

LET'S GO OUTSIDE!

Playground Time is NOT Wasted Time!

Did you know that a recent survey indicated that 40% of our schools have considered eliminating recess?



WHY DO CHILDREN NEED TO BE OUTSIDE??

1. It's where they will experience nature!
2. It's where they will cultivate environmental values!
3. It's where we evolved from!
4. Children are physical beings!
5. Inactivity often gives the false impression of hyperactivity!
6. There is freedom in outdoor play!
7. It is where we connect with our community!

FOUR SOCIAL FACTORS THAT HAVE INHIBITED OUTDOOR PLAY:

1. Vanishing outdoor play habitats
2. Traffic is limiting to outdoor play and cars limit socialization
3. There are more people and less play space
4. School and work schedules inhibit outdoor playtime

THE "3E'S" AND HOW THEY RELATE TO OUTDOOR PLAY

EGO: What if today was their only day? What will they take with them? Question everything you do! Why do we need to clean up in five minutes? Why is it time to go in? Why can't we eat lunch outside today? Why do we have to "line-up"? Why can't I swing on my tummy? Why can't I hold the hose myself?? Are their real reasons for these rules and limitations, or is it easier to just say NO?

ENVIRONMENT: There are two parts to this E. The first is logistical; make sure you have enough of the supplies necessary for an outdoor play setting: chalk, bikes, shovels, swings, sand, buckets, etc. The second part is philosophical; DOES THE ENVIRONMENT REFLECT THE PEOPLE WHO SPEND THE MOST TIME IN IT? Do the children have long periods of uninterrupted free time? How long is long? Are there cozy corners behind shady trees where they *think* you can't see them?? Do they have opportunities for risk and challenges? Do rigid schedules limit the length and frequency of the children's outside playtime?

EXPERIENCES: Children need to be engaged in experiences that are meaningful to them! The challenge is that sometimes what is meaningful to children is NOT what is meaningful to adults, things like spinning and jumping and twisting and climbing and running! As grown-ups we have childhood amnesia! As educators it is essential that we re-connect with the "pre" - remembering what it was like before we knew everything!!! What was it like to see a bubble for the first time? To *finally* touch our feet to the bike pedals? To make it across the monkey bars without falling?? Reconnecting with these things allow us to be better teachers and educators.

Climbing big rocks, mucking in puddles, whacking sticks on trees, collecting acorns, pinecones, wallowing...all are perfect opportunities for children to be learning natural science
Gail McClelland Fenton, *Young Children*, March 1996

A FEW OF MY FAVORITE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Painting:

1. paper under the swings for "on your tummy painting" (physics, pendulum, creativity, brain development)
2. newspaper brushes at the easel (creativity, dramatic play)
3. fly swatter painting at the easel or mural (creativity)
4. spatter brush painting at the easel or a mural (creativity)
5. bike riding painting. mural paper works best, process only, the paper usually gets torn to shreds! this is a good lead-in to a "bike wash" (large motor, creativity, dramatic play)
6. nylon splat prints from off the structure (gravity, color mixing, socialization, physics)
7. painting on the window (socialization, creativity)
8. feet painting, on paper, on a sheet, on mural paper (socialization, balance, music, creativity, large motor)

Bean bags and big water jugs: cut the "mouth" off a gallon milk jug or water bottle. This becomes a bean bag toss game, a scoop, a funnel, a hat, a megaphone..... (science, dramatic play, coordination, large motor, moving from solitary to parallel to group play)

Recycled tin cans filled with water for "painting" (evaporation, absorption, hand/eye coordination)

Bubbles: (surface tension, science, creativity, socialization) use tp tubes, berry baskets, 6 pack rings, flyswatters, styrofoam cups with straws poked in them, plastic tubing and funnels.

Spaghetti throw: (hand eye coordination, fine motor grasping, creativity, velocity) dip cooked spaghetti into trays of tempera paint. 1-2-3 throw! Listen to the spaghetti SMACK that paper!

Obstacle course: milk crates, carpet squares, cones, spools, tires, hoops, (large motor, loose parts)

Sidewalk chalk: trace bodies, toys, stuff and shadows. (socialization, pre writing)

Ice Castles: (melting, actions and reactions) Fill the sensory tubs with ice blocks and add rock salt and colored water for additional exploration.

Clean Mud: 3-4 bars of grated Ivory Soap, 2-3 rolls of toilet paper and a gallon of Hot/Warm water. Mix until foamy and feels like cool whip! Cover at night and reconstitute with hot water the next day to use again. Dump in the garbage NOT DOWN THE DRAIN after a few days of exploration.

