



Keeping Kids Active After School

Does our after school program
offer kids the physical activity they need?





Why do kids need to be physically active?

Research shows that kids need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day to get the following benefits:

1 Strong muscles and bones



2 Good self-esteem and body image



3 Reduced risk for obesity



4 Increased chance of becoming healthy, active adults





Why should our after school program include physical activity?

A recent study found that fewer than one in 5 elementary and junior high school students walk or bike to school in good weather and that number drops to fewer than one in 10 in poor weather. So we know that kids are not getting enough physical activity on their way to and from school.

The study found that most Nova Scotia kids in grade 3 (more than 80%) get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day, 5 days a week. But by the time those kids are in grade 7, only 13% of girls and 24% of boys get that much physical activity.

Resources

Government of Nova Scotia (2012). Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Among Children and Youth: Key Findings from the 2009-2010 Study.





The hours after school are an ideal time to get kids physically active. Too many kids spend these hours alone in front of a TV or computer. Active after school programs get kids outside playing. Studies show that kids who take part in after school programs are more likely to become physically and emotionally healthy adults.

Physical activity is an important part of any after school program.

The following slides help you find out whether your program offers kids the physical activity they need to benefit fully.

Resources

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada (2011). *After School: The Time of a Child's Life.*





How do we know if our program is meeting our kids' physical activity needs?

The following slides are organized into 3 themes to help you find out

- if the kids in your program **get enough moderate to vigorous physical activity**
- how well you **plan and implement** your program so that kids get enough physical activity
- if you have the **facilities and equipment** you need to encourage and support physical activity

On each slide is a list of questions. Beside each question are 2 boxes like these

more..

. If you answer “yes” to a question, click the box that looks like this

and a check mark will appear. If you want to know more about the topic, click the

box that looks like this

information about the topic. You can always return to the question page by clicking

the button at the bottom of the page: [Return to question page.](#)

If you are going through these slides as a group, you can print off the question

page using the button at the bottom of the question page: [Print question page.](#)

Each participant can check the boxes next to the questions to which they answer

“yes.” You can then go through the slides together for more information on each of

the topics.





Do our kids get enough moderate to vigorous physical activity?

- 1 Do kids get at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity during our program?
- 2 Do we have a written policy to support the goal of question #1?
- 3 Do we set aside at least 60 minutes for physical activity in our program?
- 4 Do we offer frequent activity breaks to keeps kids from sitting still too long?
- 5 Do we offer a variety of physical activities from which kids can choose?
- 6 Do we get kids to play outside in nature as much as possible?
- 7 Do we follow the LET US Play guidelines in our afterschool program?
- 8 Do we keep instructions short when we introduce an activity?
- 9 Do we offer our program at least 2 days a week?
- 10 Does our staff take part in the physical activities we plan for our kids?
- 11 Do we set aside time for physically active free play?
- 12 Do we schedule our physical activity time early in the program?
- 13 Can everyone take part in our activities regardless of ability, culture, or religion?
- 14 Do we ask kids, girls in particular, what physical activities they would most enjoy?
- 15 Do we offer girls-only activities?





How do we plan and implement a program that gives kids enough physical activity?

- 16** Do we try to get the whole community to work with us to provide the best after school program we can?

- 17** Do we call on physical activity specialists to help us to train our staff or help to deliver programs?

- 18** Do we offer training opportunities to our staff?

- 19** Can everyone take part in our program regardless of ability to pay?

- 20** Do we offer transportation to kids who can't get to or from our program on their own?

- 21** How do we measure the physical activity levels of our program participants?

- 22** Do we ask staff, parents, and participants for ways to improve our program?





Do we have the **facilities and equipment** needed to encourage and support physical activity?

- 23** Do we ask those who own or control facilities to make their facilities available for after school programs?

- 24** Do we have the equipment we need to ensure that kids in our program have a variety of activities to choose from?

- 25** Do we offer a variety of spaces in which kids can play?

- 26** Do we encourage kids to use the whole play space?

- 27** Is it easy to get to and from our program on foot, by bike, or by public transit?

- 28** Do we make sure our kids have appropriate clothing for outside activities?





Congratulations!

You have completed the evaluation of your own after school program. You now know your kids should be moderately to vigorously active for 30 minutes during your program. You also know

- if your kids are getting enough physical activity
- how to plan and implement your program to make sure kids get enough physical activity
- how to get the facilities and equipment you need to encourage physical activity

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Find out more about the benefits of active living at participaction.com.

To leave this evaluation, click the “close” button.





Do children get at least **30 minutes** of moderate to vigorous activity during our program?

1

Research shows that children and youth need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day. After school programs are only one part of a larger plan to increase activity among children. The remaining 30 minutes of physical activity can be made up in the following areas:

- gym classes
- activity breaks in classrooms
- active transportation like walking, cycling, and roller-blading
- sports and recreation
- unstructured play with family and friends

Definitions

Moderate activity – makes you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. You should be able to talk but not sing.

Examples: walking, skating, cycling, skateboarding.

Vigorous activity – heart beats faster than with moderate activity. You will not be able to say more than a few words without having to catch your breath.

Examples: running, basketball, soccer, cross-country skiing.

SOURCE: [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

Resources

[Public Health Agency of Canada: Physical Activity Tips for Children \(5–11 years\)](#)

[Nova Scotia Connect.ca](#)



Do we have a **written policy** to support the goal of question #1?

2

A written policy does 4 things:

- It tells your staff what you expect of them.
- It tells parents what they can expect from the program.
- It ensures the same goals will be met even when staff changes.
- It gives a standard for program providers to measure against, for example, 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity.

