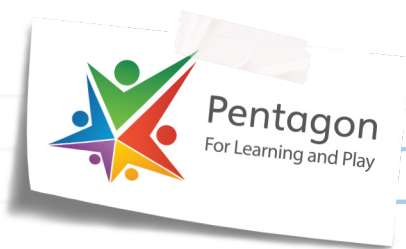


Nursery and Pre-School's Physical Activity Guidelines



The Early Years, from birth to 5, are a period when children gain some really specific benefits through and associated with movement and physical activity.

Good quality and regular movement and exercise for a sufficient period of time each day is associated with development of gross and fine motor skills, movement and co-ordination, improved cognitive development, enhanced bone and muscular health and development, improved cardiovascular health, learning and understanding of social skills and maintaining a healthy weight.

The Chief Medical Officer guidelines on the types and levels of physical activity required for Early Years children (0-5) read as follows:

Early Years (Under 5s) - For Infants Who Are Not Yet Walking

1. Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water-based activities in safe environments.
2. All under 5s should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines for infants who are not yet walking:

Physical activity refers to movement of any intensity and may include

- 'Tummy time' – this includes any time spent on the stomach including rolling and playing on the floor
- Reaching for and grasping objects, pulling, pushing and playing with other people
- 'Parent and baby' swim sessions

Floor-based and water-based play encourages infants to use their muscles and develop motor skills. It also provides valuable opportunities to build social and emotional bonds.

Minimising sedentary behaviour is also important for health and development and may include:

- Reducing time spent in infant carriers or seats
- Reducing time spent in walking aids or baby bouncers (these limit free movement)
- Reducing time spent in front of TV or other screens

Early Years (Under 5s) - For Children Who Are Capable of Walking

1. Children of preschool age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day. Most UK pre-school children currently spend 120–150 minutes a day in physical activity, so achieving this guideline would mean adding another 30–60 minutes per day.
2. All under 5s should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines for children who are capable of walking:

Physical activity is likely to occur mainly through unstructured active play but may also include more structured activities. Activities can be of any intensity (light or more energetic) and may include:

- Activities which involve movements of all the major muscle groups, i.e. the legs, buttocks, shoulders and arms, and movement of the trunk from one place to another
- Energetic play, e.g. climbing frame or riding a bike
- More energetic bouts of activity, e.g. running and chasing games
- Walking/skipping to shops, a friend's home, a park or to and from a school

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV, using the computer or playing video games
- Reducing time spent in a pushchair or car seat – this can also help to break up long periods of sedentary behaviour”



Outdoor Learning and Play - Satisfying the Physical Activity Guidelines

There has been a lot of observation and research into the benefits of outdoor play and outdoor learning activities in recent years. The resounding message is one of enormous positivity, that there are countless benefits to outdoor activities which have a real and positive impact on children's lives.

Practitioners consider that there are four main vehicles through which Early Years children learn, and they are movement, play, talk, and sensory experiences.

With the space and opportunities to move around in different ways outside, an outdoor setting supports all of these areas and particularly learning through movement (and opportunities for physical activity) really well. It is the perfect natural environment for children to engage, explore and be active.

NHS guidelines go hand in hand with the Physical Activity Guidelines and specify that children under 5 need three hours exercise a day, to include a mixture of bone strengthening, muscle building and cardiovascular activity.

It is safe to say that all of the guidelines regarding physical activity for children aged 0-5 can easily be satisfied through daily outdoor play. Running around outside, getting out of breath and having fun rolling, climbing, digging, jumping and swinging, dancing or whatever else they are inspired to do guarantees that their physical activity needs are met in every way.

There is a freedom associated with being outdoors, with more physical space to move around and be active, that cannot be replicated inside.

Children playing and learning in an outdoor environment are generally more active, absorbed and motivated. The more opportunities that Early Years children have for active outdoor play, the better their overall fitness and physical development.

The outdoors is a natural environment for them and they want to be able to play outside, where they often feel less inhibited and more open to movement and learning.



