For young children, physical activity is natural. ‘Active Kids + Active You’ is based on the premise that children love to move. Little ones are delighted to have your company and your undivided attention (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2010). Playing actively with them will give pleasure to both of you. You do not need to be an expert on movement to promote a child’s daily physical activity, and no special equipment is necessary to make meaningful activity part of children’s lives.

Being active from an early age will help children become physically fit later in life as they will be set on a trajectory of a healthy lifestyle (Wethington, 2005). Health-related fitness involves cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition (Health Canada, 2009). Small children need several hours of unstructured movement every day. They should never be inactive for more than 60 minutes. Toddlers need at least 30 minutes of structured activities, such as those presented in this game, and preschoolers need at least 60 minutes of structured activities (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). You can break all activity periods into smaller units of ten or fifteen minutes.

To help your child reach individual activity goals, let your child randomly choose several of activities from the index cards in the game. Play at each one for 10 to 15 minutes. Ideally, you would have at least two or three activity sessions a day.

As you perform the activities in ‘Active Kids + Active You’ with your child, remember that one of the most important things you can do to promote an active lifestyle is to be a role model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2000). This game also includes a calendar that can be used to keep a record of your child’s and your physical activity throughout the month.

Record the amount of time spent each day by you in doing structured activities with your child.

So have fun, and let the suggestions in this game inspire your own creative movement ideas!
References


Horse Play

Go for a horse-back ride... on your imaginary horse. Gallop, trot, and canter down the street, at the park or in the house. Try some jumps and other show stopping moves!

Good to Know:

Becoming active early in life increases the chances that young children will learn to move skillfully, and forms the foundation for sport, dance, and exercise activities later in life.
Hop to It

Name animals and insects that hop and jump, then show how they move. Some examples to get you started include: grasshopper, kangaroo, frog, and rabbit.

Physical activity in young children helps early brain development and learning.
Push and Pull

Have your child push and pull a large box, laundry basket or wagon to different spots inside or outside. You can add household items to it to make it heavier. Take advantage of seasonal themes. For example, fill a wagon with some pumpkins in the fall.

Create indoor and outdoor play areas where rolling, climbing, jumping, and tumbling are safe, allowed and encouraged.
Mirror Game

Stand facing your child, explaining that you want her to do exactly as you do - just like she were your reflection in the mirror. Begin making slow movements that you can do in place, like raising and lowering an arm, nodding your head, or clapping your hands. Take turns being the leader.

This cooperative game is also great for social/emotional development along with physical development.
Bubbling over with fun!

Get out the bubble solution and blow bubbles. Try to catch and pop the bubbles.

Provide your child with the chance to jump, balance, catch, and follow objects with her eyes. Practicing these skills now will help build the skills she will use later to play different sports such as baseball and basketball.
**Track Meet**

Invite your child to pretend she’s in a track meet at the Olympics. Can she pretend to jump hurdles, in addition to “running the track?”

**Good To Know**

Research shows that families who play together are more likely to stay together. Activities that support family time, such as going for a family walk, playing catch or gardening, promote heathy family relationships.
Skittle Soccer

Fill 6 plastic bottles with sand or rice and place them on the ground about 30 cm apart, in a triangle shape. With chalk or masking tape mark a kicking point. Practice kicking with your child and see if one of you can get a “strike” by knocking all 6 bottles over!

Being active from an early age will help children become physically fit later in life. Health-related fitness involves cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, and body composition.
Aim and throw

Sit a washing basket or box on the floor and give your child a collection of balls, rolled up socks and rolled up paper to throw in. Once they are capable of throwing a certain distance ask your child to take a step back and try again.

Good to Know

When playing with your child, choose only activities for which the child is developmentally ready.
I Get a Kick Out of You!

Practice kicking and passing a ball using only your feet. A young child may need to use her hands to stop a rolling ball.

To make kicking safe and more interesting, make sure your child is wearing non-slip shoes and use an under-inflated large rubber ball. Try to challenge your child to aim toward an object rather than just kicking for distance.
Train

Tie two baskets together to make a train. Add a short rope for pulling, a child in the first "car" and her toy cargo in the second "car", and you, the adult, will get a good workout chugging the train around the house!

Good To Know

When playing with your child, choose only activities for which the child is developmentally ready.
It's a Zoo Out There

Have one person be the “zookeeper”. The zookeeper calls out an animal and everyone moves around the room just like that animal. When the zookeeper says “feeding time” everyone moves back to the zookeeper imitating their animal and waits for the next animal to be called.

