

# ***Creating Outdoor Interest Areas That Support Physical Development***

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## ***Introduction***

Quality school-age programs recognize that school-age children need daily opportunities to participate in physical activities. Many children today have few opportunities to spend time outdoors. They may attend schools where time for recess and physical education is limited. They may live in neighborhoods where parents feel uncomfortable about allowing children to play freely outdoors.

Even if your program does not have access to permanent equipment like climbers, swings, basketball courts, etc., it is possible to create an outdoor environment that offers areas for many different kinds of physical exercise. If outdoor space is limited, it is possible to develop designated areas for different kinds of physical activities or rotate the use of equipment from day to day or week to week.

Children in most school-age programs have widely varying physical abilities, activity levels, skills, and interests. With this in mind, it is important to provide outdoor equipment and materials to support different levels of physical activity. To the extent possible, it is important to provide equipment and supplies to support the following kinds of physical activities:

- ***Team Sports*** (e.g. baseball, kickball, soccer, field hockey, basketball, flag football, and others depending on space and facilities available)
- ***Large Group Games*** (e.g. cooperative games, parachute games, tag games)
- ***Small Group Games and Activities*** (e.g. small group cooperative games, ring toss, horse shoes, Double Dutch jump roping, tennis, fitness clubs like jogging or walking, relay races, obstacle courses)
- ***Seasonal Activities*** (e.g. activities related to snow, changing seasons, etc.)
- ***Individual Activities and Challenge Experiences*** (e.g. jump roping, stilt walking, learning skills for different sports, balancing, baton twirling, hula hooping, opportunities where children set physical goals and work on physical skills – dribbling a ball, shooting free throws, running sprints, broad jumping, learning to putt, etc.)

## ***Suggested Equipment and Materials for Outdoor Interest Areas That Support Varied Physical Activities***

### **TEAM SPORTS**

- Balls (for a wide variety of activities – kick balls, soccer balls, footballs, volley balls, baseballs, basketballs, etc.)
- Air pumps (for balls)
- Badminton set
- Basketball hoops – permanent and/or temporary – different heights
- Bats
- Field/street hockey sticks and pucks
- Portable bases for adapting games for different abilities and challenges
- Safety cones (for designating safe zones around play areas and for marking boundaries for various games)
- Safety helmets and pads (for hockey and baseball)
- Shirts, aprons, or other items for differentiating members of different teams
- Storage shelves, bins, and other containers for organizing and storing equipment
- Tennis rackets and balls
- Volleyball set
- Tether ball set up
- Books (how to play different sports, rules, being a good sport, famous athletes, etc.)

### **LARGE GROUP GAMES**

- Clothesline or other lightweight rope for marking game boundaries
- Parachute(s) (small, medium, large)
- Parachute activity book and instructional video tape
- Portable place spotters
- Props and game balls for various games (e.g. bean bags, Koosch balls, etc.)
- Safety cones (for designating safe zones around play areas and for marking boundaries of various games)
- Stop watch (for cooperative and competitive games)
- Storage shelves, bins, and other containers for organizing and storing equipment
- Books on cooperative and competitive group games

## **SMALL GROUP GAMES AND ACTIVITIES**

- Bean bags and targets
- Bowling set
- Chalk for drawing hopscotch play area
- Books on small group activities
- Charts for recording progress of jogging or walking clubs
- Croquet set
- Double Dutch jump ropes and instructional video tape
- Frisbees
- Golf (putting equipment and/or junior golf equipment, putting green, mini driving green and net)
- Jump ropes (additional long ropes for jump roping games)
- Horse shoe set
- Ring toss game
- Safety cones (for designating safe zones around play areas, creating obstacle courses, marking walking or jogging paths)
- Stop watch (for relay games, obstacle courses, jogging or walking club activities)
- Storage shelves, bins, and other containers for organizing and storing materials
- Tunnels, barrels, and or components for creating tunnel challenge courses and obstacle courses
- Books with directions for playing small group games

## **SEASONAL ACTIVITIES (include if applicable to climate)**

- Buckets and hoses for water activities
- Pools for wading (should meet safety standards and any local/state licensing or health regulations)
- Snow equipment and props (e.g. snow shovels, snow saucers, sleds, forms for making ice sculptures, mallets and other tools for working with ice and snow)

## INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGE EXPERIENCES

- Balance beam and other equipment for balance work
- Batons
- Bikes to share (if adequate riding space is available)
- Hula hoops
- Jump ropes for individuals (several different lengths for different ages) and books of jump roping chants and rhymes
- Ice skates (if climate and outdoor area permits)
- Kites
- Pogo sticks
- Rock climbing wall and safety equipment (supported by trained staff)
- Roller skates
- Ropes (knotted for climbing)
- Safety cones (for designating safe zones around play areas)
- Safety helmets and pads (for skating and bike riding)
- Sidewalk games like jacks
- Stilts
- Storage shelves, bins, and other containers for organizing and storing equipment
- Yo-yos
- Wagons, carts, scooters (depending on space available)