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10 Ways to Get Ready for Kindergarten... Outside!

Kindergarten readiness can be a source of anxiety for kids and parents alike. Avoid drill-and-kill practice and prep your preschooler for the classroom with these fun outdoor activities.

As the lazy days of summer go by, your mind may start to wander to thoughts of fall and back to school. It is important to be sure your preschooler is prepared for kindergarten, but who wants to trade in fun in the sun for working on counting and the ABC's?

The good news? You don't have to choose between building kindergarten readiness skills and playing outdoors. Many parents think flashcards are the best tools for learning math and literacy skills, but research shows that young children learn best through hands-on, playful activities. Try these ideas next time you're playing outdoors to boost your child's skills.

Shady Reading

Gather up a basket of books and a blanket, then find a shady spot to read together. Simply reading to (and with) your little one every day helps her understand print concepts, improves her speech and vocabulary, promotes parent-child bonding and fosters a lifelong love of books. Plus, what better way to enjoy a sunny day?

Sidewalk Learning

Strengthen the muscles needed for writing by drawing with sidewalk chalk on the sidewalk or driveway. Ask your child to write her name or practice writing the ABC's to see how many letters she knows. As a bonus, you'll have the best looking driveway on the block ... and when it's

time for another lesson, the chalk rinses off easily with water.



Alphabet Spotting

Take a walk or bike ride around the neighborhood and be on the lookout for signs. Encourage your little detective to sound out the words she can read, and help her sound out the ones she doesn't know. Kick-start friendly competition by picking a letter to hunt for. The one with the most "B or b" sightings wins!

'I Spy' Rhyming

Play "I Spy" with rhyming words. Find an object and think of a word that rhymes with it, then have your child guess what you have found. For example, if you spot a tree ahead, say, "I spy with my little eye, something that rhymes with knee."

Tally Mark Counting

"Using sidewalk chalk, make anywhere from 10 to 20 marks on your sidewalk, depending on your child's skill level," suggests kindergarten teacher Betsy States. "Next, have your child count while hopping to each mark. Have your child jump forward and count forward, then practice jumping backwards while counting backwards. Mix it up by starting at random numbers."

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Fun Summer Fitness Tips

By Merry Gordon

Blame it on cutbacks to physical education, on computer games, on standardized tests that eat away recess time—no matter where you point the finger, kids aren't exercising. Experts say that today's kids have less physical stamina than they did 10 years ago. A recent study conducted by Essex University's Dr. Gavin Sandercock showed that while children have the same body mass as their counterparts in the 1990s, it's made of more fat and less muscle. Kids today are twice as unlikely to be able to hold their own weight while hanging from wall bars, for example.

If you're worried about your child becoming a couch potato, summer can be a great time to turn it all around. Lead by example and get in shape together! Here are some easy ways to get fit with kids of any age this summer.

With Your Toddler

All that pent-up energy of the "terrible twos" driving you crazy this summer? Learn to exercise with her! You could spend your money on any number of pricey "Mommy and Me" gym classes—or you could just improvise in your own backyard.

- Kids this age love imitation. Try "Simon Says" or a game that involves moving around like different animals.
- Turn on the radio or throw on your favorite kid-friendly "playlist" and dance with your child.
- Take a trip to the neighborhood playground for some unstructured free play—just be sure you are up there climbing the monkey bars and swinging with your child, too! When fitness is fun, kids don't even recognize it as exercise.

With Your Preschooler

A better sense of balance and boundless mobility makes exercise even more fun at this age level. In fact, you may find yourself struggling to keep up with an active preschooler. Activities that emphasize coordination are particularly good for preschoolers.

- Break out the jump rope and learn some silly rhymes to burn those calories away.
- Ball games like catch or soccer are appealing to young children who are just beginning to understand team sports.
- Especially for more strenuous activities, make it a point to do some quick warm-up stretches with your kids. Chances are, you'll feel the burn more than your preschooler will the morning after!

