

Resource Cards

Set 3

**Best Practices for
Creating an Active Play Environment**



2017

Steps to Creating an Active Play Environment

Each of the resource cards in this set states one or more of the following best practices, the rationale for why they are best practices, and strategies for implementing the best practices.

Best Practices for Creating an Active Play Environment

- 3.1.1 Provide active play time (both indoors and outdoors) for 90 to 120 minutes per 8-hour day for all preschoolers ages two to five, including children with special needs.
- 3.2.1 Provide structured (teacher-led) active play two or more times per day, for a total of 60 minutes or more, for all preschoolers ages two to five, including those with special needs.
- 3.3.1 Provide unstructured active play for a total of 60 minutes or more, for all preschoolers ages two to five, including those with special needs.
- 3.4.1 Provide access to indoor areas with a wide variety of portable play equipment that meets or exceeds recommended safety standards for performing large-muscle activities.
- 3.5.1 Provide outdoor active play at least two or more times per day, for a total of 60 minutes or more, for all preschoolers ages two to five, including those with special needs.
- 3.5.2 Provide access to outdoor areas and a wide variety of both fixed and portable play equipment that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large-muscle activities.
- 3.6.1 Staff members lead and participate in active play during times devoted to physical activity for preschoolers.
- 3.6.2 Preschoolers are not sedentary (sitting) for more than 30 minutes at a time, except while napping.
- 3.6.3 Active play time is not withheld as punishment when children misbehave.

Sources

Institute of Medicine. (2011). *Early childhood obesity prevention policies: goals, recommendations, and potential actions*. Retrieved from www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2011/Early-Childhood-Obesity-Prevention-Policies/Young%20Child%20Obesity%202011%20Recommendations.pdf

Nemours Health and Prevention Services. (2008). *Best practices for physical activity: For organizations serving children and youth - a guide to help children grow up healthy*. Retrieved from www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/paguide2010.pdf

Partnership for a Healthier America. (n.d.). *Let's move child care providers*. Retrieved from www.letsmove.gov/child-care-providers

The Nemours Foundation. (2012). *Nemours child care wellness policy workbook: Creating an environment for preschoolers to develop healthy habits for life*. Retrieved from www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www2/filebox/service/healthy-living/growuphealthy/Child%20Care%20Wellness%20Policy%20Workbook.pdf

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Active early: A Wisconsin guide for improving childhood physical activity*. Retrieved from www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/PO/PO0280.pdf

Card #3-1: Incorporating Active Play

Best Practice

3.1.1 Provide active play time (both indoors and outdoors) for 90 to 120 minutes per 8-hour day for all preschoolers ages two to five, including children with special needs.

Why is this a best practice?

- Moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity help children exercise their hearts, lungs, arms, and legs.
- Children develop motor skills, such as running, skipping, kicking, jumping, hopping, catching, and throwing, which develops strong muscles and bones.
- Physical activity helps children learn better by increasing their ability to focus and concentrate.
- Active children are more likely to be happy and feel good about themselves.
- Active children are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Active children are less likely to develop chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes.

Strategies for implementation

1. Model an active lifestyle by joining and leading children in physical activity.
2. Incorporate physical activity into activities designed to promote children's cognitive and social development.
3. Provide opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity in 10- to 20-minute intervals throughout the day.
4. Provide a variety of indoor and outdoor portable play equipment that is freely available to children and assure there is enough space per child.
5. Provide daily indoor and outdoor free time for physical activity.
6. Do not punish children for being physically active indoors.
7. Do not take away active play time from children as a disciplinary measure.

Card #3-2: Structured Active Play

Best Practice

- 3.2.1 Provide structured (teacher-led) active play two or more times per day, for a total of 60 minutes or more, for all preschoolers ages two to five, including those with special needs.

Why is this a best practice?

- Structured (teacher-led) active play tends to get children active at higher levels of intensity.
- Moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity help children exercise their hearts, lungs, arms, and legs.
- Children develop motor skills, such as running, skipping, kicking, jumping, hopping, catching, and throwing, which develops strong muscles and bones.
- Children learn verbal skills by following instructions for structured activities.
- Physical activity helps children learn better by increasing their ability to focus and concentrate.
- Active children are more likely to be happy and feel good about themselves.
- Active children are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Active children are less likely to develop chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes.

Strategies for implementation

1. Assure that structured active play is teacher-led, developmentally appropriate, and fun. Structured active play should include the following:
 - a. Daily planned physical activity that supports age-appropriate motor skill development. The activity should be engaging and involve all children with minimal or no waiting.
 - b. Daily, fun physical activity that is vigorous (gets children “breathless” or breathing deeper and faster than during typical activities) for short doses of time.
2. Model enjoyment of an active lifestyle by joining and leading children in two or more adult-led activities or games that encourage movement each day.
3. Incorporate movement into indoor activities designed to promote children’s cognitive and social development. Ideas include the following:
 - a. Acting out a story as it is read.
 - b. Dancing to music.
 - c. Playing games, such as hide and seek, follow the leader, or Simon says.
 - d. Encouraging kids to move like different animals during transitions from one activity or room to another (hop like a bunny, walk like a crab, swim like a fish, etc.).
4. Plan safe, engaging outdoor activities, such as hopscotch, freeze tag, or obstacle courses.
5. Provide opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity for at least 10 minutes or more per hour throughout the day.
6. Participate in trainings to learn games and activities that promote physical activity among young children.

Card #3-3: Unstructured Active Play

Best Practice

- 3.3.1 Provide unstructured active play for a total of 60 minutes or more, for all preschoolers ages two to five, including those with special needs.

Why is this a best practice?

