



Having fun, getting fit!

How can you get every child active for at least 60 minutes a day? This is the target recommended by Change4Life, the social marketing movement backed by the Department of Health that aims to help every family in England eat well, move more and live longer. Similar initiatives are running in Scotland and Wales. And this year, as part of National School Grounds Week, LTL is launching *The big play experiment!* designed to get as many children as possible UK wide engaged in more physical activity through enjoyable outdoor play.

The importance of active play

According to Change4Life, nine out of 10 children today could grow up dangerously overweight, exposing themselves to life-threatening diseases like cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Physical activity, as well as contributing to maintaining a healthy weight and reducing these future risks, is also important for healthy growth and development of the musculoskeletal and cardiorespiratory systems.

How much is enough?

In England, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) states that 'the recommended 60 minutes may be achieved through several short bursts of activity of 10 minutes or more'.

As ever, parents have a major role to play, but schools can also do their bit to help. Formal PE lessons are one answer. But they are not the only opportunity to get children on the move – getting children active at playtimes can also make a major contribution to ensuring they take their recommended daily exercise.

Getting started

The best way to get children being active is to get them motivated – and this means providing plenty of opportunities for active play of the type they enjoy while also helping them make the link between active play and good health.

Although devised to work in conjunction with the National School Grounds Week Schoolgrounds-UK poster, the advice and activities recommended here can be introduced into your playground at anytime of the year.

Here you will find:

- ideas on how to support active play in your playground
- ways to motivate children in active play
- how to find out what activities children most enjoy
- four fun, active, playtime games plus ideas to help create your own game.

Supporting active play

For children's physical health, opportunities for active play are essential. And playtimes and breaktimes not only offer great opportunities to get children active but also the chance to try out and develop new skills and inspire them to explore, experiment and challenge themselves and each other. Of course, this type of play also encourages children to let off steam, ready to return to the classroom.

Encouraging active play in the school grounds – especially adult-led activities – means ensuring everyone involved, from parents and governors to teachers, breaktime supervisors and even the caretaker, understands and appreciates the value of active play and is encouraged to contribute towards its success.

Zally Huseyin from Playwell (see 'Further resources'), an organisation that supports a whole school approach



towards play, points out that it is especially important to get parents on board: 'Parents often limit schools by insisting on certain restrictions within the playground because of concerns about injury. Consequently there are schools where simple active games like cartwheels, leapfrog or handstand are forbidden.'

Zally suggests a number of approaches towards creating a positive active play ethos, including:

- agreeing a series of statements ('this school promotes active play') which are displayed around the school
- running a workshop for different members of the school community. Talk

about play and ask everyone there to remember what active games they played as children

- writing a formal play policy outlining the school's attitude and approach to play, and especially active play (see 'Further resources').

Motivating active play

Playtime and breaktimes are obviously free time for children – and there will always be times when children prefer to sit and chat rather than run around. But without the opportunities, inspiration and/or resources even the most naturally active children will not make use of the free time and space that playtimes offer them. So how can



Ball game (secondary)

You need a minimum of five people, a basketball and a large court divided into four equal squares.

Getting ready One square is named A. The next square, clockwise from A, is called B, the next C, the last D. Each square has one child in it. The other children wait in line to join the game. A is the head square.

Playing the game The person in A makes the rules (see below) and starts the game by serving the ball. The game is over when someone cannot return the ball or breaks the rules. That player then leaves the square and goes to the back of the line. If A, B, or C is out, the children rotate accordingly to fill the vacancies. The player in the front of the line enters at D and the game starts again.

Passing the ball The ball is hit as in tennis, except you use your hands. Square A serves by bouncing the ball once, then hitting it to another square. The player receiving the ball lets it bounce once in their square, then hits it to another square, and so on. If a player cannot return the ball after it bounces in their square, they are out. If the ball lands out of bounds, the player who last touched it is out. The ball can be hit before it bounces. In case of a dispute, the players in line vote on who won.

Winning the game The object is to stay in the game as long as possible, and work your way up to square A.

Changing the rules The twist to the game is the rules. Square A gets to make new rules at the beginning of every game if they choose to. A rule stands until it is nullified by someone in square A. The rules may pertain to any aspect of the game, from how to hit the ball, who to hit it to or how many times the ball can bounce before you are out, etc. Examples of typical rules include:

- return serves: when A serves to you, you must hit it back to A.
- no return serves: when A serves to you, you cannot hit it back to A.
- no back-stops: a back-stop happens when you touch the ball before it bounces in your square, letting it bounce once, then hitting it. A back-stop is a move used to gain control of the ball when it is hit to you.
- no one-handed shots: Players must use two hands when touching the ball.

Playground marking game (primary)



Draw circles in chalk around the playground – one less than the number of people taking part. One person stands in each circle except for the person who is 'on'. He or she turns away and the children in the circles shout 'Chucky Chucky', and try to swap circles with someone else. Whoever is 'on' turns around and tries to get into one of the circles that is left free while everyone is swapping. If he or she gets into the circle, the person who has no circle to go to is now 'on'.

Running game (primary)

The aim of this game is for teams to work together to deliver as many 'letters' as possible into post boxes set up around the grounds. The winning team is the one with the most accurately posted letters.