Loose Parts ANYTHING the kids have creative control over and can manipulate and drag around and organize themselves! Include any of the following: buckets, pvc piping, planks, wood, containers, cups, gutter, hub caps, sparkletts bottles, plastic tubing, milk crates, sheets, blankets, carpet squares, boxes and funnels!

Bring Lisa Murphy, the Ooey Goey Lady, to your next conference, parent night, in-service or staff workshop. For more information please contact her at:

LEARNING THROUGH ADVENTURE

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Child's Name _____

Date _____

**KINESTHETIC AWARENESS
Compensatory Strategies**

GYM, SPORTS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Purpose

To improve ability to participate in gym and sport activities that require kinesthetic awareness of position and movement of body parts

Strategies

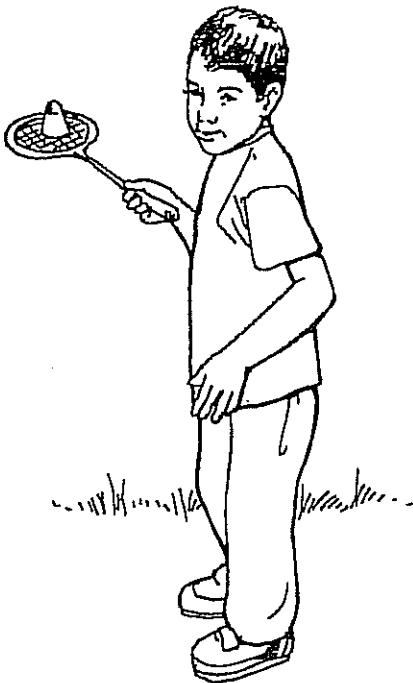
If child has difficulty feeling and guiding position and movement accurately due to kinesthetic weakness, modify activities so that:

- Other sensory information can guide the child's movement.
- The accuracy requirements for positioning or movement are minimized.
- The activity can be accomplished using simpler movements.

Adaptations

Because these activities involve an area of known weakness, be sure they are taught in a noncompetitive and individualized manner. The following are a few examples of this kind of modification.

1. Activities such as gymnastics, karate, and dance, which rely heavily upon internal awareness of body position, often can be performed more easily in front of a mirror so that movement can be guided visually.
2. When playing ball games, if an arm or leg must be directed toward a ball or target, the child must direct movement kinesthetically so that visual attention can be directed at the ball (when hitting a baseball with a bat) or on the target (when shooting baskets in basketball). Modify so that spatial demands of directing the arm are decreased. For example, use a T to hold the ball while watching the bat swing; use a larger bat or ball; lower the basket or use a smaller ball for basketball.
3. When serving balls (as in tennis, badminton, and volleyball), visual attention is focused on the ball or shuttlecock while the arm is moving. This can be simplified by throwing (for volleyball) or placing the ball or shuttlecock on the racket and throwing (for tennis or badminton).



Desired Response

Child is able to participate in sports without frustration or embarrassment.

Use of these activities should be directed by a qualified therapist.

3. Child rubs crayon on paper over textured shape template. (These are commercially available in a variety of animal, car, dinosaur, and other shapes.) If too much pressure is used, the paper is likely to rip; if too little pressure is used, the image does not come through clearly onto the paper. After achieving the "perfect" pressure when watching, child tries to maintain the same pressure without looking. Adult can point out inconsistencies in pressure which are visible as dark or light places on the completed rubbing, and child can try to make one with more consistent coloring.
4. Follow these activities with writing practice or a written classroom assignment. When the writing activity is completed, encourage child to identify whether correct pressure was used.

Desired Response

Child uses consistent moderate pressure on the writing implement with eyes open and closed.

Undesired Response

Child repeatedly changes force exerted in response to visual feedback that pressure is too light or heavy.

Use of these activities should be directed by a qualified therapist.