Resources

[National Recreation and Parks Association. Healthy Out-of-School Time Wellness Policy Implementation Guide for Parks and Recreation Agencies](#)

[Girls Incorporated of Limestone, Algonquin and Lakeshore. Operational Policy Document: After School Program](#)





Do we set aside at least **60 minutes** for physical activity in our program?

3

Even when physical activity is scheduled, kids are not continuously active. While you should strive to minimize it, there will always be some time when kids are standing, sitting, or waiting. By scheduling 60 minutes of physical activity, you ensure that kids get at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise.

Definitions

Moderate activity – makes you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. You should be able to talk but not sing. Examples: walking, skating, cycling, skateboarding.

Vigorous activity – heart beats faster than with moderate activity. You will not be able to say more than a few words without having to catch your breath. Examples: running, basketball, soccer, cross-country skiing.

SOURCE: [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

Resources

[Physical Activity in Alberta
After School Programs](#)

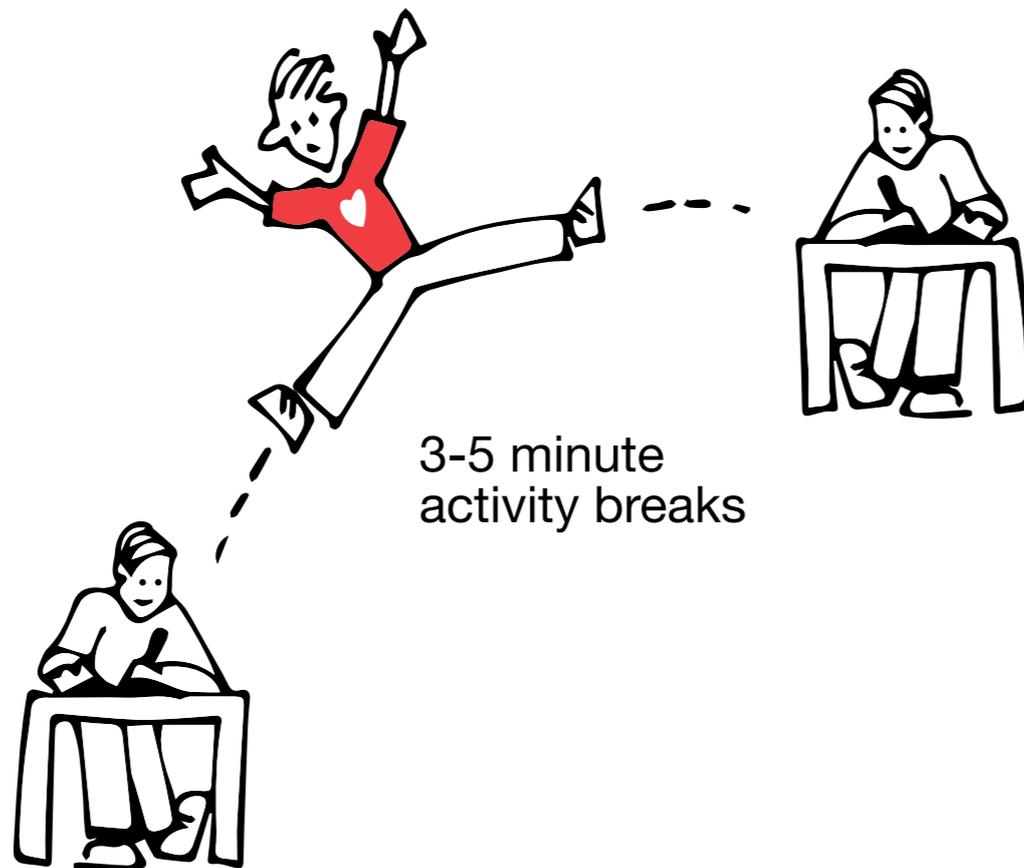
[Youth Fit for Life](#)



Do we offer **frequent activity breaks** to keep kids from sitting still too long?

4

Your after school program may include time for kids to complete homework, reading, or to work on arts and crafts. To keep kids from sitting too long, schedule short (3-5 minute) activity breaks during these activities. These short periods of activity can help you ensure that each participant gets at least 30 minutes of physical activity during your program.



Resources

[In-School Activity Breaks – American Heart Association](#)

[After-School Energizers: Classroom-Based Physical Activities](#)





