

# Get STUCK On The Vinyl Strip Craze!

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Every decade the equipment manufacturers create an object that becomes indispensable to coaches and instructors. In the 1980's it was the trapezoid. The 1990's brought the introduction of the back handspring trainer, AKA Pac Man mat. In the new millennium we've got ***vinyl strips!***

Who, what, where, when, why? Let's look into these curiously inexpensive, multi-use items!

Who: Everyone who teaches gymnastics needs this item! (Pardon the enthusiasm!)  
What: Four inch wide vinyl strips with Velcro or non-skid backing.  
Where: Artistic Coverings Inc, Toll Free 877-599-9343.  
Why: To enhance your teaching environment. See ideas below!  
When: Order now to put to use the ideas in this article!

Vinyl strips are typically sold in 4 or 8 foot lengths of 4-6 inch wide vinyl. They are offered in a rainbow of solid colors or with custom digital printing of graphics applied.

Velcro backing is available for use on carpeted surfaces, while non-skid backing works best for tile flooring. A single 8 foot long strip is priced at approximately \$15. Bundle purchases reduce the price.

A myriad of activities can be performed with vinyl strips. Read on for a sampling of ideas. Your options with vinyl strips are unlimited! With this document as a launching pad, be prepared to gather ideas from your fellow staffers and those precious, spontaneous students!

## Vinyl Strips In-The-Gym Idea Categories

Skill Specific Ideas  
Imaginative Play Ideas  
Games  
Locomotor Skill Station Ideas  
Crowd Control Ideas  
Educational Activities  
Warm-Up Ideas

## Skill Specific Ideas

Effective Instructors often demonstrate skills as they teach. Attempt to do so with the skills listed below. The vinyl strips are a useful teaching aid. Less spotting is required as the students are engaged in a tactile process while learning. The descriptions that follow include Teacher Directed verbal cues.

**Straddle Forward Roll** – Place two vinyl strips on the floor in a V shape. The student begins at the apex of the V. “Walk each foot forward until you’re standing in a Straddle Stand. Next, place both hands on the floor between your feet. Look back where you started! Tuck your chin to roll and end in a Straddle Sit or Straddle Stand. Viola!”

**V-Sit** – Place two vinyl strips on the floor parallel to one another. The students sit on one strip with the second one behind them. “Sit in a Tuck Position on the yellow line. Reach behind to place your hands on the orange line. Are your fingers facing your seat? Great! Now lift up your feet.” Often young children will tip backwards onto their elbows or backs during a V-Sit. Simply remind them that only their *hands* should be touching the orange line.

**Handstand** – Place two vinyl strips on the floor parallel to one another. “Lunge so that your front foot touches the yellow vinyl strip. Reach forward past the yellow line to the white one. Place your hands on the white line while you kick up to your Handstand.” Reverse the action to finish in a Lunge.

**Back Handspring** – Increasing the distance from which the student's hands land from their starting position is a concept Instructors strive to teach. To be concrete about your request to the students, follow this simple guideline for the distance of the hand placement. Ask the student to stand on a white line. Next, have him/her lie on their back. Use a different color vinyl strip to mark a line (parallel to the white line) between the elbows and shoulders on the floor. Next, with the student standing on the white line, spot a Back Handspring. Was the student able to reach their hands to contact the vinyl strip? The visual cue makes an effective “reaching” teaching aid. Group your students by height for this drill.

**Tip Up** – Place two vinyl strips of two different colors parallel to one another on the floor. “Stand on the white line. Look down. Do you see the yellow line in front of you? Great! Now, stand in a Straddle on that white line. Let’s go down our elevator. (End in a cowboyled squat position.) You can touch the floor, if you like. Look here! Let’s put some pretend glue on our knee. Oh, put some on the other knee, too. Can you stick an elbow on each knee? (Make some sound effects!) Wow, show me those big hands while your elbows are stuck to your knees. Super! Next, place those big hands on the yellow line in front of you. Keep your chin up. While your elbows and knees stay stuck together, can you lean forward until your toes come up off of the white line? Watch me. Now, you try. You just did a Tip Up!”

**Tripod and Headstand** – Place three different colored vinyl strips parallel to one another on the floor perpendicular to the students. “Stand on the white line. Can you see the green line right in front of you? Good. What color is the farthest line from you? Red, you’re right! Stand on the white line in a Straddle. Reach down and place your hands on the green line (shoulder width apart). So far so good! Now, place your head on the red line. Keep your eyes open! Talk to me now. Can you see your fingers on the green line? Great! Those Straddle knees look very close to your elbows. Your

elbows are making a little step (if fingers are facing the head, the forearm and upper arm create 90 degree angles). Place a knee on each elbow. If you feel steady, let your toes release the floor. Keep pushing down on your big hands. That will make you steady! Wow, I see lots of Tripods. If you can raise up your feet higher, you'll be doing a Headstand!"

