

## ACTIVITY PLANNING FOR PRESCHOOLERS

Activity planning is a "must" for individuals and organizations providing child care, but is also recommended for parents to do at home. Planning in advance makes it easier to fit physical activity into your busy day.

How does activity planning benefit preschoolers?

- promotes regular physical activity which contributes to healthy growth and development, positive self-esteem, and a healthy weight
- ensures preschoolers have ample opportunities to be active and exercise their muscles
- provides preschoolers with a chance to try new activities and meet new friends
- provides a source of fun and entertainment

Why should you have an activity plan?

- to provide regular opportunities for active play and ensure preschoolers are active every day
- to decrease the amount of time spent in sedentary activities such as television watching and computer games
- to help you set aside time to be active with your preschooler



Parents and child care providers share the responsibility of keeping children physically active and should all be involved in planning and doing activities with their children.

## HOW TO USE THE "HEALTHY START FOR LIFE - KEEPING ACTIVE TOGETHER PLANNER"

Use the activity planner to plan or keep track of the activities you do with your children. Include activities that your children do on a regular basis (e.g. swimming or skating). Add other activities that you plan to do (e.g. walking or hiking). This will help you see if you have reached your goal of keeping your preschoolers active each and every day. Remember to include a variety of different activities.

**Tip:** If you are new to activity planning or don't have a lot of time, use the activity planner to record the activities you enjoy with your children day-by-day.

For activities choose:

- **Endurance activities** that strengthen the heart and lungs such as running, jumping and swimming.
- **Flexibility activities** that encourage children to bend, stretch and reach such as gymnastics and dancing.
- **Strength building activities** that build strong muscles and bones such as climbing.

When planning activities for preschoolers:

- Look for "fun" activities that children will enjoy
- Choose activities that are appropriate for the age and stage of your children. Preschoolers should begin with simple activities that develop skills for more complex activities. For example, rolling a ball and having them sit and catch it between their legs vs. throwing a ball and having them catch it while standing.
- Be aware that basic movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing and kicking do not just happen as a child grows older. These skills are a result of the child's heredity, activity experiences and their environment. For example, a child who does not use stairs may be delayed in stair climbing and a child who is discouraged from bouncing and chasing balls may lag in hand-eye coordination.

What else should you keep in mind?

- Praise children for participating in an activity - building confidence is more important than skill at this stage (e.g. I'm glad you enjoyed playing that game vs. you played that game really well)
- Keep children "moving" without making it seem like "exercise" or something they "have to do" - being physically active should come naturally
- Make sure indoor and outdoor play areas are safe
- Reduce "non-active" time spent watching TV and playing video and computer games.
- Be a good role model by being active yourself and with your children.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to plan your activities and check it again to see if your activity plan:

- Includes a variety of different activities and varies these throughout the week
- Includes activities that are appealing, fun and safe for preschoolers.
- Includes a combination of endurance, flexibility and strength activities.
- Provides for at least 30 minutes daily of **structured**<sup>1</sup> physical activity for toddlers and least 60 minutes for preschoolers.
- Provides for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day of daily, **unstructured**<sup>2</sup> physical activity.
- Provides opportunities for children and adults to be active together.

<sup>1</sup> **Structured** physical activity includes activities that you direct or do with your toddler/preschooler to keep them moving such as walking, exercising, bike riding, skating, gymnastics, dancing, active games, etc. These also include activities that you might take your toddler/preschooler to.

<sup>2</sup> **Unstructured** physical activity is supervised free time for children to play actively on their own or with other children. For example playing inside or outside on play structures, building forts, running and jumping, etc.

**QUICK LINKS FOR PARENTS AND CHILD CARE PROVIDERS:**

Canada's physical activity guide for children - Health Canada/Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/paguide/guides/en/children](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/paguide/guides/en/children)

Fun and Physical Activity - Toronto Public Health (2000)  
[www.toronto.ca/health/pubs\\_index.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/health/pubs_index.htm)

Healthy Start for Life – FAQs  
[www.dietitians.ca/healthystart/content/resources/faqs.asp](http://www.dietitians.ca/healthystart/content/resources/faqs.asp)

Moving and growing: exercises and activities for two, three and four year olds  
Canadian Institute of Child Health [www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cich/00002\\_en.htm](http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cich/00002_en.htm)

Moving & growing: exercises and activities for five and six year olds -  
Canadian Institute of Child Health [www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cich/00003\\_en.htm](http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cich/00003_en.htm)

Parachute play - Canadian Child Care Federation (1996)  
[www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/00004\\_en.htm](http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/00004_en.htm)