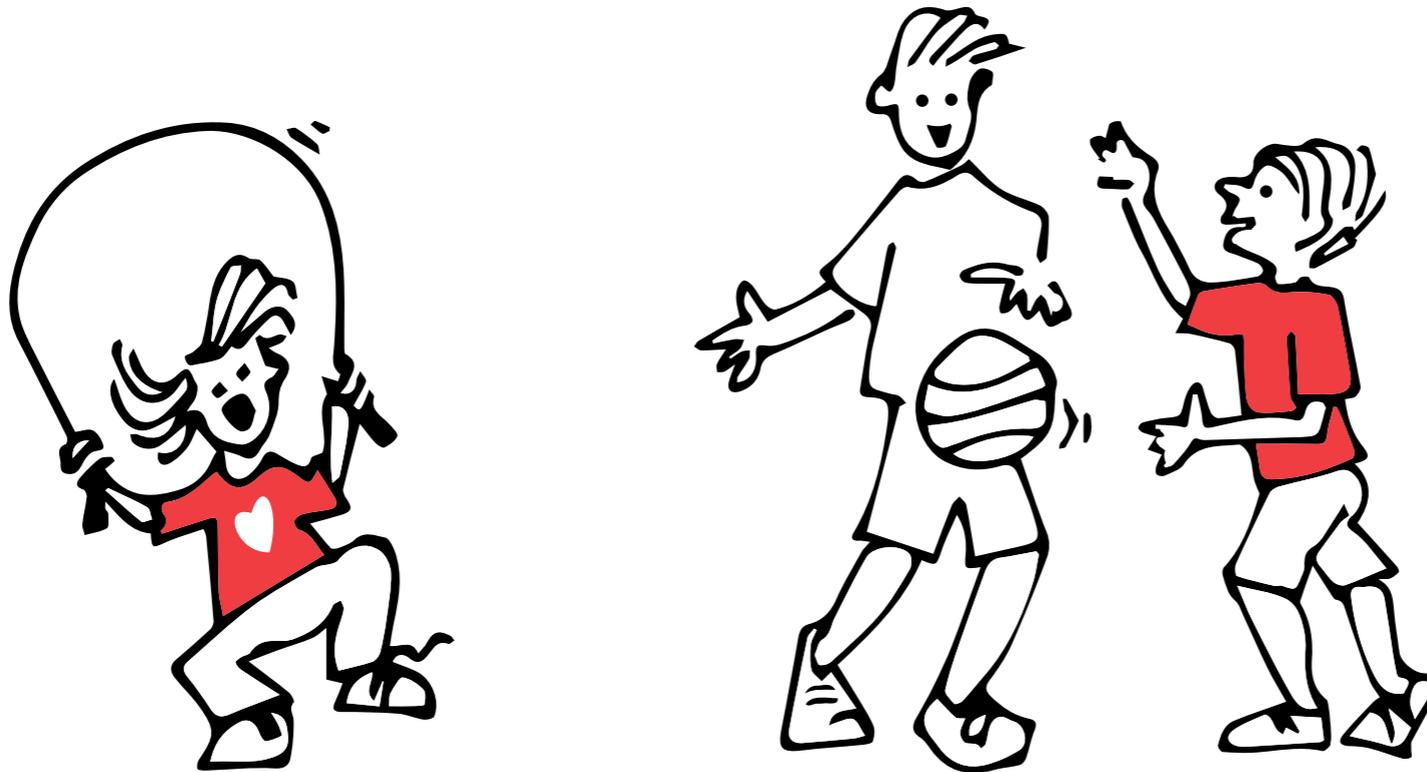
Do we offer a **variety of physical activities** from which kids can choose?

5

Remember that each of your participants is an individual and they all enjoy different things. Some kids like individual activities like running, bike-riding, and climbing. Others like group play like tag and ball games. Offering kids choices of activities means they can choose the ones they like. Kids are more likely to be active if the activity is something they enjoy.

Resource

[To Get Kids Active,
Let Them Choose](#)





Do we try to get kids to **play outside in nature** as much as possible?

6

Kids who play outdoors tend to be more physically active. Studies show that playing outside in nature improves kids' health and social interactions. A study that looked at where kids play in Canada found that kids aged 11 to 13 were more likely to be physically active in undeveloped treed areas than in other environments including parks and playgrounds.



Resources

[Canadian Childcare Federation: The Importance of Increasing Children's Outdoor Play Opportunities](#)

[Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play](#)



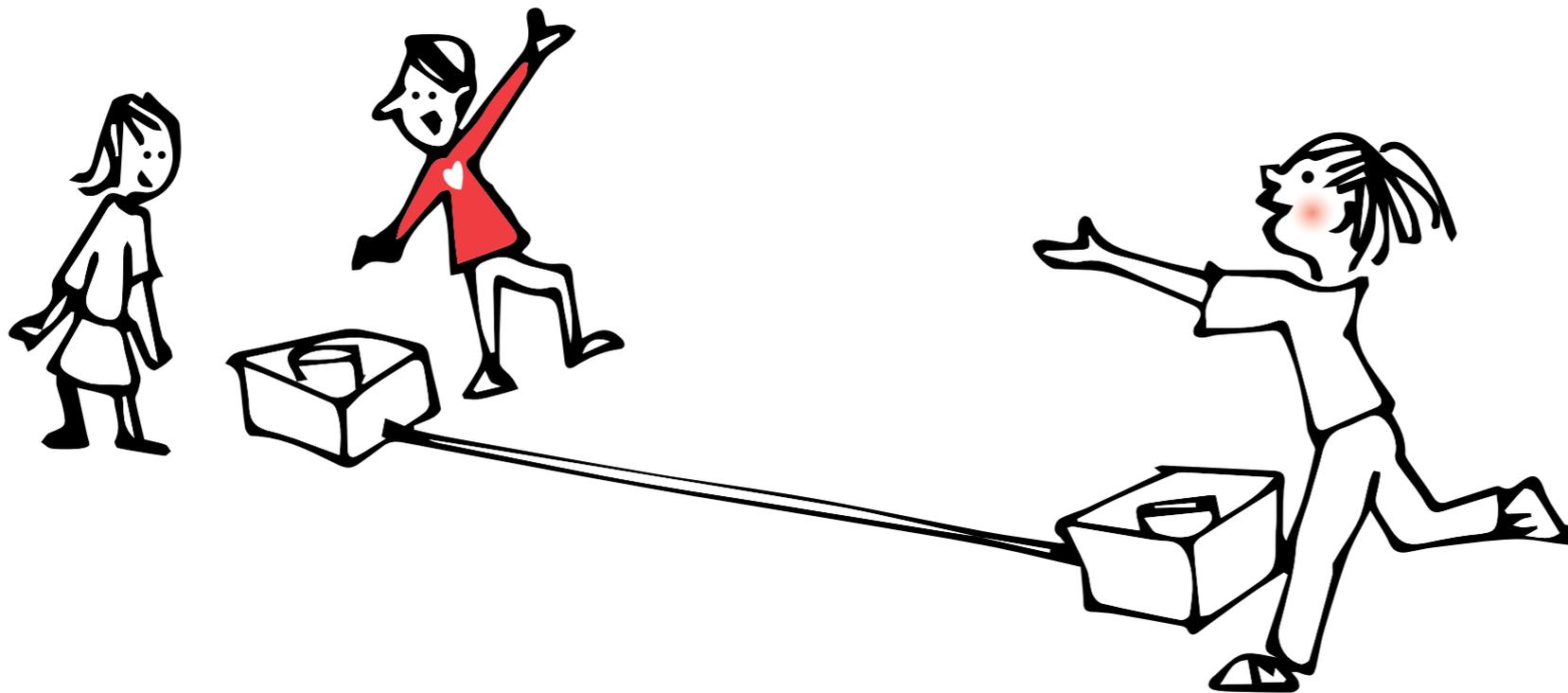


Do we follow the LET US Play guidelines in our afterschool program?

