

Everyday Family Learning Activities

Curious preschoolers actively explore their world, both indoors and outdoors. They naturally want to run, climb, tumble, and dance, trying to discover all its interesting possibilities! Be sure your home environment provides your young child plenty of space for active exploration and learning.

Learning Guide: Arranging the Home Environment for Active Learning

- Make space **indoors** where your child can move and play freely. Is there room to crawl, climb, and dance, or to push, pull, and roll toys? Is the floor hard or soft? A few mats or pillows for tumbling can add to the interest and fun of an open play space.
- Does your child know which areas are okay for active play and which are off-limits? Consider placing a special rug or blanket in an area to “tell” your child it is a place where he can tumble, dance, and climb. Such a play space can be temporary for special play times—such as using sofa cushions to build a hideaway on a rainy day. Do you have space for him to throw or toss soft items—such as tossing rolled-up socks or stuffed animals into a laundry basket? These are all great activities to encourage your child to move, and are especially inviting when playtime must be indoors on bad-weather days.
- What does your child like to do **outdoors**? Does she enjoy throwing or rolling a ball? Does she enjoy rolling down a hill or playing on a slide? Does she enjoy digging or scooping? Perhaps she would enjoy digging in a box of dirt using a large spoon or cup.
- Sidewalks and walking trails provide pathways where children can push, pull, and ride toys or equipment. A local parks department can direct you to playgrounds adapted for use of mobility equipment—wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, etc.
- Arrange an outdoor play area with materials and equipment that promote active play. You might find room in your yard for a simple climbing structure and/or play equipment such as a swing set or slide that encourages physical movement. An outdoor storage bin or small shed is a great place to keep small items like kickballs and other games equipment and riding toys like wagons and tricycles.
- Keep in mind that there are many ways to arrange your home to accommodate any special needs your child might have. Assure that your child’s play settings provide the widest range of interesting opportunities to move, explore, and learn. Start with your child’s interests and movement strengths and arrange your home and yard for the greatest possible freedom of movement and access to fun and learning.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

You’ll know the practice is working if ...

- Your child spends more time being active.
- Your child is more active—whether it’s walking, throwing a ball, or raising her arms up and down.
- Your child enjoys lots of physical movement.

A Quick Peek

Four-year-old Lena loves to climb, jump, dance, and twirl. Her mother tells their early interventionist (EI) about a problem she’s having lately—Lena doesn’t respond when her mother tells her to keep her feet on the floor and stop jumping from the furniture.

The EI asks Lena’s mother if there are places where it’s okay for Lena to jump indoors or outside. Lena’s mother thinks about it and says the only place inside is from the floor. Together

they look around and spot an open space in the kitchen where Lena can hop from one checkerboard floor tile to another. Once Lena’s mother sees how much fun Lena has hopping to-and-fro in the kitchen, she looks outside and finds an old step stool Lena can jump from.

Suddenly, it’s a game for Lena. She loves it and understands that she has special places for jumping.



For more ideas, ask an early interventionist, teacher, therapist, home visitor, or another experienced parent. [Click here to visit a webpage about “Big Body Play” from the National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\).](#)