

## SOUND STEPS

Item # 39037

Colorful stepping pads are great for encouraging proprioceptive activity in the feet. They are beneficial to both neuro-typical and special needs populations for helping to develop balance, core stability and ankle stability, making them perfect for inclusion gymnastics classes. The cushioned surface of each pad allows for gentle proprioceptive movement. Kids love them, and respond well to the auditory component. Additionally, they make great props for color recognition and sequencing activities.



### **Balance:**

Step or jump from pad to pad, and hold balance positions on each pad. Positions should be developmentally appropriate for the student. Examples of hold positions include straight stand, tuck stand, passé, cupé, arabesque, scale, relevé or adapted needle with both hands holding both ankles. Allow time for proprioceptive activity to engage. Hold for as long as the student can maintain position. Encourage team-building by using the timed holds as a group activity, adding times together for a cumulative total.

### **Core Stability:**

Utilizing uneven or unstable surfaces aids in the development of core stability and forces the student to center themselves in order to maintain balance in an upright position. Place the sound steps into set ups, creating pathways. This encourages the student to follow the designated path and cross the unstable surface of the sound steps. Vary the surface stabilities with other mats, or stepping stones to help the student adapt their movement and utilize their center of gravity for core stability.

### **Color Recognition and Sequencing:**

Sequencing is an important skill in the development of mathematics skills, reading and critical thinking. Create a color path out of the sound steps. Repeat the same color sequence in other activities such as stringing beads. This establishes a known sequence for the student to recognize. Say the name of the color or have the student say the name of the color as they move from sound step to sound step. After students have had the chance to memorize the sequence, change the order of the steps and ask the kids to follow the same sequence as before. This forces students to jump, stretch or problem solve their way across the steps in order to maintain the correct sequence of color.

**Auditory:**

The auditory component of the sound steps is not only fun, but is also beneficial for students with visual impairments. Create a path from station to station utilizing the sound steps to guide your students from one activity station to another. Proprioceptive and vestibular development is especially important for those who have limited visual input.

***Beth Gardiner** brings an impressive array of experience and professional affiliations in the gymnastics world, spanning three decades. As owner of Heart of Texas Gymnastics Beth specializes in preschool gymnastics, recreational, compulsory team and special needs gymnastics. Her child-first philosophy and skill-based curriculum have proven effective in building dynamic and highly successful gymnastics programs. Through these, and as a volunteer with Special Olympics and other private organizations, she regularly works with children and adults who have disabilities, researching ways to serve the special needs population in the gym environment. Beth has also served as a USA Gymnastics National Instructor since 1997 and is a 1983 graduate of Texas A&M University.*