7

The LET US Play guidelines help you get kids as active as they can be during your afterschool program. These are some of the ways the LET US Play guidelines get kids to be more active:

- remove lines so kids have more room to play
- eliminate elimination
- reduce team size
- get everyone involved in the game – staff and kids
- get creative with space, equipment, and rules



Resources

[LET US Play Videos](#)

[LET US Play Principles](#)





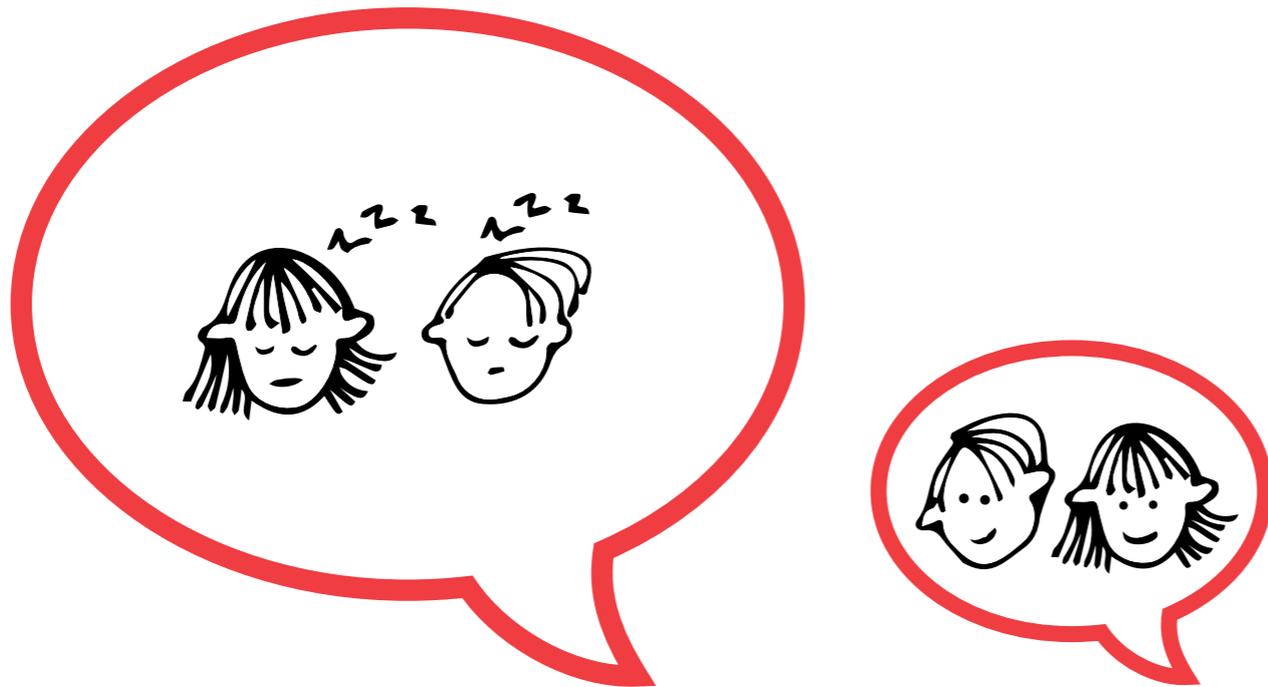
Do we keep **instructions short** when we introduce an activity?

8

Time spent listening to instructions is inactive time. If you keep your instructions short, you give your kids more time for active play. Remember, kids need at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity during your program.

Resource

[Overall Program
Tips & Tricks](#)





Do we offer our program at least **2 days a week**?

9

Children and youth need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. While they should be able to get half of that in gym class, walking or cycling to and from school, and in unstructured play with family and friends, many rely on after school programs for the other half. If you are only offering your program once a week, try increasing it to twice a week. Over time, you may gradually work your way up to offering your program 5 days a week but we wouldn't expect you to get there overnight.

Resources

[Government of Canada: Children and Physical Activity](#)

[Active Canada 20/20](#)



Monday



Tuesday



Wednesday



Thursday



Friday





Does our **staff take part** in the physical activity we plan for our kids?

10

Kids are less likely to participate in active play when their leaders do not take part. When kids decide NOT to join in active play, they usually turn to a more sedentary activity such as sitting down talking with friends or playing with electronic devices. Staff should move about the play area watching for kids who are not playing. They should find creative ways to get these kids to play. Studies show that when staff get involved in play, kids are more likely to participate.

Resources

[Active Role Models](#)

[LET US Play Videos](#)





Do we set time aside for physically **active free play**?