- Children learn to explore their environment, be creative, and use their imagination through unstructured active play (child-led free play).
- Children develop motor skills, such as running, skipping, kicking, jumping, hopping, catching, and throwing, which develops strong muscles and bones.
- Physical activity helps children learn better by increasing their ability to focus and concentrate.
- Active children are more likely to be happy and feel good about themselves.
- Active children are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Active children are less likely to develop chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes.

Strategies for implementation

1. Unstructured active play is child-led free play. Unstructured physical activity should include:
 - a. Activities that respect and encourage children's individual abilities and interests.
 - b. Teacher engagement with children, support for extending play, and gentle prompts and encouragement by teachers, when appropriate, to stay physically active.
2. Provide opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity for at least 10 minutes or more per hour throughout the day.
3. Provide daily indoor and outdoor free time for physical activity.
4. Provide a variety of indoor and outdoor portable play equipment that is freely available to children and assure there is enough space per child.

Card #3-4: Indoor Active Play

Best Practice

- 3.4.1 Provide access to indoor areas with a wide variety of portable play equipment that meets or exceeds recommended safety standards for performing large-muscle activities.

Why is this a best practice?

- Children develop motor skills, such as running, skipping, kicking, jumping, hopping, catching, and throwing, which develops strong muscles and bones.
- Children learn to be creative and use their imagination through play.
- Physical activity helps children learn better by increasing their ability to focus and concentrate.
- Active children are more likely to be happy and feel good about themselves.
- Active children are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Active children are less likely to develop chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes.

Strategies for implementation

1. Provide a variety of indoor portable play equipment that is freely available to children and assure there is enough space per child.
2. Incorporate movement into activities designed to promote children's cognitive and social development. Ideas include the following:
 - a. Acting out a story as it is read.
 - b. Dancing to music.
 - c. Playing games, such as hide and seek, follow the leader, or Simon says.
 - d. Encouraging kids to move like different animals during transitions from one activity or room to another (hop like a bunny, walk like a crab, swim like a fish, etc.).
3. Provide opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity for at least 10 minutes or more per hour throughout the day.
4. Provide daily indoor free time for physical activity.
5. Do not punish children for being physically active indoors.

Card #3-5: Outdoor Active Play

Best Practices

- 3.5.1 Provide outdoor active play at least two or more times per day, for a total of 60 minutes or more, for all preschoolers ages two to five, including those with special needs.
- 3.5.2 Provide access to outdoor areas and a wide variety of both fixed and portable play equipment that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large-muscle activities.

Why are these best practices?

- Activities such as running, skipping, kicking, jumping, hopping, catching, and throwing helps children develop motor skills and coordination.
- Walking, running, and similar activities helps build endurance.
- Climbing and lifting helps build strength.
- Playing on playground equipment and stretching helps maintain flexibility.
- Physical activity helps children develop strong muscles and bones and healthier lungs and hearts.
- Physical activity helps children learn better and develop their creativity and imagination.
- Active children are more likely to be happy and feel good about themselves.
- Active children are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Active children are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

Strategies for implementation

1. Provide a variety of outdoor portable play equipment that is freely available to children.
2. Assure that the outdoor play environment has a secure perimeter, some shade, natural elements, an open grassy area, varying surfaces and terrain, and adequate space per child.
3. Provide opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity for at least 10 minutes or more per hour throughout the day.
4. Provide daily outdoor free time for physical activity as weather permits.
5. Encourage children and providers to wear clothing and shoes that allow for easy movement and active play.
6. Assure children are protected from the sun with shade, sun protective clothing and sunscreen (at least SPF 15) with parental permission.
7. Do not take away active play time from children as a disciplinary measure.

Card #3-6: Encouraging Active Play

Best Practices

- 3.6.1 Staff members lead and participate in active play during times devoted to physical activity for preschoolers.
- 3.6.2 Preschoolers are not sedentary (sitting) for more than 30 minutes at a time, except while napping.
- 3.6.3 Active play time is not withheld as punishment when children misbehave.

Why are these best practices?

- Moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity help children exercise their hearts, lungs, arms, and legs.
- Children develop motor skills, such as running, skipping, kicking, jumping, hopping, catching, and throwing, which develops strong muscles and bones.
- Physical activity helps children learn better.
- Active children are more likely to be happy and feel good about themselves.
- Active children are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight.
- Active children are less likely to develop chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes.

Strategies for implementation

1. Model enjoyment of an active lifestyle by joining and leading children in two or more adult-led activities or games that encourage movement each day.
2. Incorporate physical activity into activities designed to promote children's cognitive and social development.
3. Provide opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity for at least 10 minutes or more per hour throughout the day.
4. Do not punish children for being physically active indoors.
5. Do not withhold physical activity as punishment.
6. Participate in trainings to learn games and activities that promote physical activity among young children.
7. Share information about active lifestyle habits with parents through conversations, fact sheets, newsletters and events.

Resource Toolkit: Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets

Creating an Active Play Environment

- Encouraging and Modeling Active Play Throughout the Day for Preschoolers
- Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play
- Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play
- Activities for Children – Gardening for Preschoolers
- Activities for Children – Learning About How Foods Grow with Beans

Encouraging and Modeling Active Play Throughout the Day for Preschoolers

Children learn and model their habits and behaviors on what they see adults do. For children to learn to embrace an active lifestyle, they need to see adults engaged in and enjoying physical activity throughout the day.

Preschoolers need 120 minutes or more of active play, both outdoors and indoors, every day. Teachers need to provide structured active play two or more times per day, for a total of 60 minutes or more. They also need to provide unstructured active play for a total of 60 minutes or more. Since preschoolers do best when physical activity is provided in short 10- to 15-minute segments, this means physical activity is best incorporated in different ways throughout the curriculum. As child care providers lead and participate in active play with preschoolers throughout the day, they set a good role model for children. It's a great way to relieve stress too!