### Imaginative Ideas

- 👍 Drape an assortment of vinyl strips over a low bar. You have created a car wash! As the students pass under the car wash, they can attempt locomotor skills or can sit on a scooter on a wedge mat and roll through the cleaning strips!
- 👍 Use the vinyl strips to create a giant Tic Tac Toe board. Toss a bean bag into each square space of the Tic Tac Toe board. For young children, place numbers or colors within the open squares. To add an element of difficulty, set a laminated skill card in each square. "Whichever square your bean bag lands on, perform that skill."
- 👍 With vinyl strips create a giant diamond. You have created a kick ball field. Establish your bases with large carpet squares, giant cones or safe, heavy markers. Place one child on the pitcher's mound. The remaining students line up at home plate. This will be an 'active' line. Once the at-bat student kicks the ball, it's simply a free-for-all run around the bases! "Touch the bases as you go! Give high 5's to your teammates as you get back into line at home plate." Hint: Do not wait for the running child to complete the base run. Pitch to the next child in order to heighten the number of children who are active at one time.
- 👍 Create a giant V shape on the floor with vinyl strips. Tell the students that this is T Rex's mouth! (For your very young students you can refer to Barney.) Place cut out cardboard triangle "teeth" all around the area and peeking out from under nearby mats. "T rex has lost his teeth! While I play this dinosaur music, gallop around the outside of his giant mouth. When the music stops, try to find ONE tooth. Then bring it to the mouth and place it on his gum." Demonstrate the tooth placement. Music on, students gallop. Music off, students collect one tooth each and place it along the inner edge of the vinyl strips. Take this moment to count the teeth out loud with the students. Next, ask the students to hide the teeth. Repeat the music on/off requiring a new mode of locomotion. After a few attempts at this activity say, "Hey kids, let's see how many people can fit in the mouth of the dinosaur!" Gather the students inside of the V shape and have everyone lie down. Have a good laugh. "Oh, this dinosaur has bad breath. Let's get out of here!" Jump up and run! Additional activity – after you pause to count the teeth, encourage the students to perform that number of Tuck Jumps, Jumping Jacks or similar action.

### Games With Vinyl Strips

- ▶ Keep the vinyl strips rolled up. Set them on the floor. Arrange the students into partners. The object of the game on the “Go” command is for each person to pick up one vinyl strip and make a solid, connected line with their partner. This takes cooperative play skills. Additionally, to challenge an advanced group, see if all of the children can create one long uninterrupted line on the vault runway.
- ▶ Set a large basket or child’s basketball net on the floor. Establish three foul lines of varying distances from the basket. The students can select which line they want to stand on as they attempt to make baskets. Set up multiple basket stations. Supply an assortment of balls. Praise all attempts.
- ▶ Seat a group of 3 kids on the tramp, side by side. Place a vinyl strip with the non-skid backing across their laps. It is their seat belt! Can the kids maintain a tight Pike Sit position as you gently bounce them?
- ▶ Do Line Touches. Arrange a starting line of one color of vinyl strips. Set a second colored line 20 feet away. And a third colored line 35 feet away from the first line. Simply put, you start on the first line, run to the second line. Run quickly back to the first line. Continue running to touch the third line. Run back to the start. Note: Dissuade the students from racing. Change the locomotor movement to backward Jumping or squatting Bunny Jumps to slow down the activity.

### Locomotor Skill Station Ideas


- ☛ Create a pathway with two vinyl strips parallel to one another with a space of two feet between them. The students can move along the open floor space to get to the next station within a circuit.
- ☛ Use the same set up but place the lines closer to one another. Similar to moving along low p-bars (hands and feet in contact with the vinyl strips), have the students attempt Camel Walks, Doggie Walk, Bear Walk, Crab Walk, Inch Worm, or Bunny Jump. Try each of those locomotions backwards, too. To help the students to remember the suggested locomotor skill, simply place a “Doggie Dash” or “Bear Walk” digitally printed Activity Strip across the opening of the pathway.
- ☛ Using a single line to travel along, perform the “Broken Leg Walk,” also known as “See Saw Walk,” with your hands on the floor to either side of the line, and the hopping foot moving along the vinyl strip. With a single vinyl strip on the floor, perform Ski Jumps side to side as you travel forward or backward.
- ☛ Use six vinyl strips to create a zigzag pattern for the children to locomote through to reach the next station within a circuit.
- ☛ Set vinyl strips on the floor to Leap over.