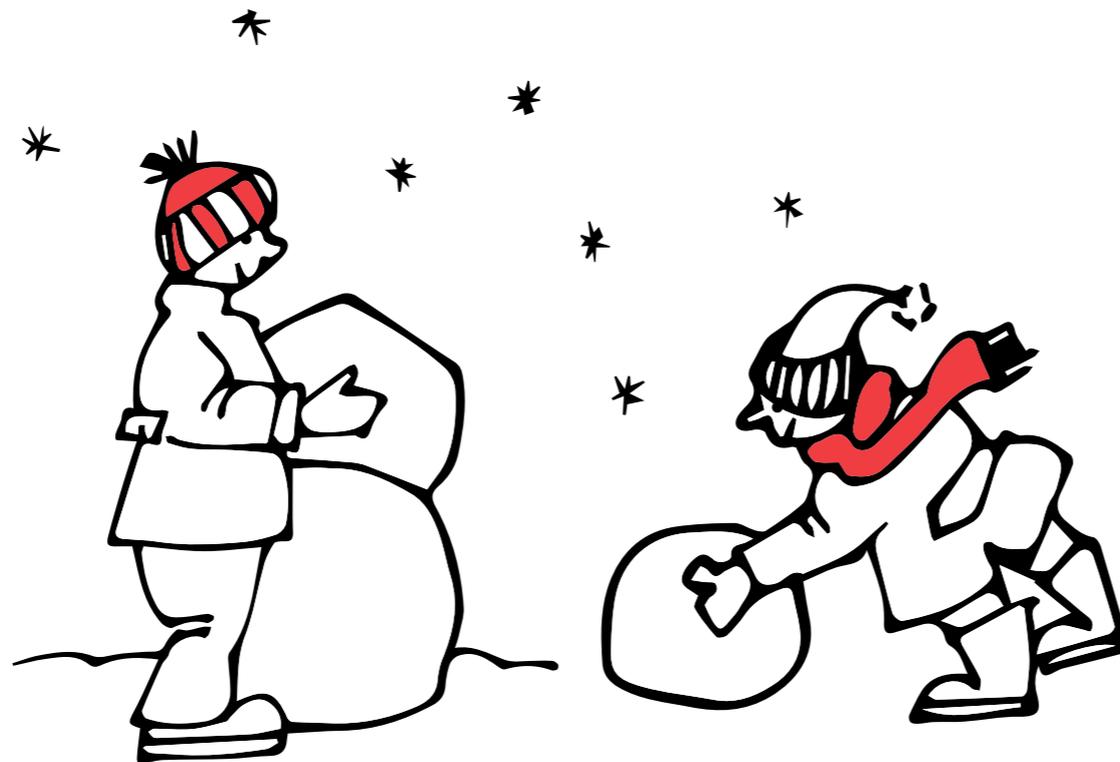
11

Free play is important because it helps kids learn how to work together, share, solve problems and stand up for themselves. During free play, kids make their own rules, move at their own pace, and work on the skills that interest them. Free play is also less stressful play because kids aren't trying to live up to anyone else's expectations.

Resources

[Unstructured Free Play Important for Kids](#)

[Play and Playground Encyclopedia: Free Play](#)





Do we schedule our physical activity time early in the program?

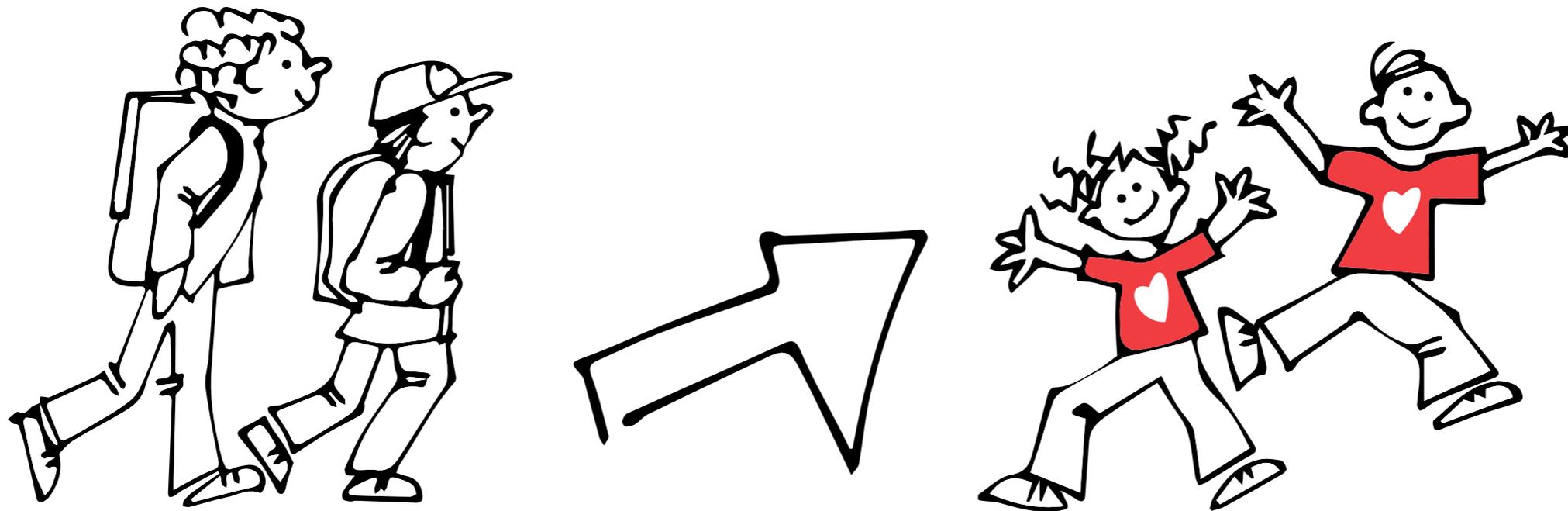
12

It is important to schedule physical activity time when most of your participants are present. For most after school programs, this is early in the program, soon after kids arrive. Physical activity should be scheduled at this time to allow as many kids as possible to benefit from it and to ensure that kids who leave early don't miss out.