Below are some ways to incorporate physical activity throughout the curriculum and be a role model for an active lifestyle:

- Read books about physical activity or stories that children can act out during story time. Demonstrate movements along with the children.
- Teach science by showing children how movement helps their heart, muscles and bones.
- Engage children in teacher-led games and activities both indoors and outdoors. Join in the activities as much as possible to model skills, such as bouncing a ball or skipping along.
- Create a music and movement interest area. Play lively music and dance along with the children. Adding instruments, tambourines and maracas, are another way to combine music with movement.
- Include art projects that encourage movement, such as creating a mural on a wall or drawing with chalk on a sidewalk.
- Engage in dramatic play where children pretend they are athletes or action heroes.
- Teach math skills through movement. Children can learn to count by jumping out the day of the month or how many times they toss a bean bag into a bucket.
- As children transition from one activity to another, use the time to have children move in different ways.

By moving more and sitting less, both children and their caregivers can learn to live a healthful, active lifestyle.

Sources:

Nemours Health and Prevention Services. (2008). *Best practices for physical activity: For organizations serving children and youth - A guide to help children grow up healthy*. Retrieved from www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/paguide2010.pdf

The Nemours Foundation. (n.d.). *Let's move child care - What to play*. Retrieved from <https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/home/activities/what.html>

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Active early: A Wisconsin guide for improving childhood physical activity*. Retrieved from www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/PO/POO280.pdf

Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play

Preschoolers need time for structured play activities every day. Structured play activities are those that are led by an adult caregiver and promote moderate to vigorous physical activity. These activities make preschoolers exercise the lungs and breathe harder. They also make their hearts beat faster than when they are not active. Structured activities help preschoolers maintain an ideal weight by burning calories, building muscle, and encouraging children to have an active life.

Preschoolers need 60 minutes or more of structured play activity every day. Active play time doesn't have to occur in a single session, though. Short 10- or 15-minute bursts of active play throughout the day works well. It should also get children breathing deeper and faster than during typical activities for short doses of time to exercise their heart and lungs. Moderate physical activity allows children to still talk easily, while vigorous activities make children "breathless."

In addition to helping preschoolers be active, structured play lets preschoolers see adults as healthy role models for physical activity. Participating with children in physical activities show them that you enjoy being active every day also.

Well-planned structured play should be engaging and involve all children with very little or no waiting. Activities can be either indoors or outdoors. Examples of structured activities are:

- Noncompetitive relay races or obstacle courses
- Musical games
- Guided play with inexpensive props (yarn balls, simple bean bags, paper plate paddles, scoops made from milk cartons)
- Games such as "Simon Says" or "Follow the Leader"
- Simple ball games where the ball is rolled, passed, or kicked to each other
- Acting out a story or dancing to music

Below are some simple ideas for structured activities that can be played either indoors or outdoors:

- **Sleeping Animals**

Call out the name of an animal, such as horse, and have the children move like that animal. When you call out "Sleep", the children stop and pretend to "go to sleep." When you call out the next animal name, the children move again. Be creative with the animals so that children will try different movements, like hopping, crawling, running, etc.

- **Obstacle Course**

Make sure an area outdoors or in the classroom is free of unsafe objects. Then place objects such as chairs, hula hoops, cones, boxes, or other items around the area for the children to romp over, under, or through. Guide children on how to move over, under, around, and through each part of the course.

- **Freeze Dance**

Play some lively music that children can dance to. When you stop the music briefly, the children "freeze" in the position they are in.

Outdoor Activities:

- Purchase hula hoops and rotate to lively music.
- Use grassy areas for running, rolling, crawling or ball games.
- Go for a walk and encourage children to find different things along the way, such as different colors, shapes, etc.
- Make or purchase inexpensive kites that children can fly on windy days.
- Use a sand pit to encourage children to jump. Use a tape measure or string so children can measure their jumps.
- Blow bubbles and encourage children to jump and catch them.
- Have a variety of balls (plastic, foam, beach, etc.), bags, or baskets available for children to play with. Install basketball hoops at various heights for the children to practice throwing.
- Set-up a soccer net to encourage children to practice kicking.
- Draw targets on outside walls for children to practice target throws.
- Use traffic cones to make tees from which children can strike balls with paddles or bats.
- Place a soft ball in a stocking and tie it safely to a tree or somewhere else for children to practice hitting the ball with their hands or using soft bats.
- Put up a net across the playground and use a lightweight ball to play volleyball.
- Throw foam rubber flying discs to each other.

Indoor Activities:

- Lead and encourage children to balance in a variety of ways, like standing on one foot.
- Create balance challenges by spray painting footprints on carpet squares. Lay them out in different configurations as stepping stones.
- Tape streamers up high on a wall to encourage children to jump up and touch or grab them.
- Throw light scarves into the air and catch them before they reach the ground. Or, demonstrate and ask children to copy the following actions with their scarves: windscreen wiper; helicopter; air snake; butterfly; spirals.
- Mark out hopscotch squares with chalk or masking tape to encourage throwing, hopping, and jumping skills.
- Plan a “movement parade.” Act out movements and sounds of different animals. For example, hop like a rabbit, jump like a kangaroo, or waddle like a duck. Or simply call out different movements children can do, such as hop, skip, leap, twirl, twist, jump, and stomp.
- Make catching devices for balls from plastic milk containers. Have the children throw soft balls into the air and catch them with the scoops.
- Create wedges out of foam that children can walk up and down.
- Use a bed sheet or a large piece of fabric as a parachute and have the children crawl, walk, hop, or gallop underneath.
- Lay out tape, chalk lines, or rope on the floor to create different paths that are wide, narrow, straight, or zigzagged. Encourage children to move along the patterns in different ways.
- Set up a bowling game with plastic bowling pins or plastic half-gallon milk cartons. Have the children roll balls underhanded to knock down the targets.
- Play musical movement games, such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” or “Hokey Pokey.”

