Wellness Activities for Healthy Preschoolers

Lesson Overview

Lesson Participants: CACFP personnel and school-age child care staff

Type of Lesson: Short face-to-face training session

Time Needed to Conduct the Lesson: 20 minutes

Lesson Description: This lesson focuses on different activities that include physical activity for preschool children.

Lesson Objectives
At the completion of the lesson, the participant will be able to plan various physical activities for preschool children.

Get Ready to Train

The format for the CARE Connection lesson plans includes an overview, preparation checklist, lesson-at-a-glance with timeline for conducting the lesson, script, and lists of references and other resources. The instructor will use the script to present the lesson to the participants. Each script gives directions to the instructor—DO, SAY, ASK—to deliver the lesson.

The lesson can be presented in the child care center or family day care home, media center, or classroom.
**Preparation Checklist**

**Directions:** Use the Preparation Checklist to get ready for the training session. Keep track of your progress by checking off tasks as they are completed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Done ✓</th>
<th>Lesson Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Gather Materials</strong></td>
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<td>Materials Needed:</td>
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<td>☐ · Instructor’s Script</td>
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<td></td>
<td>☐ · Handout 1: <em>Benefits of Physical Activity</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>☐ · Handout 2: <em>Examples of Activities for Healthy Preschoolers</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ · Beach ball or any plain, lightweight 10 to 12-inch ball</td>
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<td>☐ · Black permanent marker</td>
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<td>☐ · Pens or pencils (one for each participant)</td>
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<td>☐ · Session Evaluation/Feedback Form (one for each participant)</td>
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**Prepare for Lesson**

**Before the Training:**

| ☐ | · Make copies of Handouts 1 and 2 (one of each for each participant). |
| ☐ | · Make copies of Session Evaluation/Feedback Form (one for each participant). You may use the sample NFSMI evaluation form or develop your own. |
| ☐ | · On each color section of the beach ball, paste/tape pictures of activity commands. If using a ball without color sections, paste/tape pictures of commands in different areas of the ball. |

**On Training Day:**

| ☐ | · Place pens or pencils on tables (one for each participant). |

**On the Instructor’s Table:**

| ☐ | · Instructor’s Script |
| ☐ | · Instructor’s copies of Handouts 1 and 2 |
| ☐ | · Session Evaluation/Feedback Forms |
Lesson at a Glance  
(20 minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 minute</td>
<td>Introduction and Overview</td>
<td>Introduce topic</td>
<td>• Instructor’s Script</td>
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| 15 minutes| Objective: At the completion of the lesson, the participant will be able to plan various physical activities for preschool children. | Participant review and discussion | • Handout 1: Benefits of Physical Activity  
• Handout 2: Examples of Activities for Healthy Preschoolers |
| 1 minute  | Summary and Close                                   | Review Key Points              | Script                                                                    |
| 3 minutes | Session evaluation/feedback                         | Conduct a short evaluation of the lesson. | • Sample evaluation/feedback form or standard form used in your nutrition program |
Wellness Activities for Healthy Preschoolers

References


Internet Resources

National Physical Activity Plan: www.physicalactivityplan.org

I Am Moving I Am Learning. Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center: www.eclkc.gov
Instructor’s Script

SAY:
Daily structured and unstructured physical activities are very important for young children. Structured physical activities are created, implemented, and led by adults, while unstructured physical activities are created, implemented, and led by children. Both structured and unstructured physical activities are rewarding and beneficial for young children.

When planning and introducing physical activities to children, there are three fundamental movement skills to remember: locomotor skills, object control, and stability skills. Locomotor skills are movements children use to move from one place to another, (for example, skipping, galloping, running, or jumping). Object control skills are controlled movements like swinging a bat, rolling a ball, or striking a ball. The third fundamental movement skill is stability skills. Stability movements improve balance and body control. Some examples of stability skills are turning, lifting, stretching, and bending.

ASK:
What are some other examples of locomotor skills, object control skills, or stability skills?

DO:
Listen for all answers.
Examples:
   Locomotor Skills: running, skipping, walking, hopping, galloping, jumping, and sliding.
   Object Control Skills: volleying, dribbling, trapping, striking, throwing, and catching.
   Stability Skills: falling, turning, lifting, bending, twisting, and reaching.

