



Note: These are guidelines only. Consider the developmental age and stage of your child and try to meet your child where they are. There are outdoor play options for every child as they grow.



INFANT (0-12 MONTHS)

- Movement of the whole body is how infants develop core strength and build skill over time.
- It is important to offer a lot of time each day for free movement, not strapped into a chair, stroller or child carrier for long periods of time.



SOME ACTIVITIES FOR 0-6 MONTHS

- find ways to explore a variety of touch, see, feel experiences; the outdoors is a great place for this
- letting them lie or sit to play outdoors on a blanket or play mat in warmer weather
- provide opportunities for your little one to turn their head toward sound or movement and to reach or track objects

SOME ACTIVITIES FOR 6-12 MONTHS:

- daily outdoor time and to give them a space to lie, sit, crawl and try standing on a variety of natural surfaces
- putting objects into buckets or baskets, then dumping them out
- pulling themselves up to standing; give them a stool, steady log, or a walking toy to use
- making art outdoors using snow, dirt, leaves or sand
- crawling on grass, under outdoor furniture or through old boxes

This content forms part of a larger booklet entitled "Why Outdoor Play Matters for Children: A practical guide for parents and caregivers". To see the full booklet, and references, please go to recreationns.ca.

TODDLER (1–3 YEARS)

- Spend time outdoors on a variety of surfaces, both even and uneven, as your child begins to walk. Allow them to explore. Follow their curiosity of nature, textures and sounds in the outdoors.
- Find ways to incorporate outdoor items and nature to develop skills like squeezing, pinching, holding and picking up items.
- At 2–3 years the outdoors is a great environment to help your child develop new physical skills like running, swinging, jumping, falling, hopping, pushing, and carrying.
- Make use of sandboxes, beaches, hills, branches, trails, open fields, rocky areas, and playgrounds (sandboxes should be at least big enough for your child to lay down in!)



AT THIS STAGE CHILDREN CAN START TO INITIATE MORE OF THEIR OWN PLAY.

SOME ACTIVITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- throwing and chasing balls
- wheeling, pushing or pulling different toys and objects
- walking, running or jumping around trees, over stones or cracks and into puddles
- blowing bubbles and chasing them away as they float
- playing in sand, mud, or small amounts of water (always supervise water play!)
- lining things up and making collections
- riding balance bikes



PRESCHOOLERS (3–5 YEARS)

- Continue to think about the core skills your child will need to master skills like biking, swimming, skating or playing any sport. Provide opportunities to learn these skills, through both success and tumbles.
- Each child develops at their own pace, however, ensuring they have the permission, opportunity and time to practice and learn is essential. Refer to the adult role in outdoor play to consider when and how you practice active support or simply observe.



AT THIS STAGE AND INTO THE SCHOOL YEARS CHILDREN CAN LEAD MOST OF THEIR OWN PLAY.

SOME ACTIVITIES MAY INCLUDE:

- building forts
- balancing or climbing on logs or curbs, benches
- playing creatively with small and large objects
- playing with mud kitchens and muddy creations
- playing chase, tag, hide and seek or ball games
- climbing or hanging off trees, branches or posts or playgrounds
- doing obstacle courses
- skipping, sliding, biking, beach and sand play
- swinging or hanging off a variety of surfaces
- imaginative play
- gardening, shoveling, washing the car (functional play)

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