<http://www.education.com/magazine/article/fun-summer-fitness-tips>

10 Ways to Get Ready for Kindergarten - Outside! continued from cover ...

Number Ball Bounce

Play catch with a ball or beanbag, and count each time you catch the ball. Bounce the ball to each other first with one bounce before catching, next two bounces, then three. The first person to have too many or too few bounces loses and the game can start again!

Picnic Patterning

Create patterns using fruits or veggies from a picnic, snack or a family barbecue. Patterns are the foundation of many more complex math concepts. The strawberry, blueberry, raspberry, strawberry, blueberry, raspberry pattern she creates isn't just delicious—it's beneficial for the brain!



Shaving Cream Finger Painting

Take advantage of swimsuit weather by playing with shaving cream. Encourage kids to write numbers, letters and shapes to

strengthen fine motor muscles. Spray a bit on your child's back, tummy or legs and use it as a human canvas. Or, make a pile on the patio table and let kids fingerpaint it in. When you rinse it off, the table will be clean and her hands will be too!

Library Visit

When it's too hot to be outdoors, visit your local library for storytime or to find books about something your little one's showing interest in this summer. Investigate bugs, frogs, crawdads or fish in books, and then find some out in the wild.

Nature Hunt

Go on nature hunts and see if you can find some things that you may not be able to identify. This is a great springboard to a study of birds, bugs or plants that are native to your neighborhood.

Don't waste the summer away with flashcard practice inside. Instead, move the learning outside and into the sunshine. Your child can gain valuable kindergarten readiness skills through playful activities with a purpose. Not only will she get what she needs to be ready for school, she will have fun summer memories with you and gain an understanding that learning can be fun!

Reprinted with permission: <http://www.education.com/slideshow/kindergarten-readiness-outside>

Free Family Outdoor Events in Calgary

The City of Calgary Parks has been providing a variety of special events and programs for over 30 years. They offer many free public events families and individuals can participate in.

International Migratory Bird Day

The City of Calgary has been proudly participating in this annual celebration for the past 10 years and will again be hosting this popular event on Mother's Day! Join Parks staff and local experts for a fun-filled day of games, entertainment and activities to celebrate bird migration and conservation. Date: May 11th, Time: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Location: Inglewood Bird Sanctuary

Walk with Wildlife

Walk with Wildlife promotes nature exploration, physical fitness and civic pride. This program is for citizens of all ages. Date: June 12, 14 & 15. Location: Various parks and green spaces throughout the city. Please visit calgary.ca/parksguide for additional information, dates and times.

Ralph Klein Park - Parks Fest 2014!

On Father's Day join Calgarians for Parks Fest 2014 as they celebrate their great City parks! Visitors will have the chance to connect with nature and enjoy local entertainers during this fun-filled day. Bring your family and friends to enjoy games, activities and more! Date: June 15th, Time: 1 - 3 p.m., Location: Ralph Klein Park

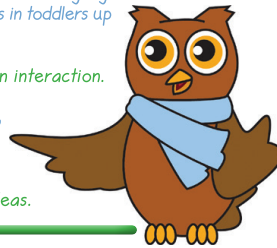
Summer Solstice Picnic

Celebrate the beginning of summer with a vintage-inspired picnic! Join your fellow botanical buffs at Reader Rock Garden on the longest day of the year! Parks staff will be hosting garden picnic activities under the June sky, including guided walks. Bring your lunch and join us! Date: June 21st, Time: 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., Location: Reader Rock Garden

Did you know?



- * Babies are born with instinctual skills to seek out a person's face; humans are innately communicative beings!
- * At only 4 days old, babies can detect a primary caregiver voice from other voices.
- * Parents are the best facilitators of a child's language development.
- * Daily routines and scheduled activities help promote language development and early executive functioning skills in toddlers up through to teens.
- * Children learn best through person-to-person interaction.
- * Learning through describing what, who, when, where and why is a good format for encouraging rich language understanding and use.
- * Language is linked to a child's thinking and ideas.