Habits are learned early in life, so including plenty of physical activity in your child care curriculum can create a lifelong active lifestyle for preschoolers.

Sources:

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. (2009). *Active play everyday - indoor and outdoor active play*. Retrieved from health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=dlglobres&globres=1264819712

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. (2011). *Non-competitive and active games for preschoolers*. Retrieved from healthykidshealthyfuture.org/content/dam/hkhf/filebox/naccrra/newnaccrra/noncomgames.pdf

New South Wales Government. (2009). *I move we move, the physical activity handbook - Preschoolers*, (1st ed). Retrieved from www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/sitefiles/GoodForKids/documents/Children's%20Services/Final%20Ovesion%20_I%20Move%20We%20Move_%20OPA%20Preschoolers.pdf

The Nemours Foundation. (n.d.). *Let's move child care - What to play*. Retrieved from <https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/home/activities/what.html>

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Active early: A Wisconsin guide for improving childhood physical activity*. Retrieved from www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/PO/POO28O.pdf

Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play

Habits are learned early in life, so encouraging children to move throughout the day can create a lifelong active lifestyle. Preschool children need 60 minute or more of unstructured active play time every day. Unstructured physical activity is free play that's led by the child, but supervised by an adult in a safe environment. Active unstructured play time doesn't have to occur in a single session. Short 10- or 15-minute bursts of active play works well.

Unstructured active play is valuable because it stimulates creativity and allows children to use their imagination. Through free play, children develop their individual abilities and interests. While children choose and direct their own activities during free play, adults can provide gentle prompts and encouragement to help the child stay engaged and physically active.

Preschoolers need time both outdoors and indoors for unstructured play. Below are some tips for providing opportunities for unstructured play.

Outdoor activities:

- Provide a variety of portable play equipment that is readily accessible outdoors. For example, have several different types of balls available. Other portable equipment that can encourage creative play can include pool noodles, paddles, plastic bats, and hula hoops.
- Fixed play structures encourage children to practice a variety of gross motor skills. Choose equipment that encourage different movements, such as crawling, sliding, climbing, etc.
- If possible, try to provide different types of surfaces for playing, such as cushioned surfaces for tumbling and grassy spaces for running.
- Children need opportunities to explore nature, so consider outings to places where children will have an opportunity to climb rocks, climb up and roll down hills.
- Gardens provide opportunities for digging, hoeing, and planting, as well as learning about foods.
- Make sure outdoor play areas are safe for young children.
- Make sure the play area has large trees to provide shade or put up a sun shelter to protect children from the sun, rain, or snow.
- Always make sure drinking water is readily accessible.

Indoor activities:

- Set up specific areas where children are encouraged to be active. There should be plenty of space for children to jump, skip, gallop, use push-and-pull toys, and throw soft objects.
- Provide a wide variety of portable play equipment and designate spaces, such as plastic tubs, where it is stored. Place pictures and names of materials on shelves to show children where materials belong.
- Portable play equipment can and should include recycled household materials, such as empty boxes, ice cream containers, plastic milk jugs, yarn balls, cardboard cylinders and other materials. Because children won't have an automatic idea of how the materials should be used, they'll develop their creativity and imagination and will create their own games and uses.
- Make sure lighting is adequate for children to see and that play areas have materials to absorb sound and limit noise levels.

Sources:

Nemours Health and Prevention Services. (2008). *Best practices for physical activity: For organizations serving children and youth - A guide to help children grow up healthy*. Retrieved from www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/paguide2010.pdf

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Active early: A Wisconsin guide for improving childhood physical activity*. Retrieved from www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/PO/POO280.pdf

Activities for Children – Gardening for Preschoolers

Gardening is a fun and easy way for preschoolers to be physically active, as well as learn about fruits and vegetables. Preschoolers develop their large and small muscles as they hoe the soil, pull up weeds, and harvest the foods. You don't need a lot of space to have a garden for preschoolers. Plants can grow almost anywhere if there is plenty of sun and water, so look for places near sidewalks, flowerbeds, and shrubs.

Below are some tips for successful outdoor gardens for preschoolers:

- Involve kids in all stages that are reasonable for their age. Work in small groups of 2 or 3 so each child is engaged and actively involved.
- Spend time preparing the soil. Most garden work can be completed with a child-sized trowel if the soil is well-prepared.
- Teach kids proper gardening behavior. Show them how to use child-sized garden tools correctly. They should not eat anything before asking an adult.
- Practice sun safety. Make sure kids use sunscreen, wear a hat, and have plenty of water to drink.
- Plant for immediate and delayed gratification. Plant both seeds and potted plants.
- Don't use pesticides or other chemicals in the garden. Be sure to check about chemicals in potting soil or seeds.
- Don't worry about the garden's appearance. Children will still learn from the experience and think the garden is beautiful.

Easy food plants to grow in preschool/daycare settings include lettuce, radishes, snow peas, cherry tomatoes, carrots, potatoes, bush beans, and pumpkins. Try growing herbs, too, like rosemary, oregano, mint, and basil. Theme gardens are fun for preschoolers too. Popular theme gardens include:

- Pizza garden – tomatoes, onions, green peppers, basil, oregano
- Stone soup garden – onions, carrots, peppers, parsnips, beans, potatoes, corn
- Bean teepees – bamboo poles, bean or sweet pea vine

For more information on gardening, check the following resources:

Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate at www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it.