## Crowd Control Ideas


- ⚡ Actual class scenario: During your class you arrive at a circuit full of apparatus stations. The children sit nicely on a low beam to attend to your instructions and demonstrations. When it is time to demonstrate the objective of the low beam station, you simply ask the children to stand on the vinyl strip set behind the low beam on the floor. The children have a concrete object to stand upon and remain orderly. Hence, all eyes are on you, the teacher.
- ⚡ During Warm-ups instead of standing in a circle formation, create a giant triangle on the floor made out of vinyl strips. With the teacher standing on one point of the triangle, all children will be in view. When the children have a specific location for their feet, there are usually less disruptions.
- ⚡ Safe Landing Position, SLP, practice off of a tumble track. Allow the students to practice traveling position jumps *over* vinyl strips set on the track. On the landing mat create a vinyl strip triangle. The challenge is to land in the triangle balanced in the “Safety Stop” position.

## Educational Activities


The KAT and MELPD workshops offered by USA Gymnastics as continuing education for Preschool Instructors offer a plethora of information in meeting children’s needs as an Instructor. A portion of the workshop discusses how children learn in an integrated fashion. Aside from children learning in a kinetic fashion with an emphasis on physical skill development, children also learn cognitively and social/affectively. To appeal to the ‘whole child,’ include the following educational activities in your gym curriculum. You can tout these activities to your clients as kindergarten preparatory activities.

 Create shapes, numbers, or letters with the vinyl strips. Possible shapes are triangle, square, rectangle, diamond, star, trapezoid, hexagon, and octagon. An engaging song to use, “I Spy Shapes” is available on the CD Smart Songs 1 by Angela Russ of [abridgeclub.com](http://abridgeclub.com). Possible numbers are one, four, and seven. There are 15 letters to create. With the letter **I** on the floor you can request that the children do a **I**uck Forward Roll along the vinyl letter.

 Practice color recognition. Scatter solid colored vinyl strips on your open floor space. Play the “I Spy” game by saying, “I spy the color orange. Can YOU find it?” Another approach is to use two songs by Angela Russ of [abridgeclub.com](http://abridgeclub.com). On the Smart Moves 1 CD use the song “Can You Find The Color?” and on the Smart Songs 2 CD use the “I Spy Colors” song. The former song not only has the students seeking the color, but once they get to the vinyl strip they are asked to perform a movement.

 For a social twist to class, arrange parallel lines of vinyl strips on the floor. Arrange the students into partners. One person stands on the red line. The partner stands on the purple line facing their friend. Lead the students through partner hand clapping activities. For older students, command the red line of students to be the Thinkers. The purple line of students are the Mirrors. The students on the purple line mimic every









move that their Thinking partner makes. Encourage the “Thinker” students to perform balances, facial expressions and the like. Rename the lines so that the purple line students are the Thinkers, while the red line students are the Mirrors.

 Another enjoyable social activity is for pairs of students to have parallel lines to stand upon. While facing each other and holding hands, ask the students to slide sideways to the right and left. Next, with the kids standing side by side holding hands ask them to locomote together towards the ends of their beams. Challenge the partners to think of additional movements.

### Warm-Up Ideas

*Sideways City* = create a giant rectangle with six vinyl strips in the center of a floor space. Within the rectangle set a cone with a stop sign, a tricycle and a few stuffed animals. Line the students up on the edge of the floor. Announce to the students that today is “Sideways Day” at gymnastics. “Can you see our Sideways City? All the people who live there do **everything** SIDEWAYS! Would you like to visit this City?”

“Let’s walk SIDEWAYS over to the City.” Proceed to lead the children to the City. When you arrive at the City walls attempt the following lateral movements.