Preschoolers should build up to 60 minutes of structured physical activity every day. These are activities that you plan, supervise and/or do with your child.
It's Never Too Late to Skate

On a carpeted area, clear some space to make a “rink”. Get two pieces of paper (8 1/2” x 11”), and put one under each foot. With shoes on, stride forward and backward as if you were skating. Have skating races, create a path to follow, or skate to music.

Good To Know

Preschoolers should build up to 60 minutes of endurance activities (activities that make your heart beat faster) every day.
Walk and Roll

Go for a walk. Try a “different walk”: walk slowly, quickly, with heavy loud steps, on tiptoes, with long strides, with tiny steps, in a straight line, and in a zig-zag. Run, skip, hop, step and jump.

Good To Know

Be active as a family by walking to do small errands such as mailing letters, a trip to the corner store, or returning a DVD.
Obstacle Course

On a carpeted area, create an obstacle course by using boxes, chairs, pillows, and other household items to jump over, crawl under and move around. Think about your child's safety by choosing items that are sturdy, free of sharp or rough edges, and lightweight.

Good To Know

Some children may get bored quickly so don't worry if you don't get to finish an activity before moving on to the next one.
Time to Act

Act out a sport and have your child guess what sport you are playing (e.g. basketball, hockey, soccer, baseball, volleyball, swimming). To make this activity more active, have your children mirror the activity while you act it out. Try again with another sport. Take turns acting.

Good To Know

Participating in a variety of sports helps children learn new skills, improve their self-confidence, make new friends, and improve their health.
Wacky Hockey

Play hockey using pool noodles and a soft ball.

Physical activity doesn't have to cost a lot of money. Think of household items you can use to be active e.g. plastic containers, squeeze bottles, cardboard boxes, cardboard rolls from wrapping paper or paper towels, egg cartons, old clothes and hats.
Strike up the Band

Create your own marching band and march around the house using real or make-believe instruments.

Good To Know

Physical activity builds strong bones and strengthens muscles, promotes flexibility, strengthens the heart, and enhances healthy growth and development.
Walk to the Rhythm of the Beat

Play music and move to the rhythm: walk, run, hop, march, gallop, and jump. Go down low, reach up high. Walk on the spot, on your toes, and on your heels. Walk around with big steps, little steps, light quick easy steps, heavy quick steps or long slow steps. Use your imagination.

Place pictures of your child being active on the fridge or on the walls... creating your own iWall of Fame! This will reinforce physically active play.
Snake Stomp

Hold a skipping rope at one end. Keeping the rope on the ground, wiggle it back and forth while having your child try to stomp on the rope.

Good To Know

Jumping helps strengthen your child's bones.
Do the Twist

Play music and dance for 10 minutes.

Dancing is a great way to make your heart and lungs stronger.
**Jump Through the Seasons**

Enjoy a walk in the rain, by jumping over puddles. On a warm, sunny day, jump over marks or cracks on the sidewalk or puddle shapes drawn with chalk. Fall and winter seasons offer piles of leaves and mounds of snow to jump into and over. Be sure to stay well back from the road and clear leaf piles of sharp sticks.

**Good To Know**

Remember, there's no such thing as bad weather... just dress properly for whatever weather nature brings!
“I spy” a Walk

While walking, one person takes a turn calling “I spy with my little eye, something that is ____” (fill in the blank with a letter, color, texture, etc.). Walk/run to the object. Continue walking while a different person takes a turn “spying”.

When children are encouraged to be active at an early age, there is a greater chance they will continue to be active throughout their lives.
Who Let the Dogs Out?
It's a Pooch Promenade. Pretend to walk like
Different dogs. Some ideas include:
  Dainty poodle walk
  Bouncy golden retriever walk
  Big Great Dane steps walk
  Crazy “mutt” walk
At the end, do the “wet dog shake”

Good To Know
Being active can be affordable. You can visit many public parks, trails and playgrounds at no cost.
Sponge Play

Use soft sponges to throw, catch, and bat using your hands.

It is important to promote all types of physical activities for both boys and girls. Avoid comments about what boys and girls should or should not do.
Bean Bag Bonanza

Start by balancing a bean bag (or similar sized item such as a stuffed animal or cushion) on your head, then walking around the room. Move the bean bag to various body parts such as your elbow, shoulder, tummy, back, knee. Next play bean bag basketball by throwing the bean bags into a box or basket.

Good To Know

This game helps your child learn about how her body moves and how to use space in different ways.
Activity calendar