Resources

[Daily Program Plan Template](#)

[Weekly Program Plan Template](#)





Can **everyone take part** in our activities regardless of ability, culture, or religion?

13

All children need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day. Try to modify games and activities to ensure that kids with disabilities are as active as they can be.

Listen to your kids. If there is something they cannot do for cultural or religious reasons, find a way to change the activity so they can be included.

Resources

[Play it Fair! Toolkit](#)

[First Nations Inspired DPA Activities](#)





Do we ask **kids**, girls in particular, what physical activities they would most enjoy?

14

As they get older, girls are less likely to be physically active than boys. By the time girls are in grade 11, they are almost half as likely to be physically active after school than boys. That is why it is important to find out what activities your girls enjoy. When people find a physical activity they enjoy, they tend to continue to do it, even when they become adults.

Resources

[Lets Get Girls Active](#)

[Active After School Programs for Girls and Young Women](#)





Do we offer **girls-only** activities?

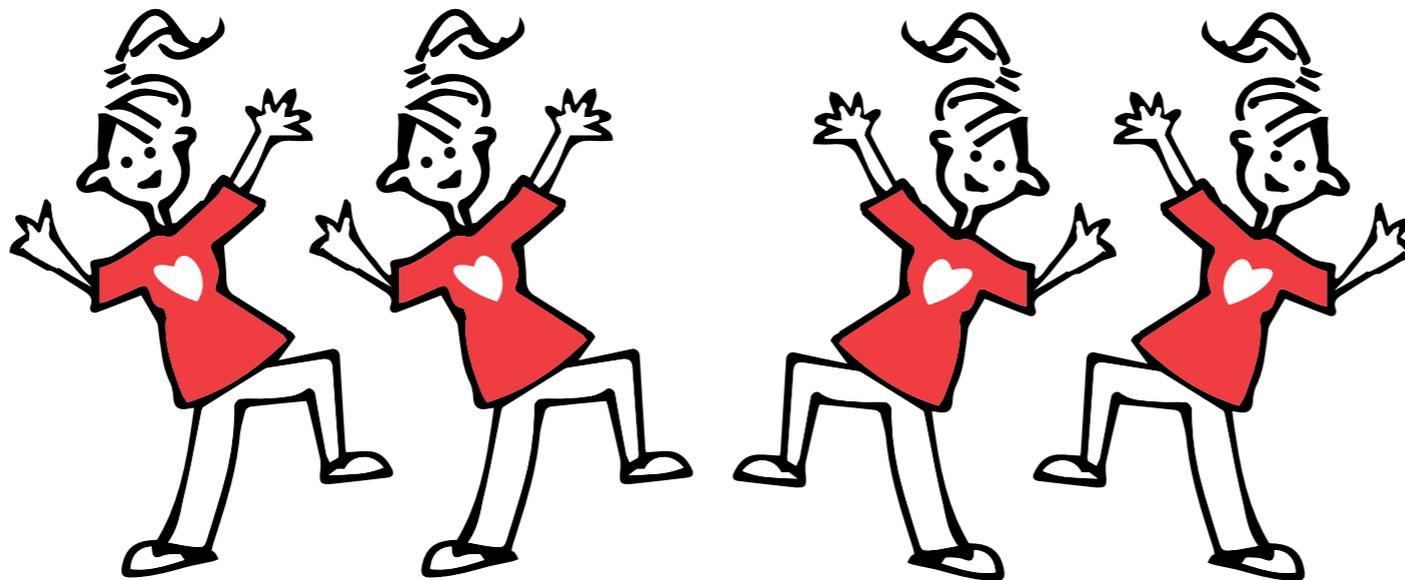
15

Some girls may not be allowed to participate in physical activities with boys for cultural or religious reasons. Other girls are just more comfortable participating in girl-only physical activity than they are participating in mixed groups.

Resources

[Active After School Programs for Girls and Young Women](#)

[6 Secrets to Raising Confident and Active Girls](#)





Do we try to get the **whole community** to work with us to provide the best after school program we can?

16

There are probably a number of groups who organize after school programs where you live. Some of these include

- youth organizations like the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada
- schools
- municipal parks and recreation departments
- churches

There are other organizations that may be willing to give funding to an active after school program. Some of these include

- provincial government departments
- municipal recreation departments
- community health boards
- local employers

Reaching out to these organizations can help you get the expertise and the funding you need to provide the best after school program possible for your kids.

Resources

[Developing After School Partnerships and Programs: A Resource Guide for Community Groups](#)

[WellSpring: Healthy Active Communities: Creating Change in Your Community](#)





Do we call on **physical activity specialists** to help us to train our staff or help to deliver programs?

17

Every community has a number of physical activity specialists you can call on. Some may be willing to lead activities during your after school program. Others may be able to teach your staff more ways to get your kids active. Here are some physical activity specialists who may be able to help you:

- physical education teachers
- coaches
- dance teachers
- fitness instructors
- outdoor leaders

Resources

Contact your local municipal recreation department to find out about the physical activity specialists in your area.





Do we offer **training** opportunities to our staff?

18

It's hard to constantly come up with new ideas to keep kids engaged and active. Kids get bored doing the same activities. When they lose interest, they stop being active. Offering staff training in the newest thinking on how to keep kids active will improve your program as well as enjoyment of the program by staff and participants alike. Look for training programs that will give your staff a good understanding of

- light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity
- bone and muscle strengthening activities
- cardio-respiratory fitness activities

Resources

[Let's Get Children Active! Simple Skills For You and Your Staff](#)

[Lesson 6: Planning for Physical Fitness](#)

Contact your local municipal recreation department or the physical education teacher at your local school to find out who can offer training in your area.