PARENT DIRECTED ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

BALANCE ACTIVITIES

- Play a balance game in which your child pretends to be a tight rope walker and walks along a line or string placed on the floor. See if she can walk along a narrow board on the ground; try it with eyes open, closed. Walk with both hands on hips and then on shoulders.
- Animal walk: Trot like a pony; hop like a frog, crab walk, bear walk-- Forward and backward; Bunny hop to a target.
- Have her jump a certain distance on one foot, then back on the other foot. See if she can stand on one foot and balance for a short time.
- Play "Statue" with her and have her "freeze" while in mid-stride.
- Play on a mini-tramp; first in sitting, then in kneeling, then standing while holding hands with a partner that is not on the tramp.
- Box activities: Create an obstacle course--over and under, standing and crawling through the course. Box races: pushing and pulling, one foot in and one foot out of a box or one foot in one box and the other foot in another box as if skating.
- Hip Hop: Place a long rope on the floor in a pattern in which rope crosses itself often. Have child walk along the rope, jumping over each crossing point.
- Backward kickball: Kicking forward: child is to name where or to whom she is going to kick the ball. Try it backward and sideways.
- Ladder Walk: Lay an ordinary ladder down on the floor. Child walks from point A to point B and must "climb" the ladder. Child can think of different ways to walk, play follow the leader, or use your direction. Try walking only on rungs, on the sides of the ladder, or stepping on the floor between the rungs.
- Bounce on a hoppity-hop ball.
- Play "jump the brook" over two tape lines. Gradually increase the width of the stream. Try this with both feet together or a running step-jump.
- Have child pretend to be a tree blowing in the wind. Encourage weight shifting from one foot to the other and hold in place for at least 2-3 seconds.
- Draw small circles with chalk or masking tape; have child try to walk on tiptoes only in the circles or around a larger circle. Or incorporate tiptoe walking into an aerobic/dance exercise with a partner.
- Tape large paper circles and squares on the floor. Show your child how to walk only on those shapes.

Child's Name _____

Date _____

POSTURAL CONTROL
Gym, Playground, and Extracurricular Practice
BALANCE

Purpose

To improve balance

Activities

Many activities commonly presented in gym class, on the playground, and in extracurricular sports help to develop balancing skills. Any activity that places the body off-balance and requires the child to correct the position is helpful.

Games

1. Incorporate standing or hopping on one foot with eyes open or closed into relay races or "follow-the-leader" games.
2. Children stand facing one another across a taped line, elbows bent and palms touching. By straightening the arms and pushing quickly against the other child's hands, each tries to make the other lose balance and move feet.
3. Child stands or sits on a tiltboard (round board that tilts to all sides) and engages in ball activities. Children take turns being IT and standing on the board in the center of a circle of children. Children throw the ball to the person on the board, who throws it back to another child. See how many catches and throws can be accomplished without falling off the board, or time how long a child can maintain balance before another child becomes IT.
4. Tape lines on the floor in the shape of a funnel (angled so the opening is wider at one end than at the other). Children walk one at a time through the funnel without touching either side. Each time this is done, successful children hold hands and try again, until large groups of children are going through together.
5. Place beanbags on the children's heads and encourage the children to keep them there during relay games, skipping, walking, running, and galloping.
6. Call out combinations of body parts, and encourage children to balance on those parts for as long as possible. Children can balance on one leg, right knee and left hand, both hands and one foot, and so on.
7. Set up obstacle courses that include plenty of balancing activities (ladders, hoops to walk around, mats to walk over, ropes, and taped lines and circles to walk on).



Gym and Playground Toys and Equipment

1. Taped lines and circles, balance beams of various heights, railroad ties, and old tires can be used for developing balance. Encourage child to walk on them with hands on hips, touching the heel of the front foot to the toe of the back foot.
2. Equipment with moving surfaces, such as platform swings, balance boards, and tiltboards, can be incorporated into gym or after-school activities. Always provide adult supervision when this kind of equipment is used.
3. Get a large barrel (usually cardboard) from a co-op or other grocery store. Line it with carpeting. This toy is fun for home or school and can be used for many balancing activities, such as sitting on top, standing on top, or rolling by walking on top. (This is an advanced skill and requires adult assistance or supervision.)
4. Hippy Hop Ball® (a large ball with a handle that children bounce on), Pogo Ball® (a disc with a ball in the center, which children stand and bounce on), and large physioballs (for sitting or lying on), are commercially available toys that develop balancing skills.

Sports

Skating, gymnastics, trampoline, dancing, bicycle riding, and swimming are excellent balancing activities. Children with very poor static (nonmoving) balance often are able to do well in activities such as these which require moving balance. Don't assume that a child who can't stand on one foot (static balance) will not be able to ride a bicycle. For learning to ride a bike, it often helps to practice riding a two-wheeled scooter to develop balance skills before adding the pedaling motion of a bicycle.

Variations and Adaptations

Children with poor balance may find this kind of activity frightening. Teach these activities in an individualized, noncompetitive manner. Provide external support (an adult's hand, a grab bar, or the wall) for as long as necessary. Decrease the amount of external support as skills increase, by having the child merely touch one finger to the wall or an adult's hand. Encourage the child to balance independently as much as possible, but respect the child's fears and take precautions to ensure safety. Use gym mats for balance activities whenever possible.

Balancing is easiest on wide lines on the floor. Progress to thinner and higher balancing surfaces as skill improves.