Preschool/Child Care Garden Resources at healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/school-and-preschool-gardens/preschool-child-care-garden-resources.

Activities for Children – Learning About How Foods Grow with Beans

Activity 1 – Sorting and Identifying Beans

Before the Activity:

Read through the activity and gather the following materials:

- Ten bean soup mix
- Note cards with the name of each bean written in clear letters (refer to ingredient label for specific type of beans)
- Small cups (one per child)
- Empty egg cartons or muffin tins

Conduct the Activity:

- Explain that beans are healthy to eat because they help young bodies to grow bigger and stronger. Some people eat beans instead of meat at their meals.
- Pass out small cups of the bean soup mix to each child.
- Ask children to sort the different types of beans into egg cartons or muffin tins.
- Ask children to identify the different colors, shapes, and sizes of beans.
- Show children the note cards displaying the names of the beans. Together, identify all 10 types of beans.
- (Optional) Serve 10 bean soup as part of the children's lunch on the day that they complete this activity. Ask the children how the beans changed during cooking and see if they can identify the cooked beans in the soup.

Activity 2 – Growing Beans

Before the Activity:

Read through the activity and gather the following materials:

- The children's book: Doyle, M. (2002). *Jody's Beans*. Candlewick Press.
- Bean seeds (scarlet runner beans are featured in the story *Jody's Beans* but any type of green bean seeds will work)
- Small peat pots
- Planting soil

Conduct the Activity:

- Read the book, *Jody's Beans*. Ask children if they have ever planted seeds and watched them grow. Explain that you will plant bean seeds just like Jody and her grandfather did in this story.
- Ask children if they know what is needed for seeds to sprout and grow (soil, water, and sunshine).
- Have each child use a spoon to fill small peat pots with planting soil.
- Plant two bean seeds in each pot, according to the instructions on the seed package.
- Keep soil moist and place in a sunny area outdoors (or in a sunny window indoors).
- After the beans sprout, thin to one plant per container. Once the plant is 2-3 inches high, the entire pot can be planted outdoors in the garden or in a bigger pot to grow inside.
- Continue to monitor the plants and hopefully, harvest and taste the delicious beans. Harvest in the tender pod stage and serve as green beans. If possible, allow some of the pods to mature and dry into seeds (dry beans).

Source:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (n.d.). *CARE connection. Menu planning fun food activities for children - Let's learn about beans.* University, MS: Author. Retrieved from www.theicn.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20101004010220.pdf

Resource Toolkit: Instructor Scripts

Creating an Active Play Environment

- Encouraging Active Play
- Structured Active Play
- Unstructured Active Play
- Indoor Active Play
- Outdoor Active Play

Instructor Script: Encouraging Active Play

Target Audience: CACFP personnel, other child care staff, and volunteers

Lesson Purpose:

- To introduce best practices for healthful physical activity practices that promote healthy growth and development in young children
- To develop recommendations for implementing best practices at the child care facility

Time Needed to Conduct Lesson: 20 minutes

Materials Needed for Each Participant:

- Handout 1: *Card #3-1: Incorporating Active Play* from the *Resource Toolkit*
- Handout 2: *Card #3-6: Encouraging Active Play* from the *Resource Toolkit*
- Handout 3: *Encouraging and Modeling Active Play Throughout the Day for Preschoolers*, from the *Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets*
- Handout 4: Pages 67-68, *Encourage Active Play and Participate With Children*, from the USDA's *Provider Handbook Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children*
- Pens or pencil

Materials Needed for the Instructor:

- Instructor Script
- Flip chart (optional)
- Marker (optional)

Lesson Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the child care provider will be able to

1. State the best practices for incorporating and encouraging active play throughout the day for preschoolers and at least two reasons why they are best practices.
2. Make recommendations for incorporating and encouraging active play throughout the day for preschoolers at their child care facility.

Instructor Script

SAY:

Active play and movement are important for every child's growth, health, development, and learning. For young children, exercise strengthens bones and muscles, develops motor skills, and teaches healthy lifestyle habits. But many children do not get the exercise they need. Today we will discuss incorporating and encouraging active play throughout the day for preschoolers.

DO:

Provide each participant with a copy of *Card #3-1: Incorporating Active Play*.

SAY:

This resource card defines the best practice for incorporating active play in child care.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on a volunteer to read the best practice.

SAY:

Thank you. Incorporating active play consists of both indoor and outdoor activities for a total of 90 to 120 minutes per 8-hour day. The next section on the resource card has some points about why this is a best practice.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the reasons why incorporating active play is a best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on one or more volunteers to read the bullet points.

SAY:

The first bullet point under the strategies for implementation says to model an active lifestyle by joining and leading children in physical activity. This leads to another set of best practices that I will share with you now.

DO:

Give each participant a copy of *Card #3-6: Encouraging Active Play*.

SAY:

This resource card defines the best practices for encouraging active play in child care.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the best practices on this card?

FEEDBACK:

Call on a volunteer to read the best practices.

SAY:

The best practices on both cards go hand in hand. Our child care facility is committed to doing more to ensure that we are encouraging active play for a total of 90 to 120 minutes or more every day. There are strategies for implementation at the bottom of each card. Please work with at least one other partner and read over the strategies. Discuss how we are currently encouraging active play and being good role models. Then discuss and make two recommendations to encourage more active play at our facility. You will get two fact sheets – *Encouraging and Modeling Active Play Throughout the Day for Preschoolers* and *Encourage Active Play and Participate With Children* – that will help you with ideas.

