



September 15, 2022

Growing Physical Skills Through Outdoor Learning and Play

Viewer's Guide

This viewer's guide gives you ideas for creating learning environments for all preschoolers. The reflection questions and activities will help you think about ways to support children's development of physical skills. Helpful resources can be found in the Resources section of this guide.

Increasing Physical Activity in Young Children

What are some ways to boost physical activity levels in young children? Write any ideas from the webinar or your own experience in the box below.

What do We Mean by “Physical Skills”?

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)



Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development domain for preschoolers has three sub-domains:

- “Physical skills” covers all of these areas
- Gross Motor
- Fine Motor
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition

The outdoors is a great place for children to work on skills in all of these sub-domains!

Try it Out!

Studies show that a substantial percentage of children ages 3-5 are less physically active than recommended by public health authorities. What is an easy way to increase children’s physical activity? Go outside! Research shows that children play harder and longer outside and are more likely to engage in vigorous play that strengthens hearts, lungs, and muscles. Outdoor play improves motor and other physical skills as well as overall fitness levels.

Take it Outside



Research-Backed Practices for Increasing Physical Activity

What Else Does Research Say to Increase Physical Activity in Young Children?

Research recommends these four practices as evidence-based ways to increase physical activity in young children within child care settings. Use the boxes below to brainstorm how you might implement these ideas in your own program settings.

1. Increase time spent outside in play.
2. Provide portable play equipment (e.g., loose or moveable parts, balls, toys, etc.).
3. Train staff to deliver structured physical activity sessions.
4. Integrate physical activity into teaching and learning activities throughout the day.

Your ideas for #1:

Your ideas for #2:

Your ideas for #3:

Your ideas for #4:

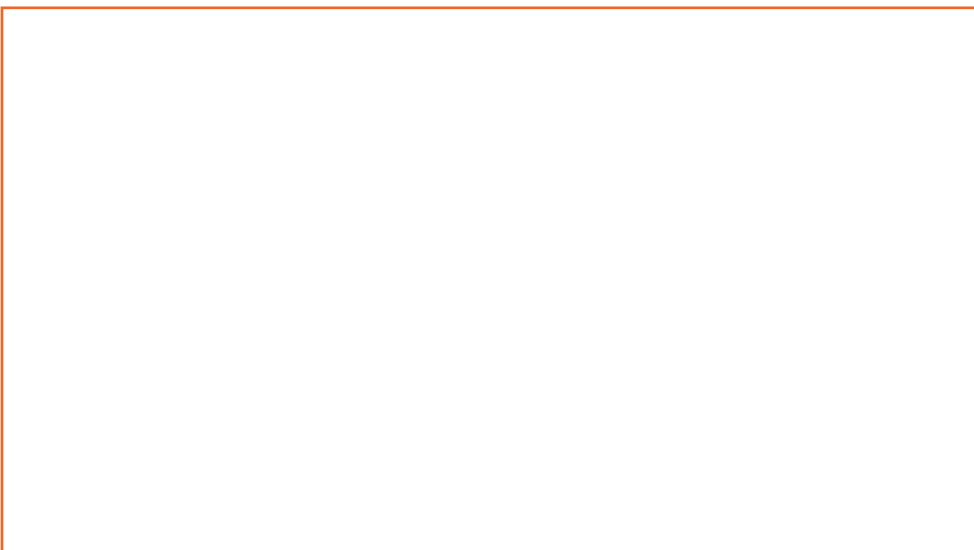
Video Reflection: Physical Play Outdoors

As you watch this video, what physical skill development do you see happening here? What aspects of the environment, materials, or adult interactions support this?



Video Reflection: Inclusion on the Playground

As you watch this video, what might impact each child's ability to fully participate? What are some of the barriers you see? How does the environment and/or adult support this?



Video Reflection: Let's Watch it Again!

As you re-watch this video, keep the perspective of a child with a disability or delay in mind. What are some ways this family child care provider could make this outdoor learning activity more inclusive if she had a child with a disability or delay join her program?



Development of Physical Skills Requires Appropriate Challenge

It is important to remember that a “safe” environment means an appropriately challenging environment. And if you don't have appropriate challenges, children will find ways to find their own challenges that are not as safe as appropriate challenges you've provided. Use the box below to write notes about risky play and any questions you may have. You can also use this space to record your ideas of things you'd like to try in your program or take back to a staff meeting to discuss with your team. Note that supporting risky play for ALL children is a matter of equity. For home visitors, this is a great topic of discussion with families in joint planning sessions.