INFANT DEVELOPMENT CHART - FIRST 12 MONTHS

Harold Iretton - PhD, ©2005

Birth	Social	Language	Self-Help	Gross/Fine Motor
1 month	Quiets when fed and comforted; makes eye contact	Cries; Makes small throaty sounds	Alert: Interested in sights and sounds	Wiggles and kicks; Looks at objects or faces.
2 month	Social smile	Cries in a special way when hungry, for lonely, for discomfort		Lifts head and chest when lying on stomach; Follows moving objects with eyes.
3 month	Recognizes other familiar adults	Makes sounds "ah," "eh," "ugh"	Increases activity when shown a toy	Makes crawling movements; Holds up hand and looks at it.
4 month	Interested in his or her image in mirror, smiles, playful.	Laughs outloud; Squeals	Reaches for objects.	Pivots around when lying on stomach; Puts toys or other objects in mouth.
5 month	Reacts differently to strangers	Responds to voices by turning head in direction of voice	Comforts self with thumb or pacifier	Rolls over from stomach to back; Picks up things with 1 hand.
6 month	Reaches for familiar persons	Babbles; Responds to his/her name by turning and looking.	Looks for object after it disappears from sight-for example, looks for toy after it falls off the table.	Rolls over from back to stomach; Transfers objects from one hand to the other.
7 month	Get upset and cries if left alone.	Makes sounds like "da, ba, ga, ka and ma".	Feeds self a cracker/cookie.	Sits alone, steady; Holds 2 objects, one in each hand @ same time.
8 month	Plays "Peek-a-Boo!"	Makes sounds like "ma-ma, da-da, ba-ba."	Picks up a small cup with two hands	Moves forward somehow while on stomach; Uses 2 hands to pick up objects.
9 month		Resists having a toy taken away.		Crawls on hands & knees; Pulls to standing position.
10 month	Plays "Pat-a-Cake"	Imitates sounds that you make	Picks up a spoon with a handle.	Walks around a play-pen or furniture while holding on; Picks up small objects using precise thumb and finger grasp.
11 month	Waves "Bye-bye!"	Understands phrases like, "No-no," and "All-gone!"		Stands alone briefly; Puts small objects in cup or other container.
12 month		Says "Mama" or "Dada" for parent(s); Hands another a toy when asked.	Helps a little when getting dressed.	Stands alone, steady; Turns pages of books a few at a time.

Toy and Resource Library

The Community Links Toy and Resource Library offers a wide selection of toys for children up to five years of age for families in the City of Airdrie and the North Rocky View Region. Parents, grandparents and caregivers appreciate being able to borrow age-appropriate toys that will help their children develop skills they will use throughout their lives.

The children enjoy the novelty of choosing toys that may be different from the ones they have at home. The library includes activity centres, building blocks, puzzles, prop boxes, games and toys that encourage gross motor activity. We also have a selection of toys for children with special needs.

In addition, we offer a variety of resources (books and videos) on topics such as parenting, discipline, separation and divorce, bullying, self-esteem and child development.

A one time registration fee of \$10.00 will be collected from each individual/family. This fee will go directly towards maintaining and expanding our inventory which will allow us to offer a greater selection of toys, books and videos. The fee may be waived for individuals or families with limited resources.

Community Links Office:
211, 125 Main Street NW, Airdrie, AB
Phone: 403-945-3900

Please Note: Community Links programs and services are offered for residents of the City of Airdrie and the North Rocky View Region only.



For more information visit:
www.hanen.org
www.acslpa.ab.ca
www.maymonth.ca
www.speechandhearing.ca

"Every student can learn, just not on the same day, or the same way."

~George Evans



Free Preschool Literacy Program

Travelling Tales & Tunes

Tales and Tunes is a high-quality preschool literacy program that offers children, birth to age five, and their parent/caregiver an opportunity to enjoy songs, rhymes, and stories in a relaxing and lively environment. Community Links presents this program in partnership with Airdrie Public Library and Rocky View Schools Community Learning.

- **Who:** Parents/Caregivers & children 0-5 years
- **Where:** Grace Baptist Church: East Side location, 1009 East Lake Blvd. Airdrie
- **When:** 2 Classes - Wednesdays, 9:30 am - 10:15 am & 10:30 am - 11:15 am
- **Upcoming Dates:** May 21 - June 18, 2014 (5 weeks). Register by May 14th.