Physical activity Guidelines for Infants & Toddlers - National Association for Sport & Physical Education  
[www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=toddlers.html](http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=toddlers.html)

Ready Set Go - Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA)  
<http://www.readysetgo.org/>

Use this "sample activity plan" as a guide for planning activities you can do with your preschooler. Adapt it to suit your schedule and activity preferences.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- building blanket forts</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1</b></p>	<b>Tiny Tot Gym Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>2</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- stretching and moving exercises</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>3</b></p>	<b>Rhythmical activities –</b> <i>- marching and moving with the music</i> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>4</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- big ball bounce activities</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>5</b></p>	<b>Parent &amp; Tot Swim Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>6</b></p>	<b>Family outing –</b> <i>- walking or hiking</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>7</b></p>
<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- stretching and moving exercises</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>8</b></p>	<b>Tiny Tot Gym Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>9</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- dancing - making up your own dance</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>10</b></p>	<b>Parachute or Blanket games</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>11</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- outdoor playground climber</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>12</b></p>	<b>Parent &amp; Tot Swim Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>13</b></p>	<b>Family outing –</b> <i>- cycling or cross country skiing</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>14</b></p>
<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- outdoor hopping &amp; skipping games</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>15</b></p>	<b>Tiny Tot Gym Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>16</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- marching and moving with the music</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>17</b></p>	<b>Obstacle &amp; Climbing Course</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>18</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- bean bag toss &amp; carpet games</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>19</b></p>	<b>Parent &amp; Tot Swim Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>20</b></p>	<b>Family outing –</b> <i>- picnic in the park</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>21</b></p>
<b>Walk</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <i>- Freeze tag</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>22</b></p>	<b>Tiny Tot Gym Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>23</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- outdoor playground climber</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>24</b></p>	<b>Ball Games</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>25</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- outdoor hopping &amp; skipping games</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>26</b></p>	<b>Parent &amp; Tot Swim Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>27</b></p>	<b>Family outing –</b> <i>- skating or scavenger hunt</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>28</b></p>
<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- dancing - making up your own dance</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>29</b></p>	<b>Tiny Tot Gym Class</b> <b>Outdoor free play</b> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>30</b></p>	<b>Walk</b> <b>Indoor free play</b> <i>- big ball bounce activities</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>31</b></p>	x	x	x	x

**Bold type (black)**= "Structured activities" such as games and activities that you direct or do with your preschooler to keep them moving such as walking, exercising, bike riding, skating, gymnastics, dancing, active games, etc. These can also include activities that you might take your preschooler to.

**Regular type (blue)** = "Unstructured activities" including supervised free time for children to play actively on their own or with other children. For example playing inside or outside on play structures, building forts, running and jumping, etc.

**Italic type (green)** = Other activities that can be done by preschoolers with their parents or child care providers

Copy this activity planner and post it on your fridge or bulletin board to plan or keep track of activities to do with your children.

**Remember to:**

- Plan for 30 – 60 minutes of **structured\*** activity per day.
- Plan for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of **unstructured\*\*** play per day
- Preschoolers should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.
- Make activity part of your usual routine.
- Enjoy being active with your preschooler.
- Eating well and keeping active go hand-in-hand.

**MONTH** \_\_\_\_\_

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

**Physical activity can stimulate physical growth, raise self-esteem, contribute to social development and enhance overall health and well being.**

<p><b>COLD WEATHER ACTIVITIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Playing in the snow</li> <li>- Sweeping or shoveling snow</li> <li>- Building a snow fort or snow - dinosaur/creature</li> <li>- Pulling a sled or wagon</li> <li>- Skating - indoors or outside</li> </ul>	<p><b>WARM WEATHER ACTIVITIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Playing outside – kicking or throwing a ball, skipping, running, jumping, climbing</li> <li>- Playing sidewalk chalk games like hop scotch or 4 -square</li> <li>- Planting a garden</li> <li>- Supervised water play &amp; swimming</li> <li>- Riding a tricycle, big wheel or bicycle</li> <li>- Playing with a soccer or beach ball</li> </ul>	<p><b>ANYTIME ACTIVITIES:</b> (inside or outside)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dancing or moving to music</li> <li>- Walking or hiking</li> <li>- Scavenger hunt</li> <li>- Climbing on play structures or doing an obstacle course</li> <li>- Setting up a safe place to jump, climb and explore (e.g. inside - soft furniture, bean bag chairs and lots of pillows to build forts)</li> <li>- Swimming</li> <li>- Martial Arts</li> <li>- Gymnastics</li> </ul>
---	---	---