

Active Play

Active Play is a vigorous form of play that can be social or solitary. It helps children develop Fundamental Movement Skills or gross motor skills. And, it's fun!

Active Play is also important for the healthy growth and development of all children, including:

Strengthens bones, muscles and joints

Enhances brain development

Reduces obesity risk

Enhances social interactions

- Cooperation
- Self-control
- Negotiation
- Follow rules
- Behavior management

Enhances Learning

- Reasoning
- Decision making
- Language skills
- New concepts and words
- Problem solving

How much Active Play is recommended?

- 60 minutes or more of *structured* or adult directed activities
- 60 minutes or more of *unstructured* or child directed activities
- Daily

Adult modeling is essential to Active Play promotion for children.

Parents, teachers, and other significant adults act as role models. They also:

- Are important Active Play partners
- Provide opportunities for practicing fundamental movement skills
- Can offer guidance

What can I do to promote active play?

- **P**rompt children to move and play
- Be **e**nthusiastic
- **P**raise children's efforts
- Be a good role model by saying and doing
 - Talk about what you like to do to be active
 - Engage children in Active Play whenever possible
- Promote movement when counseling parents

What are the Fundamental Movement Skills?

Locomotor: Moving one's body through space

Creep	Jump	Somersault
Crawl	Hop	
Roll	Leap	
Walk	Slide	
Run	Skate	
March	Skip	
Climb	Gallop	

Non-Locomotor: Stationary, with or without an object (ball, for instance) or implement (bat or racquet, for example)

Roll a ball	Sit
Bounce	Stand
Toss	Push
Throw	Pull
Trap	Lift
Catch	Curl
Strike	Squat
Kick	Dribble
Volley	

Stability: Balance, strength and flexibility

Stretch	Swing
Bend	Sway
Reach	Fall
Lift	Balance
Twist	
Turn	

Children become more adept at the fundamental movement skills with practice. The skills also build upon each other: walking comes before running, and tossing (underhand) typically comes before throwing (overhand). Proficiency at the fundamental movement skills is also necessary for success in more complex activities, like sports and dance.

Children who live in crowded spaces or places that lack parks and green space may not have enough opportunities to be active. Share ideas for indoor play with parents and caregivers to give these children ample opportunities to play actively and to learn fundamental movement skills.

Promoting Active Play Anywhere!

When encouraging families to engage in Active Play at home or when planning a family fit fun event, there are several things to consider.

What is the setting:

Indoors- limit running and tag activities

Outdoors- temperature and humidity can limit intensity of effort

In a center – throwing hard objects or ball games might be off limits if there are windows

In a home or apartment- activities that require little space are essential; try pretend games

What's the play area like:

Concrete- can be enhanced with sidewalk chalk, but falling can be a problem for less coordinated children

Grass- perfect for most running activities

Carpet- use colored duct tape to create balance beams, hopscotch, etc.

Hard floors- watch out for slipping

Boundaries- create boundaries, especially in big play areas, like parks or fields; especially important for young children

How many participants:

Number of children- the more children, the more equipment needed to keep all active

Age range of children- the greater the range, the greater the variance in abilities

Abilities- plan games or activities that allow children to experience success at all levels

Number of adults- the more children playing, the more adults are needed, both for supervision and for keeping them engaged

What equipment is needed:

What's available- is there any equipment on hand

Purchase- anything that cannot be made

Make it- lots of stuff can be made as a substitute for expensive equipment

Some favorite equipment, cheap or free!

Bubble wrap- great on hard surfaces; children love to hop, jump and stomp

Duct tape- create patterns, shapes, targets and games on carpets

Foam noodles- excellent as implements, hockey stick, bat, golf club

Sidewalk chalk- create colorful play spaces on concrete and asphalt

Boxes- use as targets; objects to climb over, under, around, etc.

Hula hoops- use a target for tossing, or as a personal space marker

Bean bags- great for tossing at targets; balance on head or shoulders; substitute small stuffed toys

Beach balls- great for tossing, striking, kicking, and other games

Bubbles- children love to chase, catch and pop bubbles

Frisbees or paper plates- place one under each foot to skate or use as a steering wheel for make believe car driving

Yarn Balls (made from yarn plus a cardboard pattern)- use to toss, catch, throw, hit or bat, especially nice for indoor or small play spaces

Margarine Tubs- use as hockey pucks, especially on hard floors

Newspaper + Duct Tape- Wad the newspaper, wrap with duct tape to make easy to catch balls, or fill a plastic bag with styrofoam peanuts & wrap with duct tape to form a ball

Gift Wrap Rolls- use as obstacles to jump over or as implements to bat or hit with

Old Socks- use old socks, knotted or rolled up, as balls or as a substitute for bean bags

Bed Sheet or beach towel- knot the corners and use for parachute play

Calming activities- Alphabet Yoga, balancing on one foot and other activities that require focus and body control help children to calm down. These activities are also useful when you have large groups of children playing and you need to get their attention. They also provide a rest or cool down activity after a more strenuous activity like tag.

For Alphabet Yoga, instruct children to make a specific letter using their bodies. The letter "T" for example, is made with both arms extended out to the sides of the body and standing tall. Challenge children to spell their names using Alphabet Yoga.

Helpful reminders-

Be a role model for adults and children by doing the activities yourself, whether demonstrating in your center or at a community event.

Keep activities simple and rules and instructions at a minimum. Allow children to make changes to the activities you plan, as long as everyone can play safely.

Minimize waiting. All children should be engaged all or most of the time.

Repetition is fine. If children want to repeat certain activities, allow it.

No elimination games! Find a way to make even old school games cooperative and keep everyone involved.

Invite adults to play. Some adults have had negative movement experiences. Help them rediscover the joy of moving with a child.

If you are planning a family or community event- promote it. Don't assume people will come. They can't imagine how much fun they'll have playing a game of tag.

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