SAY:
There are many benefits associated with physical activity.

DO:
Distribute Handout 1: “Benefits of Physical Activity” to participants.

SAY:
Let’s look at Handout 1: “Benefits of Physical Activity.”
ASK:
What are some of the best known benefits that are listed here?

DO:
Listen for all answers.

SAY:
In addition to the benefits listed, physical activity for young children is important for early brain development and learning. Physical activity and active play produce overall physical, mental, and social benefits for young children. Children who play outside are generally happier, healthier, and stronger than those who do not.

SAY:
When adults model and teach the importance of physical activity, young children are more likely to adopt a lifetime of healthful practices and behaviors.

DO:
Distribute Handout 2: “Examples of Activities for Healthy Preschoolers” to participants.

SAY:
Preschool children should participate in at least 60 minutes of developmentally appropriate, moderate-intensity physical activity every day. Activities can be broken into two 30-minute or four 15-minute periods. Handout 2 has several examples of physical activities that can be done with preschoolers. An example is “What’s the Catch?” In this activity, physical movements are taped/pasted on different sections of a large beach ball. As children toss or roll the ball within the circle, the child receiving the ball must perform the action based on where his or her right hand touches the ball. After the child performs the action, the child then rolls or tosses the ball to someone within the circle.

DO:
Demonstrate the activity by instructing participants to form a circle. Ask a participant to roll or toss the ball to you (the instructor). Perform the action where your right hand touched the ball. Toss the ball to one of the participants to continue the activity.

At the completion of the activity:

ASK:
Can you think of any other ways the activity could be extended?
DO:
Allow participants to comment.

ASK:
As you look at the other activities on Handout 2, can you think of any other developmentally appropriate activities for young children?

DO:
Give participants 1-2 minutes to review activities. Select two or three volunteers to answer. Allow participants to ask questions or make comments.

Review Key Points to Close Lesson

SAY:
Physical activity and active play are beneficial for young children in all areas of development. Incorporate at least 60 minutes of developmentally appropriate, moderate-intensity physical activity into every child’s day. Refer to your handouts for ideas when planning physical activities for preschoolers.

DO:
Distribute the session evaluation/feedback form.

SAY:
Thank you for participating in the lesson today. Please take a couple of minutes to complete the session evaluation/feedback form. Thank you for your input.
Benefits of Physical Activity
Handout 1

Physical activity helps with:

- boosting energy levels
- controlling weight
- reducing blood pressure
- raising HDL ("good") cholesterol
- reducing the risk of diabetes
- reducing the risk of some kinds of cancer
- improving mental well-being, including gaining more self-confidence and higher self-esteem

In addition to increasing the amount of vitamin D that the body can use, playing outdoors regularly helps children:

- become more fit
- develop stronger immune systems
- be more creative
- have lower stress levels
- develop greater respect for themselves and others
Wellness Activities for Healthy Preschoolers  
Handout 2

Activities for Healthy Preschoolers  
Handout 2

Large Group Activities:

1-2-3, Act Like Me  
Materials needed: none  
Location: This activity should be done in an open space.  
Directions: The leader says 1-2-3, Act Like Me performing an action, such as leaping like a frog or pretending to be an airplane and flying around in circles. Everyone else mimics the leader’s actions. Let children take turns being the leader.  
Overview of Activity:  
1-2-3, Act Like Me and leap like a frog  
1-2-3, Act Like Me and fly around in circles  
1-2-3, Act Like Me and run in place  
Tips: Extend the activity by adding props (balls, water noodles, etc.)

Traffic Light  
Materials needed: Masking or painter’s tape (inside) or sidewalk chalk (outside)  
Location: This activity should be done outside in an open space.  
Directions: Using tape or chalk, mark/draw a line long enough for all children to stand behind the line side-by-side. Place a second horizontal line several feet in front of the first line, where one child, serving as the “engineer,” will stand. With his/her back turned to the rest of the children, the engineer will say “green light.” At this time, the players will run to the line near the engineer. When the engineer says “red light,” all players must stop running. If the engineer says “yellow light,” players must walk until the engineer says “red light” (stop) or “green light” (run). The first player to reach the line near the engineer becomes the new engineer.  
Overview of Activity:  
Engineer says “Green Light”; Children Run  
Engineer says “Yellow Light”; Children Walk  
Engineer says “Red Light”; Children Stop  
Tips: This is a good activity to promote good listening skills. To increase body movement, substitute hopping, jumping, swimming with arms, etc. for running.
Watch Out for the Alligator!

