills. Encourage them to keep practicing!

MATH TOPICS

Spatial Relations

Measurement

VIDEO



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Obstacle Course Part 2

The Course

Players 1–4



Ages 4+



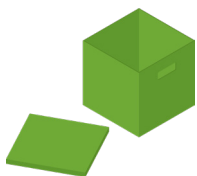
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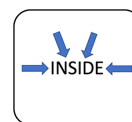
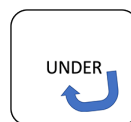
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Spatial word cards



VOCABULARY

Over

Under

Around

Inside

QUESTIONS

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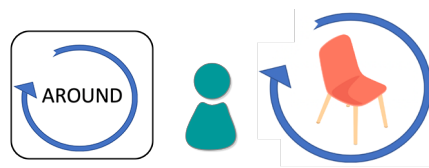
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6. Once all children have had a turn in the obstacle course, move on to *Obstacle Course Part 3: The Map*!

TIPS FOR PLAYING

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Obstacle Course Part 3

The Map

Players 1–6 Ages 4+ 15–20 min

GOAL

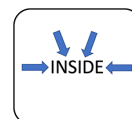
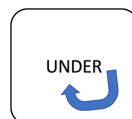
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VOCABULARY

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Course
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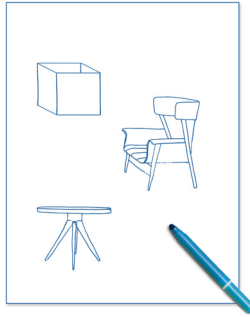
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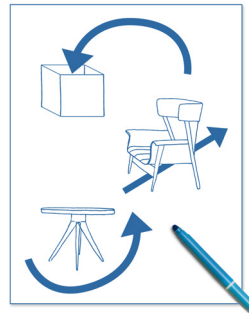
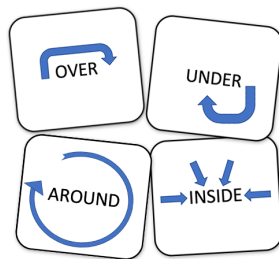
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