



Physical activity for school-age children

Many children are ready for organised sport by the middle years of primary school. Playing organised sports and activities can be good for your child in many ways. For example, it can help your child to:

- develop physical fitness, self-esteem and confidence
- improve movement and coordination skills
- learn to listen and follow instructions and basic tactics
- learn to lead, follow and be part of a team
- learn about fair play and being a good sport.

Most sports have modified versions that are appropriate for children at this age. These include cricket, football, basketball and netball. Other options for your child could be dance, martial arts or swimming classes.

Children with disability can do many physical activities and sports. Many sports can be modified so that children with disability can fully participate and be included.

Helping your child get started with organised sport

Play is one of the best ways to get your child interested and help them develop a positive attitude to sports.

You can also build your child's confidence by giving them plenty of opportunities to practise physical skills. For example, you could get your child to hit, throw or kick different sorts of balls as far as they can. As your child gets stronger, they can work on accuracy by aiming at a target. And catching a bouncy ball can improve their coordination.

You might need to help your child cope with the emotions that can come with organised sport. For example, children often feel strong emotions like excitement or nervousness before a game or disappointment if they lose. You can help your child with their emotions by focusing on positive things like playing with teammates and meeting new people, rather than winning and losing.

Different children are good at and enjoy different activities. It might be good for your child to try a variety of sports, both team and individual, and to be involved in more than one sport across a year. Mixing it up also helps to prevent injury that can happen from overusing the same body part in the one sport.

Some local sports clubs offer 'come and try' sessions, or short skills programs, so your child can have a go at different sports without having to pay a lot of money.

Some children don't like sports and that's OK. You could encourage your child to try other active hobbies – for example, dancing, bike riding, going on family walks, collecting shells, doing land care and exploring outdoor areas.

Balancing screen time and physical activity

Sometimes screen time can mean school-age children sit still for too long without a break. But you can use screen time to get your child moving. For example, you can try things like:

- planning a walk with your child using a digital map
- videoing your child learning a new skill like shooting hoops, and replaying the footage so your child can see themselves learning
- choosing video dance games or virtual sports simulators for your child.

And remember – healthy screen time is all about balance. It's good for your child's development to do plenty of different activities, including physical activity, creative play, social play, reading and screen time.