Before you begin

- 1 Think of a theme such as towns, countries, insects or flowers.
- 2 Gather together about a dozen cardboard boxes (you can use fewer with younger children).
- 3 Label each one with a different name or picture relating to your theme – for example, 'Southampton', 'Cardiff', 'Glasgow', etc.
- 4 Place these around the grounds – you may wish to put towns in roughly correct geographical positioning or plants in locations where they actually grow in the school grounds.
- 5 Create a sheet with all the names or pictures on as a template then print off copies. Cut these up so each name or picture becomes a 'letter'. You will need to make sure that there are enough different 'letters' for everyone to have at least two to post – more if you have the time.

On the day

- 1 Put everyone together in teams – maybe in classes or smaller groups – and give each team a name, letter or number with which they can be identified.
- 2 Nominate a co-ordinator for each team. They will keep hold of the 'letters' and hand over the first one in their pile to the first member of each team – writing their team name on the back.
- 3 On the word 'go' the first player in each team runs off to post their letters in the correct box. Once they have done this they must run back and tell the next person in their team to collect and post another letter. This goes on until all the letters have been posted.
- 4 When finished all the boxes are collected up and the co-ordinators count the correctly posted letters in each box. The team with the most number of correct postings is the winner.



you ensure children have the chance to be active? Here are some ideas:

- set up adult-led activities. Offering the children the opportunity to take part in activities run by playground leaders, supervisors – even older children from the linked secondary school – is a great way to promote active play and encourage the less able or shy children. This may involve no more than teaching a group a new skipping rhyme, or a dance routine to their favourite song. Use the activities and resources recommended here to get you started.
- install features like a dance area (use cones to zone off a space), basketball hoops and netball rings, targets and grids on walls and the ground, trails and circuits, ropes, tyres, traversing walls and adventure playground equipment. Features such as these can also be used to inspire children to create their own playground games.
- provide as much variety as possible with sports equipment, bats and balls etc. Many schools use a key ring system to ensure equipment is returned and encourage independence.

Which active play opportunities should you offer?

How do you know that the opportunities you are offering are the best possible activities for motivating your children? Here's a data collecting activity which will not only give you the information you need, but if run by the pupils is a great

way of reinforcing the importance of active play.

Observe at least one breaktime and one lunchtime. You will need to use a data collection sheet to record the different levels of activity. You may also want to record how these levels differ depending on whether you are observing boys or girls being active.

Collect together your statistics and show them as a suitable graph. Using the statistics decide which group of students you are going to target.

Either run *The big play experiment!* using the activities recommended in this Groundnotes and the accompanying NSGW poster (see 'Further resources') and/or survey the children you have chosen to target to find out what type of physical activity they would like to do at breaktime, and what is currently preventing them from being more active.





Using all the information you have gathered so far, look at how you can make improvements to your school grounds that will encourage active play. Short term, these could include running regular adult-led activities and providing more small play equipment. Long-term you may want to explore installing playground and/or wall markings or, for example, an adventure trail.

Further resources

- National School Grounds Week *The big play experiment!* poster
- Groundnotes *Healthy School Grounds* and *Physical activity and active play in schoolgrounds*
- Out and about *Skipping around the ground*, *Playground Markings: The Maze* and *Playground markings: The Compass; Creating playground games*
- Information sheet *Writing a play policy* Available to download from the Member Services pages of our website.

Websites

- For inspirational playground activities visit www.playgroundfun.org.uk.
- For more games that involve running, visit www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A569982
- For more skipping songs visit www.gameskidsplay.net/jump_rope_rhymes.
- The British Heart Foundation provides a free resource kit for schools to run a sponsored skip: Jump Rope for Heart. Visit www.bhf.org.uk.
- Children who would like to improve their skills may wish to take part in the National Skipping Challenge. Visit www.skippingworkshops.co.uk
- For ideas, advice and training courses on promoting positive playground behaviour visit www.playwelluk.com.

Books

- *The Health Promoting Playground* by a project team representing Health Promotion Wales, Sports Council for Wales and Play Wales (Health Promotion Wales, 1994). Available from Health Promotion Wales, Ffynnon-las, Ty Glas Avenue, Llanishen, Cardiff, CF4 5DZ. Tel: 029 2075 222.
- *Active Fun with Playground Markings* by Susan Hill (University of Hull, 1997) University of Hull. Available from the Centre for PE and Health, School of Education, University of Hull, Hull, HU6 7RX. Tel: 01482 346 311.

Skipping game (primary)

Skipping is an excellent form of cardio-vascular activity. It also promotes bone health, co-ordination, rhythm and timing. This skipping song works best when two children hold one long skipping rope for other children to jump in to.

I had a little puppy
His name was Tiny Tim
I put him in the bathtub,
to see if he could swim
He drank all the water,
he ate a bar of soap
The next thing you know
he had a bubble in his throat.
In came the doctor (*person jumps in*)
In came the nurse (*person jumps in*)
In came the lady with the
alligator purse (*person jumps in*)
Out went the doctor (*person jumps out*)
Out went the nurse (*person jumps out*)
Out went the lady with the
alligator purse (*person jumps out*)

New game! (primary and secondary)

Children of all ages naturally create their own games such as chasing games and dancing activities. Encourage them to share their existing games, and/or create new ones:

- provide a range of equipment – skipping ropes, hoops, balls, bases, chalk, bean bags etc – to stimulate ideas
- encourage children to write down the rules in a format that enables others to play the games too
- visit www.playgroundfun.org.uk for inspiration.



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To find out more about membership call 01962 845811 or visit www.ltl.org.uk

