



Pathways to Success

Helpful Strategies for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children

Developing Physical Literacy in Children

Children don't just love to move, they need to move in order to grow and learn. Daily physical activity is good for the body and is an important part of brain development- it improves thinking skills, learning, behaviour, and helps us all stay physically and mentally healthy.

What is Physical Activity?

Physical activity is any movement of high or low intensity that requires energy, increases heart rate and increases breathing. Walking, running, playing soccer, dancing, swimming, gardening and stretching are all good examples of being active.

For healthy growth and development, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends the following guidelines:

- **Infants** (aged less than 1 year) should be physically active several times daily – particularly through floor-based play with a caregiver.
- **Toddlers** (aged 1–2 years) and preschoolers (aged 3–4 years) should accumulate at least 180 minutes of physical activity at any intensity spread throughout the day, including:
 - * a variety of activities in different environments;
 - * activities that develop movement skills;
 - * progression toward at least 60 minutes of VERY energetic play by 5 years of age.
- **School-aged children** (aged 6-12) should be getting one hour or more of moderate to strong physical activity daily.



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What is Physical Literacy?

While movement of all kinds is important for children, so is learning the skills for movement. Just as kids learn language, math, and reading, they also need to be taught how to move. Many of the activities and sports that children can participate in as they grow, such as soccer, basketball, swimming, biking and skating, require putting together a set of movement skills in order to fully participate. Physically literate children are those who have developed a wide range of physical skills that allow them to participate in a variety of physical activities. When children can move with competence, confidence, and motivation, we say that they are developing their physical literacy skills.

Basic Movement Skills for Children Include:

Crawling	Jumping	Hopping (two feet and one foot)
Running	Swimming	Stretching
Kicking	Balancing	Throwing
Dodging	Catching	Dribbling
Climbing	Skating	Skipping

How Do I Teach Physical Activity and Physical Literacy?

Think of ways that you can incorporate movement, physical activity, and physical literacy into your daily routine. Be creative! Some ideas include:

- Playing “Simon Says” while getting dressed to go outside
- Incorporating action and dance songs into circle time and/or daily routines at home
- Designing an obstacle course or scavenger hunt at home, in the classroom or on the playground
- Doing some stretching and/or yoga poses before rest time
- Using “animal walks” to get from place to place

References:

- *Canadian Society for Exercise and Physiology (2019):* www.csep.ca/guidelines
- *The 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth:* www.participaction.com/en-ca/resources/report-card