DO:

Give each participant a copy of *Encouraging and Modeling Active Play Throughout the Day for Preschoolers* and *Encourage Active Play and Participate With Children*. Help the group divide into smaller groups of two or three people. Allow time for reading and discussing the strategies.

ASK:

What are some ways we are currently encouraging active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses.

ASK:

What are your recommendations for some new ways we can encourage active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses. You may want to write brief phrases about their ideas on a flip chart.

SAY:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about how we can implement the best practice of encouraging active play throughout the day at our facility. Over the next few months, we will be putting your ideas into practice so that we can help the children in our care develop healthy habits they will keep for a lifetime.

Instructor Script: Structured Active Play

Target Audience: CACFP personnel, other child care staff, and volunteers

Lesson Purpose:

- To introduce best practices for healthful physical activity practices that promote healthy growth and development in young children
- To develop recommendations for implementing best practices at the child care facility

Time Needed to Conduct Lesson: 20 minutes

Materials Needed for Each Participant:

- Handout 1: *Resource Card #3-2: Structured Active Play* from the *Resource Toolkit*
- Handout 2: *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*, from the *Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets*
- Pens or pencils

Materials Needed for the Instructor:

- Instructor Script
- Flip chart (optional)
- Marker (optional)

Lesson Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the child care provider will be able to

1. State the best practices for providing structured active play for preschoolers and at least two reasons why they are best practices.
2. Make recommendations for providing structured active play for preschoolers at their child care facility.

Instructor Script

SAY:

Active play and movement are important for every child's growth, health, development, and learning. Exercise strengthens bones and muscles, develops motor skills, and teaches healthy lifestyle habits. However, many children do not get the exercise they need. Today we will discuss best practices for providing structured active play for preschoolers.

DO:

Give each participant a copy of *Resource Card #3-2: Structured Active Play*.

SAY:

This resource card defines the best practice for structured active play in child care.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on a volunteer to read the best practice.

SAY:

Thank you. Structured active play consists of teacher-led activities. The next section of the resource card has some points about why this is a best practice. When play is teacher-led, children tend to get active at higher levels of intensity, causing them to breathe harder. This higher level of physical activity helps children exercise their hearts and lungs. When children exercise at higher levels, this also helps develop muscles in their arms and legs.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the other reasons why structured active play is a best practice, starting with the 4th bullet?

FEEDBACK:

Call on one or more volunteers to read the rest of the bullet points.

SAY:

Our child care facility is committed to doing more to ensure that we have structured active play at least two times or more per day for a total of 60 minutes or more. At the bottom of the resource card there are six strategies for implementing structured active play. Please work with at least one other partner and read over the strategies for implementation. Discuss some ways we are currently promoting structured active play. Then develop at least two recommendations to increase structured active play. You will get another sheet called *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* that will help you with ideas.

DO:

Help the group divide into smaller groups of two or three people. Give each person a copy of *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*. Allow time for reading and discussing the strategies.

ASK:

What are some ways we are currently promoting structured active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses.

ASK:

What are your ideas about some new ways we can promote structured active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses. You may want to write brief phrases about their ideas on a flip chart.

SAY:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about how we can implement the best practice of providing structured active play at our facility. Over the next few months, we will be putting your ideas into practice so that we can help the children in our care develop healthy habits they will keep for a lifetime.

Instructor Script: Unstructured Active Play

Target Audience: CACFP personnel, other child care staff, and volunteers

Lesson Purpose:

- To introduce best practices for healthful physical activity practices that promote healthy growth and development in young children
- To develop recommendations for implementing best practices at the child care facility

Time Needed to Conduct Lesson: 20 minutes

Materials Needed for Each Participant:

- Handout 1: *Resource Card #3-3: Unstructured Active Play* from the *Resource Toolkit*
- Handout 2: *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*, from the *Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets*
- Pens or pencils

Materials Needed for the Instructor:

- Instructor Script
- Flip chart (optional)
- Marker (optional)

Lesson Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the child care provider will be able to

1. State the best practice for providing unstructured active play for preschoolers and at least two reasons why it is a best practice.
2. Make recommendations for providing unstructured active play for preschoolers at their child care facility.

Instructor Script

SAY:

Active play and movement are important for every child's growth, health, development, and learning. For young children, exercise strengthens bones and muscles, develops motor skills, and teaches healthy lifestyle habits. But many children do not get the exercise they need. Today we will discuss providing unstructured active play for preschoolers.

DO:

Distribute copies of *Resource Card #3-3: Unstructured Active Play*.

SAY:

This resource card defines the best practice for unstructured active play in child care.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on a volunteer to read the best practice.

SAY:

Thank you. Unstructured active play is child-led free play. If you look at the resource card, you'll see the next section has some points about why this is a best practice. When play is child-led, children can explore their environment, be creative, and use their imagination while being active. When they play freely, they develop skills such as running, jumping, and throwing, and this helps develop the muscles in their arms and legs.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the other reasons why unstructured active play is a best practice, starting with the third bullet?

FEEDBACK:

Call on one or more volunteers to read the rest of the bullet points.

SAY:

Our child care facility is committed to doing more to ensure that we have unstructured active play for at least 60 minutes per day. At the bottom of the resource card there are four strategies for implementing unstructured active play. Please work with at least one other partner and read over the strategies for implementation. Discuss some ways we are currently promoting unstructured active play. Then develop at least two additional ways we could support an increase in unstructured active play for at least 60 minutes every day. You will get another sheet called *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* that will help you with ideas.

DO:

Help the group divide into smaller groups of two or three people. Give each person a copy of *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*. Allow time for reading and discussing the strategies.

ASK:

Would someone like to share some ways we are currently promoting unstructured active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses.