Materials needed: Masking or painter’s tape, Alligator cutout (laminated)
Location: Activity can be completed inside of a classroom or outside on a sidewalk.
Directions: To create a mouth, place two 4-foot long strips of tape on the floor in the shape of a “V”. Place alligator cut-out in the center of “V”. Children must jump over the mouth to avoid the alligator. Let each child decide how far he/she will jump, on the narrow end, the far end, or somewhere in between.

Tips and Variations:
For the first jump, using two pieces of rope create parallel lines a few inches apart. Gradually increase the distance between the lines after each jump. Have children walk on the taped lines, one foot in front of the other, around the moat. Try walking while balancing a bean bag.


What’s the Catch?

Materials needed: Beach ball or any lightweight 10 to 12-inch ball, black permanent marker
Location: The activity should be done outside in an open space.
Directions: On each color section of the beach ball, write an activity command word, (for example: hop, spin, skip, jump, shake, leap, and wiggle). If using a ball without color sections, write six commands on different areas of the ball. For younger children, tape pictures of children doing a physical activity on the ball. Ask and assist children to form a circle. Children will throw or roll the ball to each other. The child receiving the ball must perform an action based on where his or her right hand touches the ball. The child then rolls or throws the ball to another child. Continue until everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Tips and Variations: Write the name of different animals on the ball sections. Child must imitate the movement and sound of the corresponding animal.

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Small Group Activities:

**Ball or Bean Bag Toss**
Materials needed: Large tote bin or basket, Several balls of varying sizes or bean bags, Masking tape or sidewalk chalk
Location: Activity can be completed inside of a classroom or outside on a sidewalk.
Directions: Using tape or chalk, draw/mark off several X’s at varying distances from the starting point. Place basket on one of the closest X’s to the starting point. Standing at the starting point, have children toss balls into the basket. After all balls have been tossed, move basket to another X and repeat activity.
Tips and Variations: Place aluminum pie pans on the X’s. Toss bean bags into pans.

**Get Moving!**
Materials needed: Large empty cardboard box(es), Masking tape
Location: Activity can be completed inside of a classroom or outside in an open space.
Directions: Using the tape, create two horizontal lines, several feet apart. The goal is to deliver the box from one side to the other without dropping it. Working in pairs, children will carry the box together as quickly as they can, by first using two hands, then one hand, then their bodies, then walking backwards, etc.
Tips and Variations: This activity can also be done with two or three teams at a time, but not as a competition. Lightweight items can be placed in the box to increase balancing skills.
Replace the box with a large ball.
Related books:

**Bean Bag Tic-Tac-Toe**
Materials needed: Masking tape or sidewalk chalk, Bean bags (nine each of two different colors)
Location: Activity can be completed inside of a classroom or outside on a sidewalk.
Directions: Pairs of children can play this game. Create a tic-tac-toe board on the floor or ground using the tape or chalk. Use tape or chalk to create a starting line. Each child gets nine bean bags of the same color and takes a turn tossing one bean bag in every spot while standing behind the starting line.
Obstacle Course Through the Forest

**Materials needed:** Pictures of various animals, Props to represent things in a forest

**Location:** Activity can be completed inside of a classroom.

**Directions:** Designate an open area as the forest. Create an obstacle course using various props (example: blue streamers to represent water, brown paper cut out in the shape of a large tree limb, soft blocks stacked together for a bridge or moat, etc.) Randomly place pictures of animals throughout the forest. Children will maneuver through the course using a physical skill needed to proceed. As they reach a picture of an animal, they should imitate the sound and movements of that animal.

**Child Directed Activities:**

Create an environment that encourages physical activity through free play. Include various items such as:

- Large cardboard boxes
- Balls
- Jump ropes
- Hula hoops
- Sidewalk chalk for drawing hopscotch
- Musical instruments
- Parachutes
- Colorful scarves
- Large plastic cones (for obstacle courses)
- Bubbles
- Music to dance to