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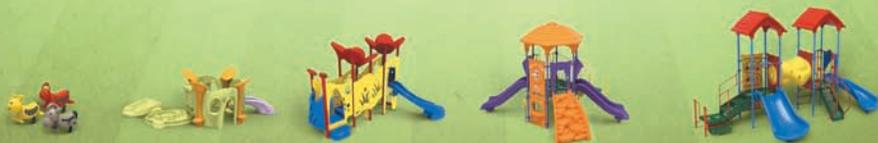
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101

FOR INCREASING PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

TIPS



Tip #7.

Take children outdoors to play as much as possible each day.



Preschool children love to move, and young bodies need to move! By exploring, discovering and using everything they come in contact with at home or in the classroom, children learn. Acquiring motor skills involves the introduction of new concepts and skills, exploring those skills physically and applying the movements to a variety of simple games and cooperative movement activities. When early childhood caregivers model and teach the importance of physical activity, young children are more likely to adopt a lifetime of healthful practices and behaviors.

The following 101 tips, published by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and Playworld Systems, were collected from numerous early childhood movement experts to help teachers and caregivers plan and provide age-appropriate physical activity experiences.

Provide Developmentally Appropriate Movement Opportunities

1. Appreciate the important role of movement in young children's development.
2. Recognize children's differing movement capabilities and promote learning experiences that challenge each child to move to the next level of individual development.
3. Provide daily physical activities for infants that enable them to explore movement and the environment.
4. Plan for at least 30 minutes of structured physical activity and from 60 minutes to several hours of unstructured physical activity each day for toddlers.
 5. Prepare for at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity and from 60 minutes to several hours of unstructured physical activity each day for preschoolers.
 6. Foster a feeling of success within each child through movement.



Maximize the Environment for Play

7. Take children outdoors to play as much as possible each day.
8. Paint game markings, such as for hopscotch, on safe surfaces.
9. Offer natural elements such as grass and trees in the outdoor play space.
10. Organize chase-and-flee games, when space allows, for children to raise their heart rates.
11. Create safe indoor spaces for physical activity. Even small spaces work for movements such as jumping, twisting, dancing and running in place.
12. Use soft pieces of equipment (e.g., lightweight balls for throwing at wall targets, beanbags for tossing and catching) for indoor play.
13. Play age-appropriate music to liven up the environment and inspire movement.
14. Decorate the walls with photographs or pictures of young children being active.
15. Plan several walking field trips to nearby parks.
16. Secure equipment in easy access storage bins.

Be Creative With Equipment

17. Collect age-appropriate manipulative equipment, such as balls, beanbags and hoops.
18. Make home-made equipment, such as sock balls, yarn balls and cardboard boxes.
19. Modify equipment (e.g., under-inflate beach balls) for greater success.



Tip #21.

Teach children how to use one piece of equipment in multiple ways, (e.g., using a ball to throw, toss, roll, bounce and dribble).



20. Use ordinary objects as equipment (e.g., wide masking tape as a balance beam).

21. Teach children how to use one piece of equipment in multiple ways, (e.g., rolling, bouncing, tossing, throwing and dribbling a ball).

22. Use equipment to teach spatial awareness and relationships such as over, under and around.

23. Show children how to use equipment creatively. For example, a jump rope does not have to pass over one's head; it can be placed on the ground for jumping over or squiggled at ground level for slightly more challenging jumping.

24. Give children a variety of equipment and let them make up their own games.

25. Use props such as puppets and costumes to add excitement.

26. Have scooters, tricycles and riding toys available outdoors.

Make Safety a Priority

27. Provide adequate and active supervision.

28. Use age-appropriate equipment that is the right size and weight.

29. Mark and teach about play-space boundaries.

30. Establish start and stop signals, and a process to bring children back to you (e.g., the sound of a horn or when the music stops playing).

31. Discuss playground rules and the consequences for breaking them.

32. Inspect the outdoor play space regularly to identify and eliminate safety hazards.

33. Check environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, humidity, ground surface) before going outside to play.