ASK:

What are your ideas about some new ways we can further promote unstructured active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses. You may want to write brief phrases about their ideas on a flip chart.

SAY:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about how we can implement the best practice of providing unstructured active play at our facility. Over the next few months, we will be putting your ideas into practice so that we can help the children in our care develop healthy habits they will keep for a lifetime.

Instructor Script: Indoor Active Play

Target Audience: CACFP personnel, other child care staff, and volunteers

Lesson Purpose:

- To introduce best practices for healthful physical activity practices that promote healthy growth and development in young children
- To develop recommendations for implementing best practices at the child care facility

Time Needed to Conduct Lesson: 20 minutes

Materials Needed for Each Participant:

- Handout 1: *Card #3-4: Indoor Active Play* from the *Resource Toolkit*
- Handout 2: *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*, from the *Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets*
- Handout 3: *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*, from the *Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets*
- Pens or pencils

Materials Needed for the Instructor:

- Instructor Script
- Flip chart (optional)
- Marker (optional)

Lesson Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the child care provider will be able to

1. State the best practice for providing indoor active play for preschoolers and at least two reasons why it is a best practice.
2. Make recommendations for providing indoor active play for preschoolers at their child care facility.

Instructor Script

SAY:

Active play and movement are important for every child's growth, health, development, and learning. For young children, exercise strengthens bones and muscles, develops motor skills, and teaches healthy lifestyle habits. However, many children don't get the exercise they need. Even when children cannot go outdoors to play, they need to be active indoors. Today we will discuss the best practices for providing indoor activities for preschoolers that promote physical activity.

DO:

Provide each participant with a copy of *Resource Card #3-4: Indoor Activities*.

SAY:

This resource card defines the best practice for indoor activities in child care.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on a volunteer to read the best practice.

SAY:

Thank you. Indoor active play helps children avoid sitting, or being sedentary, all day. The next section on the resource card has some points about why this is a best practice.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read why indoor activities are a best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on one or more volunteers to read the bullet points. Allow time for others to comment.

SAY:

Our child care facility is committed to doing more to ensure that we have indoor active play throughout the day for preschoolers. There are five strategies for implementing indoor active play listed at the bottom of the resource card. Please work with at least one other partner and read over the strategies for implementation. Discuss some ways we are currently promoting indoor active play. Then discuss and make two recommendations to increase indoor active play every day. You will get two fact sheets – *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* and *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* – that will help you with ideas.

DO:

Help the group divide into smaller groups of two or three people. Give each person a copy of *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* and *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*. Allow time for reading and discussing the strategies.

ASK:

Would someone like to share some ways we are currently promoting indoor active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses.

ASK:

What are some new ways we can further promote indoor active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses. You may want to write brief phrases about their ideas on a flip chart.

SAY:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about how we can implement the best practice of providing indoor active play at our facility. Over the next few months, we will be putting your ideas into practice so that we can help the children in our care develop healthy habits they will keep for a lifetime.

Instructor Script: Outdoor Active Play

Target Audience: CACFP personnel, other child care staff, and volunteers

Lesson Purpose:

- To introduce best practices for healthful physical activity practices that promote healthy growth and development in young children
- To develop recommendations for implementing best practices at the child care facility

Time Needed to Conduct Lesson: 20 minutes

Materials Needed for Each Participant:

- Handout 1: *Card #3-5: Outdoor Active Play* from the *Resource Toolkit*
- Handout 2: *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*, from the *Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets*
- Handout 3: *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*, from the *Supplemental Best Practices Fact Sheets*
- Pens or pencils

Materials Needed for the Instructor:

- Instructor Script
- Flip chart (optional)
- Marker (optional)

Lesson Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, the child care provider will be able to

1. State the best practices for providing outdoor active play for preschoolers and at least two reasons why they are best practices.
2. Make recommendations for providing outdoor active play for preschoolers at their child care facility.

Instructor Script

SAY:

Active play and movement are important for every child's growth, health, development, and learning. For young children, exercise strengthens bones and muscles, develops motor skills, and teaches healthy lifestyle habits. However, many children do not get the exercise they need. Children need time to play outdoors every day. Today we will discuss providing outdoor active play for preschoolers to promote physical activity.

DO:

Distribute copies of *Resource Card #3-5: Outdoor Active Play*.

SAY:

This resource card defines the best practice for outdoor active play in child care.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read the best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on a volunteer to read the best practice.

SAY:

Thank you. Outdoor active play helps children avoid sitting, or being sedentary, all day. The next section on the resource card has some points about why this is a best practice.

ASK:

Would someone volunteer to read why outdoor active play is a best practice?

FEEDBACK:

Call on one or more volunteers to read the bullet points.

SAY:

Our child care facility is committed to doing more to ensure that we have outdoor active play at least twice a day for preschoolers, for a total of 60 minutes. There are seven strategies for implementing outdoor active play at the bottom of the resource card. Please work with at least one other partner and read over the strategies for implementation. Discuss how we are currently promoting outdoor active play. Then develop at least two recommendations to support an increase in outdoor active play every day. You will get two other fact sheets – *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* and *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* – that will help you with ideas.

DO:

Help the group divide into smaller groups of two or three people. Give each person a copy of *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play* and *Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Activities for Active Play*. Allow time for reading and discussing the strategies.

ASK:

Would someone like to share some ways we are currently promoting outdoor active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses.

ASK:

What are some new ways we can further promote outdoor active play at our facility?

FEEDBACK:

Call on several people for responses. You may want to write brief phrases about their ideas on a flip chart.

SAY:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about how we can implement the best practice of providing outdoor active play at our facility. Over the next few months, we will be putting your ideas into practice so that we can help the children in our care develop healthy habits they will keep for a lifetime.