What is an inclusive outdoor play environment for ALL children? What are your key take-aways from this webinar? What ways can you put this information into practice within your community or program? Write your notes and ideas below.

Helpful Resources

Webinars

Front Porch: Using the Natural World to Support Children’s Development

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/using-natural-world-support-childrens-development>

Front Porch: Preschool Play for Physical Development

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/preschool-play-physical-development>

Loose Parts on the Playground

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/loose-parts-playground>

Creating Safe and Engaging Learning Environments: Active Supervision for Preschoolers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/creating-safe-engaging-learning-environments-active-supervision-preschoolers>

Why Young Children Need Structured Motor Play

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/why-young-children-need-structured-motor-play>

Videos

Nature-Based Learning and Development for Teachers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/nature-based-learning-development-teachers>

Play Promotes Early Development: It’s Time for Play! Video Series

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/article/play-promotes-early-development-its-time-play>

- It’s Time for Play! Outdoor Play: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/videocast/its-time-play-outdoor-play>

Briefs, Tips Sheets, and Tools

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Tips for Keeping Children Safe: A Developmental Guide – Preschoolers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/safety-practices/article/tips-keeping-children-safe-developmental-guide-preschoolers>

Healthy Active Living

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/healthy-active-living>

I Am Moving, I Am Learning (IMIL)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/physical-health/article/i-am-moving-i-am-learning-imil>

Active Play: Health Tips for Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/active-play-health-tips-families>

Caring for Our Children Guidelines

<https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.1.3.1>

OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

25 Easy Ideas for Nature Play for Early Childhood Centers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/25-easy-ideas-nature-play-early-childhood-centers>

Affordable Settings and Elements: Ideas for Cost Effective Solutions (for outdoor play spaces)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/affordable-settings-elements-ideas-cost-effective-solutions>

Play Space Assessment for Preschool

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/play-space-assessment-preschool>

10 Tips to Enhance Your Outdoor Play Space

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/10-tips-enhance-your-outdoor-play-space>

Benefits of Outdoor Play and Exploration

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/benefits-outdoor-play-exploration>

Childhood in the Garden: A Place to Encounter Natural and Social Diversity

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/childhood-garden-place-encounter-natural-social-diversity>

The Current State of Outdoor Play and Exploration in the United States

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/current-state-outdoor-play-exploration-united-states>

The Great Outdoors

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/blog/great-outdoors>

Nature Club Toolkit for Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/nature-club-toolkit-families>

Our Natural World (Teacher's Guide)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/our-natural-world>

Outdoor Play Benefits

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/outdoor-play-benefits>

When Availability of Outdoor Play Space Is an Issue

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/when-availability-outdoor-play-space-issue>

INCLUSION

Environments That Support High-Quality Inclusion

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/environments-support-high-quality-inclusion>

Head Start Center for Inclusion: Challenging Behavior Tips

<https://headstartinclusion.org/tip-sheets/challenging-behavior-tips/>

ADA and Playground Accessibility

<https://playgroundsafety.org/topics/topic/ada-and-playground-accessibility>

Mobile Apps

ELOF2GO Mobile App

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/elof2go-mobile-app>

ELOF@Home Mobile App

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/mobile-tools-home-visitors>

Text4Teachers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/text4teachers>

Text4HomeVisitors Mobile App

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/mobile-tools-home-visitors>

Ready DLL Mobile App

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/ready-dll-mobile-app>

Additional Outdoor and Risky Play Resources

Outdoor Play Keyword Search on ECLKC

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/keyword/outdoor-play>

Outside Play Canada

<https://outsideplay.ca/>

Occupational Therapy Helping Children: Benefits of Supported Risky Play for Children

<https://occupationaltherapy.com.au/benefits-of-supported-risky-play-for-children/>

Early Learning Indiana: Rough-and-Tumble Play

<https://partnershipsforearlylearners.org/2019/05/09/rough-and-tumble-play/>

The Outdoor Classroom – Learning at Home: Healthy Risk Taking

[https://www.evergreen.ca/downloads/pdfs/OutdoorClassroom RiskTaking.pdf](https://www.evergreen.ca/downloads/pdfs/OutdoorClassroom_RiskTaking.pdf)

Loose Parts Play Berlin

<https://www.kinderzeitberlin.de/en/loose-parts-play-berlin/>

Green School Yards America: Outdoor Activities for ages 3-18 Years

<https://www.greenschoolyards.org/guides>