34. Practice sun safety by using shade and sunscreen.

35. Familiarize yourself with the children's medical conditions as they affect physical activity participation.

36. Have an emergency action plan in place.

37. Keep a first-aid kit on hand.

38. Equip yourself to communicate easily with staff who are indoors (e.g., use a walkie-talkie).

Use Play-to-Teach Social Skills

39. Use cooperative activities to create a supportive environment.

40. Use games to teach the concept of buddy, partner or a pal.

41. Choose games that keep most students active rather than low-activity games such as Red Rover and Duck, Duck, Goose.

42. Model the use of positive language during game play.

43. Teach children to encourage and praise one another.

44. When introducing an activity, model how to share and take turns.

45. Involve children who have been excluded by others.

46. Help children resolve conflict through discussion and compromise.



Provide Instruction During Structured Play

47. Keep instruction and directions simple and concise.
48. Position yourself to be seen and heard when giving instructions.
49. Use quick and non-threatening methods to place students into pairs or small groups, (e.g., "Stand back to back with someone who is wearing the same color shirt as you").
50. Make the process of distributing and collecting equipment part of the activity.
51. Start with the basics: personal space, direction (e.g., forward, backward, sideways) and speed.
52. Introduce pathways (e.g., straight, zigzag, circular) and levels (e.g., low, medium, high).
53. Ask children to make various shapes (e.g., wide, long, curled, twisted) with their bodies.
54. Have children mimic moving objects, such as a kite, car or butterfly.
55. Play simple songs for children to help them perform creative movement.
56. Use movement-exploration techniques, such as "How can you move from here to there?" and "Show me all the ways that you can move the ball."
57. Teach and practice basic movement skills, such as walk, march, jump, hop, gallop and slide.
58. Present non-locomotor movements, such as bending, reaching, stretching and swaying.
59. Circulate among the children to provide feedback and encouragement.
60. Provide positive comments before corrective feedback.



61. Give very specific feedback (e.g., "Remember that hopping uses only one foot," instead of "Remember to hop and not jump").

62. Join in and play with the children periodically. Share in their joy for play.

Integrate Physical Activity Into the Curriculum

63. Use movement vocabulary, such as "balance," "sideways," "low-level," and "curved pathway."
64. On the class word wall, list the names of skills and concepts that children have practiced.
65. Teach the proper names of body parts when children use them to move.
66. Introduce some basic body organs and functions that relate to movement, (e.g., heart, lungs, muscles and bones).
67. Use colors, letters and numbers during movement activities and games.
68. Read action books aloud so that children can move to the words in a variety of creative ways.
69. Ask the children to draw pictures of people moving and playing.
70. Lead the children in performing cultural dances, such as the Mexican Hat Dance.
71. Include motor skill challenges during transition times (e.g., "Please hop back to your seat").



Tip #90.

Encourage parents to be physically active role models and select family activities that include physical activity such as walking, bike-riding and playing catch.



Be Reflective and Flexible

72. After each lesson, ask yourself what did and didn't go well and why.

73. Make notes about different strategies and/or activities to try the next time.

74. Ask the children what they enjoyed most, least and why.

75. List newly learned games so that students can select an activity by name at a future time.

76. To the extent possible, provide children with physical activity choices.

77. Adjust game play to safely fit into larger and smaller spaces.

78. Modify rules to simplify a game and make it age-appropriate.

79. Change elimination games to inclusion games to keep all kids active. Play Freeze Tag, in which players "unfreeze" frozen players, for example, instead of "tag, you're out."

Talk About and Practice Healthy Eating

80. Teach children about the need to drink water for proper hydration.

81. Explain how some foods provide energy for movement.

82. Require hand-washing before meals and snacks.

83. Model and expect good table manners.

84. Provide food-tasting opportunities. (This can be a family event, too.)

Involve Parents and Families

85. Remind parents that children should come to school with proper outdoor clothing (e.g., heavy jacket, hat, gloves) so that they can play outside even in cool weather.

86. Organize a child/parent outdoor family fitness walk.

87. Send home physical activity and healthy eating tips and ideas. The Head Start/Body Start early-childhood physical activity monthly calendar (www.headstartbodystart.org) is one tool.

88. Inform parents that research shows that children are most active when outside.

89. Remind parents that children can increase their levels of vitamin D by playing outdoors.

90. Encourage parents to be physically active role models and select family activities that include physical activity such as walking, bike-riding and playing catch.

91. Help parents identify free community venues for physical activity, such as parks and walking/biking trails.

92. Remind parents to incorporate activity into their family vacations, including hiking in the mountains and swimming in the lake/ocean.

93. Make physical activity the focus of warm-weather birthday parties, including running through the sprinkler, hide 'n' seek, and an outdoor scavenger hunt.



Employ Existing Resources

94. Check out the Head Start/Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play, at www.headstartbodystart.org.
95. Visit the National Association for Sport and Physical Education at www.naspeinfo.org.
96. Find information at the International Play Association – USA Affiliate, www.ipausa.org.
97. Get resources from PE Central, www.pecentral.org.
98. Join the physically active lifestyle award program at the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition at www.fitness.gov.
99. Visit www.naeyc.org for early childhood resources.
100. Obtain teaching tools from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Team Nutrition Web site, www.fns.usda.gov/TN.
101. Leave children smiling and wanting more!

Find more resources
at www.naspeinfo.org



National Association for Sport and Physical Education

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