Can everyone take part in our program regardless of **ability to pay**?

19

All children need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. Statistics show very few Nova Scotian youth participate in physical activity or sports between the hours of 3 pm and 6 pm 3 days a week. Among grade 3 students, only 15% of boys and 20% of girls participated in such activities. That number rises to 35% for boys and 33% for girls in grade 7. If the cost of the program is keeping kids from participating, we need to find ways to subsidize it so that all kids have the same opportunity to get active.

Resources

[Poor and Fat: The Link Between Poverty and Obesity in Canadian Children](#)

[Everybody Active: Why Don't People Participate?](#)





Do we offer **transportation** to kids who can't get to or from our program on their own?

20

Transportation has been highlighted as one of the barriers to physical activity. For low income families, it can be expensive or time-consuming to travel to and from the after school activity as good quality programs may not exist in lower-income neighbourhoods. If some kids can't take part in our program because of transportation issues, try offering transportation as part of the program or arranging rides with other families.



Resources

[Poor and Fat: The Link Between Poverty and Obesity in Canadian Children](#)

[Everybody Active: Why Don't People Participate?](#)





How to we **measure** the physical activity levels of our program participants?

21

It can be difficult to know for sure if kids are getting all the physical activity they need. One way to find out is to measure their activity with pedometers. Thirty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity is at least 4,600 pedometer steps.

You don't have to give kids pedometers every day, but it is a good idea to use them now and again and to track the data so you can see how active kids are at different times of the year.

In Nova Scotia, you can borrow pedometers for your group for free from [Heart and Stroke Walkabout](#).

Or email healthpromotion.ns@heartandstroke.ca and ask to borrow free pedometers for your group.

Resources

[A Guide to Objectively Measuring Physical Activity in Afterschool Programs](#)

[Pedometers Get Kids Moving in the Right Direction](#)





Do we ask staff, parents, and participants for ways to improve our program?

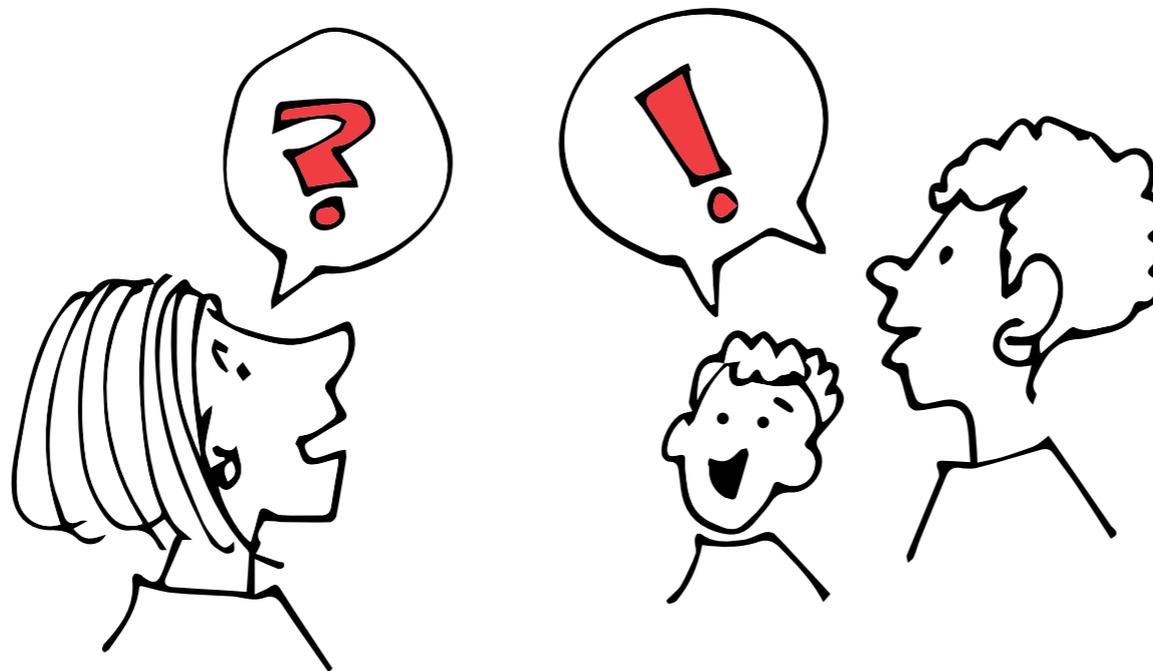
22

Gathering information from staff, parents, and kids will help you create a program that works for everyone. Staff can tell you if you have all the equipment you need and tell you which activities are most popular with the kids. Parents can tell you why their children may be reluctant to participate in some of the activities and even give you ideas on how to get their kids involved. The kids, themselves, can tell you what kinds of activities they would like to do. When kids find a physical activity they enjoy, they are more likely to continue doing it even when they are adults.

Resources

[Tips & Tricks: Program Success Stories](#)

[TASC The After-School Corporation: Increasing Family and Parent Engagement in After-School](#)





Do we ask those who **own or control facilities** to make their facilities available for after school programs?

23

To get their 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day, kids need access to places like gyms, recreation centres, and pools. In Nova Scotia many school gyms are used by school teams in the after school period leaving no indoor space on site for kids in after school programs to be active. Some after school programs have succeeded in getting school teams to practice later in the day, from 5 pm to 7 pm, for example, leaving the gym free from 3 pm to 5 pm for active after school programs. Once you secure time at a gym or other facility, it is a good idea to draw up a formal agreement so that your time at that facility is guaranteed.