Outdoor Physical Learning Activities for Nurseries and Preschools

There really are so many physical activities that very young children can enjoy in an Early Years setting, and in many cases the ideas and inspiration will come directly from them.

When children are encouraged to communicate with their key worker or key person about the types of activities they enjoy, this often provides the best source of feedback. A child's key worker will know what makes them tick.

Involve the children in planning, note down their ideas and use them when it comes to planning spaces and activities. Offering children freedom to move around outdoors, to make their own choices, develop their own ideas for activities and see them implemented, builds their own self confidence and enjoyment of physical activity and is a huge part of it.

The outdoor play facilities that Early Years settings can offer their children will of course come down to space and budget, but there is plenty that can be done with even the smallest of spaces. Here are some of our favourites:

Sand, Water and Mud Play

Messy play is a firm feature in Early Years settings. Getting messy with sand, water and "mud" is well known, amongst it's many benefits, as being a great physical activity for developing both fine and gross motor skills for very young children.

Given the choice, many children would happily spend the majority of their recommended 3 hours a day engaged at Mud Kitchens, Sand Boxes and Water Tables, manipulating materials with their fingers and developing strength in their hands, moving around from one area to the next as they play.

It takes a lot of effort for little ones to scoop, lift, transfer and pour heavy containers filled with the potions they have made, but it's all good for their muscle strength and physical development!

Gardening

Gardening is a really rewarding physical activity. It is wonderful in so many ways because it connects children with nature and teaches them how to understand and enjoy the natural world around them.

It is also very physical with all the digging, lifting, pulling, stretching and bending involved!

Create a wildlife or growing area in your outdoor space, set out planters wherever you can, so that children can have fun with their friends and key workers keeping active and growing their own produce.

Climbing Frames

Tailor-made EYFS climbing frames are there to satisfy and fulfill the need to climb even for the most energetic and adventurous preschoolers! Low level balance beams, logs and tyres, bridges, ramps and ropes offer all sorts of physical challenges along their path.

Moving along them allows children to develop their core strength and muscles, improve their balance and awareness and sense of space.

Whether they can crawl, walk, climb, run, jump or swing across them, as soon as toddlers are learning to walk, and with a safe hand of their key person to hold where necessary, play frames are a brilliant way of helping them to gain confidence in their own physical ability. Once they get going there's no stopping them!

Exciting floor surfaces

It's so easy to overlook the ground beneath our feet, focusing instead on toys and equipment. But actually, the ground is the foundation platform for all outdoor physical activity, and we find it quite exciting in itself!

The type of playground surfacing in a nursery or preschool setting makes a huge difference to the opportunities for safe and enjoyable outdoor physical activity for all children. This is particularly important where there are very young children who are not yet able to walk, who are learning to walk and who are finding their feet and learning how to coordinate themselves at all different paces.



“Tummy time” for babies, opportunities to roll around in the sunlight and feel the benefit of the fresh air and all those wonderful sensory experiences the outdoors has to offer, starting to crawl and wanting to reach out and explore, is much more safe and enjoyable on a clean and comfortable surface!

Artificial Grass and Safeturf mean that even the youngest members of a nursery can get out of their bouncy chairs and enjoy exploring outside. Installing the right type of surfacing protects children who are learning to walk from falls.

Fun and interesting Playground Markings and trails allow the floor itself to be used as an exciting physical activity resource that will have children up and walking, then running, jumping and skipping all through the seasons.

Our design team have some really inspiring ideas and have created a range of exciting products to encourage and support regular outdoor physical activity in nurseries and preschools all year round. We design solutions to suit different spaces and budgets. If you are considering improving your outdoor play provision we are here to help you throughout the process. Please get in touch here, we would love to hear from you.

If you are interested in discussing the development of your outdoor environment, simply fill out our [Contact Form](#) and we will be in touch with you to book a free consultation.

To find out more about our unique process as well as view our entire [EYFS range](#), [surfaces options](#), [case studies](#) and educational [blogs](#), make sure to visit our website at www.pentagonplay.co.uk