

# Active Solutions



## Age Appropriate Activities for Preschool-Aged Children

### Integrating physical activity into your preschooler's day is fun and easy!

Preschoolers need at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of physical activity throughout the day. This can be met through both structured and unstructured play.



### What is structured and unstructured play?

Unstructured and structured play refer to the different types of children's play. **Unstructured play** is less restricted and often spontaneous, made up on the spot by those playing. Unstructured play can include playing alone or with friends and family, and often involves imaginative play. Some examples include:

- A child finds a ball and sits on it and pretends it is their car
- Children walking within a playground space, moving from one piece of equipment to the next, and exploring on their own time
- Music is turned on, some children start dancing and others start doing summersaults

**Structured play** is usually organized; it may have rules, time limits and the environment is prepared with equipment and props. The structured experience is guided by an adult. Some examples include:

- Providing 30 minutes of time to play with balls and encouraging children to throw and catch
- Going for a walk and encouraging children to march and sing the 'Ants Go Marching'
- Creating an obstacle course for children to move through

Below are some key characteristics of 3-5 year olds and suggestions for educators to encourage physical activity.

#### Enjoy creative movement

Pretend to be a seed that develops into a tree and moves its branches in the wind. Invite children to move like a dinosaur or hop like a rabbit.

#### Engage in dramatic play

Read a story and invite children to act out specific movements associated with specific words.

#### Learn to love being outdoors

Make time for children to explore their natural world – get messy, garden, make mud pies, or look for insects.



#### Enjoy hands-on, sensory activities

Invite children to play with leaves, snow, water and sand.

Children at this age should participate in many different types of movements while enjoying physical activity.

Encourage the following in your early years setting:



## Physical Activity Actions

## Physical Activity Ideas

- Catching, trapping
- Throwing, kicking, striking
- Running, jumping, skipping
- Balancing
- Skating/skiing/sliding

- Balloons and scarves are great for helping small children learn catching skills.
- Use rhymes to help learn those actions.
- These are important locomotor skills that can be incorporated in games such as tag.
- Place a rope on the floor and encourage children to balance. Be a stork on one leg, or be a table with three legs.
- Learn to move on ice and snow. Walking, shoveling snow and tobogganing help children to appreciate winter season activities. Begin moving on ice in boots, learn how to fall down and get up.

### Encourage children to:

- Move their body parts: head, neck, shoulders, knees, hands, fingers, legs, and toes as this helps children to become aware of their body and how it moves!
- Understand space and how to move within it - high, medium, low, forward, backward, curve, side to side, small and big.
- Watch out for others! Encourage children to develop an awareness of others in their space. Slowing down or stopping when they come near another person is an important skill at this age. This is also a good safety measure.



Children ages 3-5 will notice if you are not participating in the fun. Whether you are a parent or a caregiver, be an active role model and be sure to play along with your preschooler(s).



### ACTIVE SOLUTIONS AND RESOURCES:

- Visit [www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap\\_bc/](http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap_bc/) for a FREE resource guide with 40 fun-filled activities encouraging learning through play and promoting physical activity, healthy eating, early language and children's reading.
- Visit [www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca) for more ideas for developing physical literacy and physically active lifestyles.



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