

Outdoors and Active

Top Tips for Physicality in the Park

Little or no equipment is needed to get children active in the park – not even the play equipment that's probably already there! If there *is* play equipment, encourage children to use it in new and challenging ways (e.g. walk up the slide, hang upside down from the monkey bars). For all of these actions, the Outdoors and Active project team judged that the **benefits outweigh the risks** when the activities are supported by caring and knowledgeable adults:

- **Jumping up to and off** features such as seats and benches, low walls, play equipment, steps, fallen logs and flower bed borders; crouching and springing. Children can practise these skills at home by jumping from a sofa or bed onto cushions.
- **Running on varied terrain** such as up and down grassy mounds; accurately following a line (e.g. the edge of a pathway or playground markings), up and down sloping paths with different surfaces; over sand, fallen leaves, dirt.
- **Balancing** (walking and standing) along low walls and boundary markers such as the edges of flower beds; stepping on alternate paving slabs to encourage body / brain links; using balance bikes and scooters; walking backwards; skipping with ropes or along a route. At home, children should be encouraged to walk up and down stairs – in particular using stairs rather than the lift, even though it will take longer.
- **Digging** in sand, mud, snow, fallen leaves; using hands as well as digging implements. Kicking the Autumn leaves or snow is also an excellent physicality activity. At home, children could build up arm strength by helping with baking and tidying up.
- **Leaping** as far as possible, from or over park features; down steps (trying a higher step each time); onto deliciously icy puddles (remember to 'benefit risk assess').
- **Rolling and spinning** for example, one handed around lampposts or signposts and then swapping hands and direction; down mounds and slopes; forward and backward rolls; spinning over handrails or bicycle stands; twirling with ribbon on a stick or a hula hoop.
- **Hanging and pulling up** from arms and legs using benches, play equipment, low branches, fitness trail equipment and handrails and rope slung over a tree branch or climbing frame.
- **Stretching the upper body** by climbing trees; negotiating large and awkward obstacles; clambering up the slide; squeezing through shrubs and tight places; den building; floaty scarves and fabrics; doing cartwheels; paint brushing, rolling and chalking on horizontal and vertical surfaces.
- **Pushing and pulling** bikes, trikes, scooters, dolls' prams, trolleys, wheelbarrows, logs, blankets (for dens), sweeping brushes, hosepipes and water pumps.
- **Building big dens** and making use of natural materials such as conkers, dried leaves, fallen twigs and branches. Practise these movements at home by making dens with sheets and washing airers.
- **Lifting, moving and transporting** objects such as large sticks and branches, wheelbarrows, rocks and pebbles, picnic bags and backpacks.
- **Make time to stroll** to the park instead of driving or using a pushchair. If it's really not possible to walk all the way, get off the bus one or two stops early, or park further away.
- **Collaborate** and go to the park with a group of friends – it's more fun for children and more enjoyable for the adults too.
- **Stay and snack** in the park. Take lunch or healthy snacks and drinks to the park; not only will it encourage you to stay longer but a snack will give children an energy boost and get them up and active again.