

Supporting your child's physical education

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Physical Education during lockdown

This fact sheet has been written to provide you, as parents, caregivers and relatives of primary school children, with a few tips and strategies based on two broad concepts that can help support a balanced lifestyle for your family. Provided below is a summary which will help you build some exciting and fun movement and body challenges for primary children. The suggested activities here use basic equipment and can be modified and adjusted according to the resources available in your home.

Keeping up with children's movement needs

Screen time is one of the many challenges that we face during the extended lockdown. As our lives have moved online, it's important to remind ourselves and our families that there is life outside our computers and smart phones. While we can acknowledge screen time can be fun, we need to remember that learning and movement are as well. Movement and physical activity in particular supports school learning, and body and mind growth, and provides a sense of personal achievement and self-esteem.

Some facts

Recent research has shown that for a balanced and healthy development, children and young people should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day. There are also reports showing that Australian children are doing poorly with their overall motor skills in comparison with international standards, so we need to pick up our game!

What can we do to get kids moving?

The pandemic has presented us with many challenges including how to keep moving when we can't leave our homes, or at least our local area. A key point to remember is that times of challenge present us with an opportunity to be creative, so lockdown may be a chance to think differently about how we move and develop our fitness. That said, primary school children do love to play in groups outside the family circle, across a variety of different locations, both of which are not possible in lockdown. So what can we do? Firstly, let's consider one of two relevant concepts: *fundamental movement skills*.

Concept 1 – Fundamental Movement Skills

Fundamental movement skills (FMS) are motor (movement) skills that every child needs to develop as they are the basis for participation in more complex sports or physical activities such as dance, acrobatics, gymnastics, circus, and others. They can be defined as the 'motor alphabet' or the 'constructing blocks' for more refined types of movement. Physical Education introduces children to this motor alphabet, allowing them to experience the basis to create motor competency across the infinite range of body challenges and opportunities that we face during different phases of our lives. FMS involve different body parts, either in isolation (e.g. trying to manipulate a ball with your hands) or in combination (trying to dribble the same ball while jumping on your feet).

FMS can be classified under three major categories: a) *Locomotor skills* (running, skipping, leaping, crawling and others); b) *Manipulative skills* (throwing, catching, kicking, hitting), and c) *Balance skills* (standing on one foot, back flips, using the body's horizontal and vertical axes, etc). Motor skills need to be introduced and consolidated across the primary school years. Ideally, children will have developed a sound level of competence for some or all these skills by the end of their primary schooling. NSW schools usually teach 12 key FMS which can be found on [this website](#).



FMS tips and strategies

Fun is the key word to get your children moving whilst practicing their FMS. Children are driven to play, which is fun, so it is important to avoid mechanical FMS repetition, mostly because FMS are usually employed in social contexts of games and everyday life, and not in isolation. One of the most engaging ways to implement FMS is through obstacle races. Search 'obstacle races' and you'll find several ideas and videos to inspire you and your family to build indoor races in your living room, or outdoor ones in your backyard.

A few important points to consider for this type of activity:

1. the construction of the race is part of the fun, get your kids to bring their ideas to the game;
2. look out for safety and potential hazards;
3. explore simple home equipment, such as couches, chairs, cushions, linen, crepe or toilet paper, books;
4. add mental challenges to the race (a riddle for example);
5. you can make it more challenging by timing the race, or competing against them; and
6. add music to make it more exciting – after all, the most known obstacle race is called 'musical chairs'!

Kindergarten and stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) - the tip is to help them to discover the FMS by using their imagination, adding animal movements or a favourite TV character (e.g., PJ masks) and employing their own bodies to let them to explore a range of FMS.

Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) children are already able to combine two or three FMS simultaneously (e.g. run and control a ball with their foot, or jump and throw a ball in the same time). Obstacle races can reflect this potential by introducing activities such as running and throwing a ball, or hitting a balloon with a large cooking spoon.

In Stage 3 (Years 5 & 6) children might be able to further combine their FMS in large and more complex movements. Team sports and games are usually used here. Whilst this might be difficult during lockdown, trying to adjust some combined movements of sports (such as hitting a ball into a target, or striking plastic bottles filled with different coloured water (each colour has different points) can add challenge and fun to your obstacle race.

Concept 2 – Games categories



Although improving FMS is highly relevant during lockdown to divert time away from screens, it's important that most PE activities are offered in a game format as this is where children will have more fun. Games also offer valuable social interactions that aid communication, emotion regulation and problem solving – and are more fun!

Games can be categorized using different criteria (e.g., outdoor or indoor). Here I propose a classification of games according to their aims. Using this criterion, there are:

- Target games, with the aim to place a projectile near or in a target to score points (e.g., bowling, archery);
- Striking/Fielding games, where a batting team opposes a fielding team to score points (e.g., cricket, softball) ;
- Net/Wall games, where a player send an object into an opponent's court and has to wait until the object is returned to their court side (e.g., tennis, volleyball) and
- Invasion games, where the purpose is to invade the opponent's territory to score more points, whilst the opposing team try to avoid the 'invaders' to score' (e.g. rugby, netball).

Click on the game types to see several ideas on how to play different types of games. Whilst playing a team sport is not feasible in its original form during lockdown, adjusting games so they can be played in a modified version encourages creativity, fun and a sense of inclusion. Games are the ideal context for the development of FMS, either in isolation (e.g. throwing a paper ball into a small basket, a kangaroo race) or in combination (e.g. balloon tennis, mini-basketball).

Games tips and strategies

Get the kids to develop basic rules with you; make them fun and less competitive. Adjust different games according to the children's motor skills and understanding of rules and time-space concepts.

Kindergarten and Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2). Small children love chasing games, this is where they develop most of their locomotor and balance skills, as well as important notions of space and time. Adjust the games so children run in different directions, crawl, etc.

Stage 2 (Years 2 and 3) children can play adjusted games such as 1 vs 1 or 2 vs 2 football games, netball or basketball games; tennis or cricket games. Balls, rackets, nets and general equipment do not need to be official, in the contrary, it is better to use adjusted and smaller balls and other equipment to improve success rate thus increasing motivation and participation rates. Therefore, chairs can be used as goal posts or nets, bins as baskets; foam and lighter balls are ideals to help them to catch and manipulate the equipment, hence developing their FMS.

Stage 3 (Years 5 and 6) children - similar to Stage 2, they can further refine their understanding of different sports by playing modified games with adjusted equipment to enhance their success and self-esteem.

The [Playing for Life](#) website has numerous sports cards that will give you and your children an enormous range of game ideas that can be adjusted to the home environment

Final tips:

Dance! Enjoy your family moments by playing songs that your kids love and have fun while creating all types of dance moves!

Bikes! Family bike riding is fun and great to get everyone active!

