

Get Ready!

Let's Begin

Children all over the world have one thing in common, they love to play! For them, play is about having fun! Children enjoy hopping, skipping, jumping, running, bending, balancing, throwing, catching, chasing and hiding. However, play is also a way for them to express themselves, to learn social skills and to work out the stress in their daily lives.



The **benefits of physical activity** go beyond fun. Adopting an active lifestyle at a young age can decrease the chances of developing heart problems, hypertension, osteoporosis, Type 2 diabetes and cancer. Regular physical activity strengthens bones, builds muscle, works the heart and contributes to a healthy body weight and lifestyle.

Playing with peers in our diverse community gives children an opportunity to integrate their racial, ethnic and cultural awareness. Games allow them to practise teamwork and leadership skills through decision making, communication, time management, problem solving, conflict resolution and goal setting. Learning these skills builds a feeling of confidence, which encourages them to engage in new challenges. Mastering these challenges builds self-esteem and provides a foundation of strong **social and life skills** for their future.

Outdoors: The Ultimate Playground is a **toolkit** developed by Toronto Public Health in consultation with various community agencies, childcare centres and physical activity experts, and adapted with permission by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. It includes **50 different games for boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 12**. These games were selected to encourage children's participation in physical activity during all **four seasons** of the year. Be creative when using this toolkit! There are no hard and fast rules. Feel free to change or adapt the activities and suggestions in a way that works well for you and the children.



No two children are the same. **Ability Adaptation Guidelines** provide suggestions for changes that can give children with personal challenges an opportunity to participate. Other suggestions may come from parents, friends and the children. Trial and error, with attention to safety, often is the best way to get all children of all abilities involved in interactive fun.

We encourage you to allow children the freedom to change the games if their creativity guides them to do so and safety is not compromised.

Fun! Enjoyment! Curiosity! Excitement! Health Benefits! All can be linked effortlessly. By using this toolkit, children can play freely outside, use their imaginations and develop a life-long love of physical activity!

Users of **Outdoors: The Ultimate Playground** should exercise their own judgement to determine the appropriateness of the games and to identify safety measures that need to be considered before children play the games. The City of Toronto and Toronto Board of Health disclaim any and all liability arising from injuries incurred by participants who use this resource.

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Artwork: Joe Weissmann.

Design: Murielle Weissmann