No cost (Donations gratefully accepted). Max: 16 children. **Register at: Community Links 403.945.3900** or visit <http://www.nrvc.ab.ca> for more information. *Please Note: Community Links programs and services are offered for residents of the City of Airdrie and the North Rocky View Region only.*



CommunityLinks



Bake Aggression Cookies: Playdough Cookies Kids Can Pound!

Sometimes life as a preschooler can be frustrating. You've probably told your child many times to "use your words" rather than hit a friend over the head with a toy when he's unhappy. Still, it can feel good to hit something when you're mad. It's just not okay to use a classmate or sibling! These cookies are the perfect solution. The more your child mashes, squeezes, pounds, and pulverizes the dough, the better they'll taste! So give him a bowl to work with and the thumbs up to let off steam. A fun alternative to play dough, he'll feel better after he gets rid of all that pent up energy, and he can eat the results!

What You Need:

- 3 cups uncooked rolled oats (Quick cooking are okay but not instant)
- 3/4 cup whole wheat flour (to add more nutrition but can substitute all purpose if needed)
- 3/4 cup all purpose flour
- 1 1/4 cups brown sugar
- 1/2 tablespoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3/4 cup unsweetened apple sauce
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3/4 cup margarine or butter (cold works best - do not melt or soften too much or the dough will be sticky and mushy instead of like playdough)
- Chocolate chips, raisins and/or coconut (to add to cookies before baking)

What You Do:

1. Let your preschooler help you measure out the ingredients. Talk about the measurements as you go along. Compare the amounts and discuss which is more and which is less.
2. Mix all the ingredients except the chocolate chips or raisins in a large bowl until combined. Remove it from the bowl and lay it out on a work surface. Let your child mash, knead, squeeze, pound, and play to his heart's content. The more he works the dough, the better the cookies will taste. (Note - we found it easiest when the parent mixes the first 5 dry ingredients, then mixes in the applesauce and vanilla. Finally, adds in the margarine or butter and mixes until a ball starts to form. Then, put on counter for children to pound and squeeze)
3. When he's done kneading and mashing, show him how to roll bits of dough between his hands to form small balls, about an inch in size. Place the balls on a cookie sheet.
4. If he'd like, let your child press some chips or raisins into the balls. Coconut also tastes great and is fun to use.
5. Bake for 8-10 minutes in a 350 degree oven.

* Can also divide ingredients into smaller bowls for multiple children to mix.

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How much physical activity do children under 5 years old need to do to keep healthy?

Being physically active every day is important for the healthy growth and development of babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers. For this age group, activity of any intensity should be encouraged, including light activity and more energetic physical activity. The amount of physical activity you need to do each week is determined by your age.

Toddlers

Children who can walk on their own should be physically active every day for at least 180 minutes (3 hours). This should be spread throughout the day, indoors or outside. The 180 minutes can include light activity such as standing up, moving around, rolling and playing, as well as more energetic activity like skipping, hopping, running and jumping. Active play, such as using a climbing frame, riding a bike, playing in water, chasing games and ballgames, is the best way for this age group to be physically active.

All children under 5 years old

Children under 5 should not be inactive for long periods, except when they're asleep. Watching TV, travelling by car, bus or train or being strapped into a buggy for long periods are not good for a child's health and development. There is growing evidence that such behaviour can increase their risk of poor health. All children under 5 who are overweight can improve their health by meeting the activity guidelines, even if their weight doesn't change. To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, they may need to do additional activity and make changes to their diet.

What counts as energetic activity for children?

Examples of energetic activities suitable for most children who can walk on their own include: active play (such as hide and seek and stuck in the mud), fast walking, riding a bike, dancing, swimming, climbing, skipping rope, and gymnastics. Energetic activity for children will make kids "huff and puff" and can include organized activities, like dance and gymnastics. Any sort of active play will usually include bursts of energetic activity.



Submitted by the Cheshmere Parent Link Centre (from <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-children.aspx>)