Resource

[Establishing Partnerships: Community-Based Joint Use Agreements](#)

Example

[Edmonton Joint Use Agreement: Facilities](#)





Do we have the equipment we need to ensure that the kids in our program have a **variety of activities** to choose from?

24

It's important to have, or have access to, a variety of equipment such as balls, skipping ropes, bicycles, ice skates, skateboards, and Frisbees. It is equally important to have enough safety equipment for the activity you want to pursue. For example, if you plan to take your group cycling, skateboarding, or ice skating, you need to have enough helmets, knee pads, elbow pads and wrist guards for everyone. You also need to make sure that all of your equipment is in good repair.

Finally, if you use a playground or play structures, you must ensure that these are in good repair as well. You may want to add a maintenance clause to your use agreement.

Resource

[Active and Safe After School Initiative: Activity Checklists](#)





Do we offer a **variety of spaces** in which kids can play?

25

During the Canadian school year, weather changes are dramatic. While having children play outside in nature encourages more active play (see *Do our kids get enough moderate to vigorous physical activity?* [Question 6](#)), on rare occasions the weather is too severe for active outdoor play. That's why you need access to indoor spaces like gyms and pools to keep kids active even in the worst weather.



Resources

[Canadian Childcare Federation: The Importance of Increasing Children's Outdoor Play Opportunities](#)

[Establishing Partnerships: Community-Based Joint Use Agreements](#)





Do we encourage kids to use the **whole play space**?

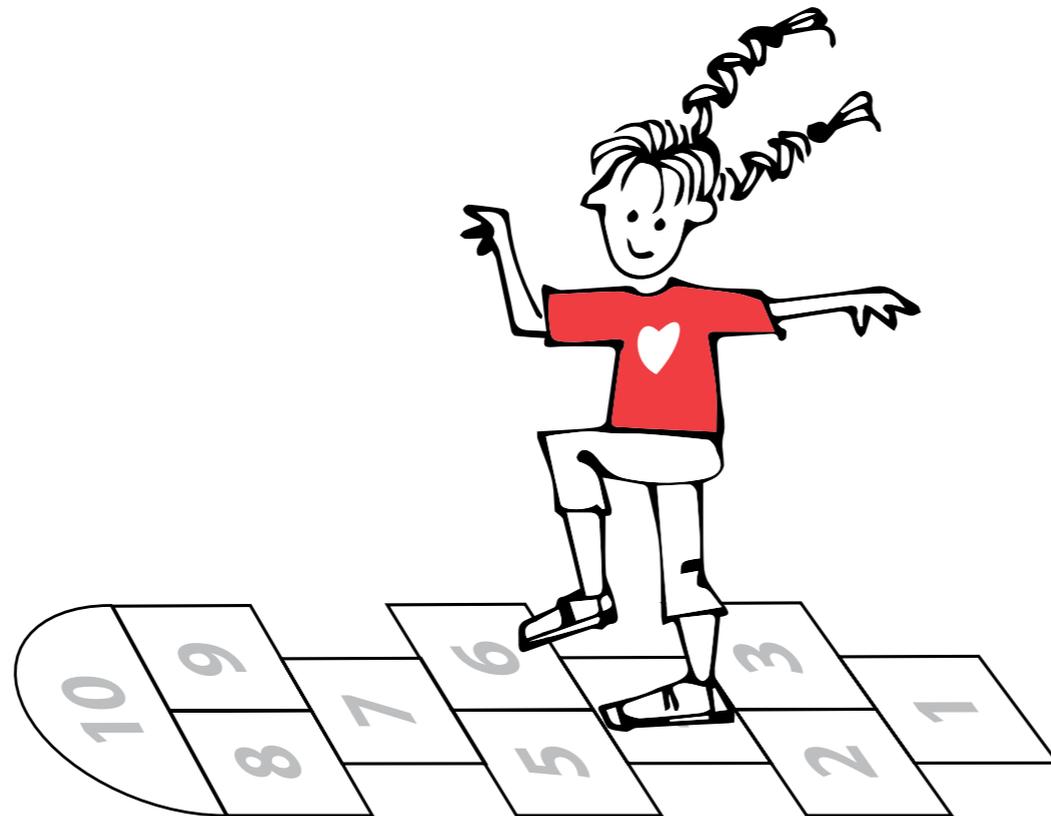
26

Often play spaces are larger than the area that houses play structures like climbing structures and slides. Some play spaces have baseball diamonds, basketball hoops, and pavement markings for games like hopscotch and 4-square. The more of these additional features there are in a play space, the more kids are encouraged to use the whole area and play a variety of games. If you have a good relationship with a school, you may convince those in charge to add more play space markings and keep them in good repair.

Resources

[Peaceful Playgrounds](#)

[Playground Markings & Other Traditional Games](#)





Is it easy to get to and from our program on foot, by bike, or by public transit?

27

Having after school activities close to where children live is important. Parents are less likely to enrol their children in a program if it means long drives during rush hour. When kids can get to and from the program easily on their own or accompanied by an older child, they are more likely to participate.

Resources

[Everybody Active: Why Don't People Participate?](#)

[Challenges and Opportunities in After-School Programs: Lessons for Policymakers and Funders](#)





Do we make sure our kids have **appropriate clothing** for outside activities?

28

Kids who play outdoors tend to be more physically active. But they won't be more physically active if they are cold and wet. To encourage kids to play outside in all but the worst weather, it's important to ensure that they have the correct clothing. Make sure families know that your program includes a lot of outdoor play and encourage them to send appropriate clothes for their child. It's also a good idea to have some extra items on hand for kids who may have forgotten or lost their outdoor clothing.

Resources

[About Kids Health, Safety and the Environment: Dressing for the Cold](#)

[Kids' Clothing Checklist for Cold, Wet, and Wintry Days Outdoors](#)