Resource Toolkit: Parent Tip Sheets

Creating an Active Play Environment

Preschoolers need time for active play activities every day. Play activities can include both structured (led by a parent or adult caregiver) and unstructured (free play) activities. When preschoolers get 120 minutes or more of physical activity every day, they are building a foundation for an active, healthy life. The following fact sheets will help parents implement an active play environment at home.

Being a Role Model

- Encouraging Active Play – 10 Tips for Being a Role Model

Structured Indoor and Outdoor Active Play

- Structured Play for Preschoolers – 10 Tips for Active Play

Unstructured Indoor and Outdoor Active Play

- Unstructured Play for Preschoolers – 10 Tips for Active Play

ENCOURAGING ACTIVE PLAY

10 Tips for Being a Role Model

Preschoolers need time for active play activities every day – play which raises their heart rate and makes them “huff and puff”. Help them develop good habits for life by being a good role model. When preschoolers see adults move more and sit less, they learn that being active is important. Make physical activity a regular part of your child’s day by participating in and supervising active play with your child. Here are ten tips to help your child be active every day.

1. Twice a day or more

Actively play with your child two or more times per day to help them get some moderate to vigorous physical activity.

2. Get outdoors

Take children outdoors to play often. Dress your child in appropriate clothes for different types of weather.

3. Make safe indoor areas

Create safe spaces indoors where preschoolers can play freely.

4. Add variety

Provide your child with lots of options for being active. Play equipment can be inexpensive and recycled from common household products, such as clean, empty milk jugs, cardboard boxes, ice cream containers, socks, yarn balls, and other items.

5. Dress for success

Dress your child in clothing and footwear that allows easy and safe movement. Shoes should provide support for running, climbing, jumping, and other movements.

6. Water, water everywhere

Make sure water is available during and after active play.

7. Keep safe from the sun

Protect children from the sun by providing shade, sun-protective clothing, and “broad-spectrum” sunscreen with UVA-ray and UVB-ray protection of SPF 15 or higher.

8. Safety first

Make sure play areas are safe and clear of sharp objects, trash, or other objects that can cause injury.

9. Short intervals are best

Active play does not need to be continuous to provide benefits. Preschoolers do best when they participate in 10- to 15-minute intervals of physical activity throughout the day.

10. Have family fun

When it is time to celebrate as a family, do something active, such as going to the zoo, park, or lake to treat the family.



STRUCTURED PLAY FOR PRESCHOOLERS

10 Tips for Active Play

Preschoolers need time for structured play activities every day. Structured play activities are those that are led by a parent or adult caregiver. Structured play activities promote moderate to vigorous physical activity. These activities make preschoolers breathe harder and make their hearts beat faster than when they are not active. Here are ten tips to make active structured play a regular part of your child's day.

1. Be active every day

Preschoolers need 60 minutes or more of structured play activity every day. Active play time doesn't have to occur in a single session, though. Short 10- or 15-minute bursts of active play works well.

2. Be a role model

Participating with children in physical activities shows them that you enjoy being active every day also. Enjoy kicking a large, bouncy ball to each other in the backyard or park, or play a game of hide and seek.

3. Take a walk together

Take a 10- or 15-minute walk in the neighborhood. Make it fun by looking for various objects, such as houses that are different colors or trees that are different types.

4. Get outdoors

Take your child outdoors to play. Dress them appropriately for different kinds of weather.

5. Invite a friend

Children love to play together, so invite a friend along.

6. Learn together

Many communities offer inexpensive physical activity classes. Take a parent-child tumbling, dance, or swim class together.

7. Don't forget water

Encourage preschoolers to drink plenty of water when they are actively playing.

8. Be active indoors too

Create safe places for your child to jump, twist, dance, or run in place indoors. Move to lively music to get the heart rate up.

9. Be creative

Teach your child how to use play equipment in various ways. For example, a ball can be tossed, bounced, rolled, or thrown. Keep directions short and simple.

10. Have active celebrations

Plan active games to play during celebrations, like birthday parties. Include physical activity on vacations as well.



UNSTRUCTURED PLAY FOR PRESCHOOLERS

10 Tips for Active Play

Providing time for unstructured play activities every day allows children to develop their creativity and imagination. While unstructured play activities are not led by an adult, they need to be supervised by an adult. Here are ten tips to make active unstructured play a regular part of your child's day.

1. Play every day

Preschoolers need 60 minutes or more of unstructured play activity every day. Short 10- or 15-minute bursts of active play works well.

2. Go outdoors

Children can play on their own outdoors with supervision. Take your child to a neighborhood park with outdoor play equipment or watch your child as they ride their tricycle.

3. Be active indoors too

Allow your child to be active indoors too. Create safe places for your child to jump, twist, dance, or run in place indoors. Put pillows on the floor for your child to leap or tumble over.

4. Be creative

Recycle clean, safe household containers to play with, such as ice cream containers, plastic milk jugs, cardboard cylinders, boxes, balls of yarn, old sheets, etc. Let your child develop his or her imagination as he or she plays.

5. Take a movement break

If your child has been sitting for too long, teach them to take a break and get moving!

6. Play some music

Children love to wiggle and dance to music. Let them create their own moves to the music.

7. Don't forget water

Encourage preschoolers to drink plenty of water when they are actively playing.

8. Be a role model

Children learn by watching you. Show them that you enjoy being active every day too.

9. Read a story

Read a child's action book or a story about different animals and encourage them to act out the movements. They can hop like a rabbit, jump like a kangaroo, or waddle like a duck to the story.

10. Buy active gifts

On birthdays and other special gift-giving occasions, buy inexpensive gifts that encourage movement like balls, jump ropes, even soap bubbles.





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