-  With your feet on the carpet, WALK SIDEWAYS around the outside of the City with eyes looking at the City. Change directions.
-  Move more quickly by taking your SIDEWAYS WALKING and turn it into SLIDING SIDEWAYS. Go to left and right.
-  Continue to perform other upright locomotor movements sideways such as JUMPING and MARCHING.
-  Stand on the City wall and balance doing a SIDE SCALE. Switch to the other leg.
-  Stand facing the City, feet outside, place hands inside the City. DOGGIE WALK SIDEWAYS to the right then the left. Advanced students can try to do the SPIRAL WALK = begin in the Doggie position (eyes facing the floor), reach right hand and right foot up and over to your other side to end in a CRAB POSITION (face up to ceiling). Repeat.
-  Sit in a Tuck on the City wall with your feet inside the City and your hands outside of the City. CRAB WALK SIDEWAYS.
-  Lie on the City wall with your belly button touching the wall. Stretch your arms towards the center of the City, with feet outside of the City. LOG ROLL to the left and right. Aid the group in all rolling in the same direction.
-  Just for fun for prep of doing an Egg Roll, sit in a Tuck on the City wall. Chant the Humpty Dumpty rhyme as you Rock and Roll forward and backward. Roll backwards and ‘crack’ open (stretch limbs out). Next, show the kids how to sit on their shins on the wall. Demonstrate the EGG ROLL. Try it to the left and right.



Stand on the City wall and teach the GRAPEVINE STEP. Travel in each direction. Be aware that “rightie” children will prefer to travel to the left. This is a result of the dominant right foot crossing the body’s midline to initiate the step. Vice versa for “lefties.”

Cartwheel progressions:



Ask each child to stand beside the City wall. JUMP SIDEWAYS in and out of the City.



Squat down and hold onto the City wall and JUMP SIDEWAYS in and out of the City. Stand up and do a TA DA! “Guess what? You just did a mini-Cartwheel! Congratulations!”



Spread the students apart. Begin in a Lunge facing the City and practice big cartwheels into and out of the City! “Can you hear all of the Sideways City people clapping for you? Great job!”

*Vinyl Strips Arranged Like A Flower* = Place the vinyl strips on a large open space in a petal formation. With older students use two strips end to end per petal. Begin the activity with the children running around the outside of the flower. Next, place one student on the far end of each petal. If the class is large, pair up the students. Perform locomotor movements along the petal to and from the center of the flower. The emphasis is on staying on the petal, not touching the carpet. (It is lots of fun to place a giant stuffed bug in the center of the flower. This aids in keeping the students eye focus up.) Next, request the students to stand still upon their petal. Explain about working on higher balance beams. It is necessary to learn how to fall properly. We never fall to our knees, bottoms, or tummies. Teach the children how to jump off of their petal and land in a Safety Stop pose (SLP). Remind them not to touch the floor nor their ‘beam’ with their hands as they fall to the ground. To end the activity, show the children how to run in a circle traveling **over** the vinyl strips. They will be leaping! **PHOTO**

*Sidewalk Relays* = Organize this set-up prior to the start of class. Create a starting line for the students to stand upon side by side. Place numerous vinyl strips perpendicular to the starting line to create a bowling alley effect or parallel sidewalks. Establish one sidewalk per child. Place a marker (cone, hoop) at the end of each sidewalk so that the students do not run past the space and into another area of the gym. Line the students up at the starting point. Be specific about self space, “This is Billy’s sidewalk. This is Amanda’s sidewalk.” Establish a “Go” command. Call out various locomotor movements to perform down the sidewalk and back again. Once the kids have the hang of it, require a skill or movement at the marker, “When you get to your hoop, do 3 Straddle Jumps.”

There you are! You are now equipped with an assortment of ideas to use in class, during camps or for birthday parties.

Great news for the coaches of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; throw away your sidewalk chalk and white carpet tape! There's longer a need to mark up the gym carpet and mats with chalk and tape. Vinyl strips are here to meet the need.

Where did all of this begin? Back in 1984 I owned a gym in Arizona called Gym Dandy's. Bela Karolyi was selling blue foam floor beams as training aids. Budgeting meant that these floppy blue foam beams would be the center of my "beam area." Ideas popped into my head and those poor beams got tons of use. Where are the decades old beams now? In my basement acting as casters for old furniture!

Alas the gymnastic vendors have stepped in and created an inexpensive, multi-use item for gymnastic Instructors to use.

Join me and get out of the '80's and into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Acquire vinyl strips and get stuck on the **vinyl strip** craze! To purchase vinyl strips, contact the sales department at Artistic Coverings toll free at 877-599-9343 or order on line at their website.

A grand "thank you" to the gymnasts at Double 'D' Gymnastics. The models are Molly McFadden, Jordin Sellen, and triplets Alyssa, Corey and Brian Manzano. Note, Jordin, who is profoundly deaf, is assisted in listening with a cochlear implant. Also, I am indebted to the "word-meisters" at Double 'D' who proofed this article: Kevin Brodie, Davies Desiderio, Betsy Kamin, and Anna Marie Kapustiak. Thanks guys!

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