

EARLY YEARS IN FOCUS

<http://kentcollege.com/early-years>



ACTIVE PLAY - ACTIVE LEARNING
OPEN MORNING
SATURDAY 26TH MARCH

Active Bodies - Active Minds

Young children are renowned for their boundless energy. We have all undoubtedly looked at our own children and inwardly asked ourselves, 'Where does all that energy come from and do they ever sit still?'

Throughout this article we will explore how we can channel the natural limitless energy your child has to support their physical development.

Early childhood is the ideal time to lay the foundations for

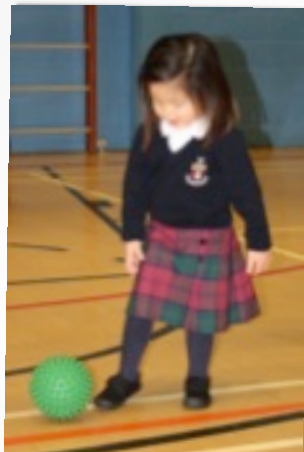
children to be physically active. This is an important time when your little one begins to learn basic motor skills, such as running, jumping and climbing. Each of these activities helps to build developing muscles and gain control of these early skills. The opportunity to be physically active both indoors and outdoors should be encouraged everyday. Activities can be in the shape of both structured and unstructured opportunities.

Ideas for structured physical activities.

These types of activities are ones that are directed by you, that you enjoy together with your child, for instance:

All types of ball games. Throwing, catching, and kicking a ball.

Using a bat and a ball, such as an appropriately-sized tennis racket and tennis ball or even a cricket bat and ball.



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Children may like playing golf; why not have a go at making your own putting green! Skittles can also be a great challenge. This simple game can also help with counting and adding through keeping a score. Don't forget holidays. A flat sandy beach can be idyllic for practising ball games, or a woodland walk for climbing trees!

Structured play also helps children learn skills such as sharing, working with others and the ability to follow instructions. These skills are all part of the building blocks for acquiring more complex movements.

Unstructured physical activities.

These types of activities provide children with the opportunity to play freely, whilst under your supervision. This play may be alone or with a group of other children. Unstructured activities allow children to use their imagination and problem solving abilities. There are no rules for this type of activity.

Through opportunities to freely explore, climb, balance, move and run, children can begin to gain awareness of their own bodies and how they need to co-ordinate their movement for particular challenges. For example, climbing the ladder of a

slide, or moving around a simple obstacle course!

Regardless of the size of your garden children can refine their developing physical skills through gardening. The enjoyable activities of digging, raking, carrying, and planting can all help to build muscles and develop co-ordination.

If you have a very small garden, indoor planting and growbags can be an option, but perhaps a visit to a play park or indoor gym can offer a bit more space for movement. The beach too can provide another great venue for digging... even if it's stony!

Through strengthening arm, hand, wrist, and finger muscles your child is indirectly laying the foundations for muscle strength and co-ordination for later writing skills. Children can quite often say, 'My arm aches' after colouring a picture. Involve your children in digging and planting in the garden or sand pit; it really is an excellent way of gaining muscle control. Threading beads or coloured pasta onto string too can refine finger strength.

Continuing on our theme of 'Building Muscles', it is also beneficial to use music and movement to build muscular strength and endurance. Dancing can be

enjoyed both indoors and outdoors. Even on a wet, cold day put on some music and encourage your child to move arms, legs and whole body to the music.

Using an active body and active mind : 'Letters are Shapes'.

Please also refer to our article 'Letters are shapes' which can found in this first edition of Early Years In Focus (EYIF).

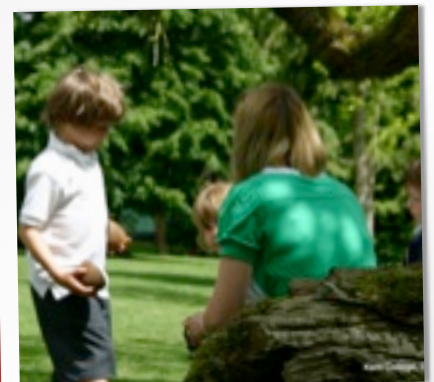
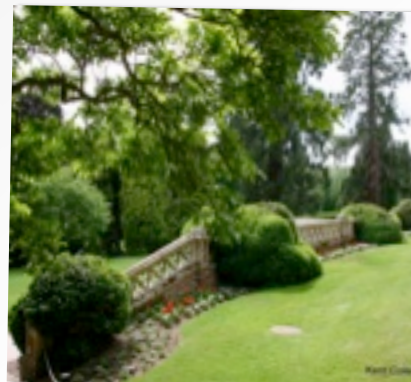
Ask children to make circular movements with their hands and arms and

tell them they are making a shape like the letter O. Up and down movements with arms can be likened to tall, straight letters.

In school, we are trained to use a programme called 'Write Dance' for introducing handwriting to children. It improves children's motor skills and provides a strong foundation for writing. The movements are designed to help children feel happy and comfortable.

The 'Write Dance' programme has excellent links with the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**.

For example it covers; **Creative Development** with use of imagination, music and dance.





Physical Development for movement and using equipment and materials.
Communication, Language and Literacy for handwriting
Personal, Social and Emotional Development for self confidence and self- esteem.

Open Morning
Saturday 26th March
Active Play - Active Learning

If you would like to find out more about 'Write Dance' or any other activities that you can share with your child to promote their physical development, you are most welcome join us for our open morning. We will be demonstrating many of the activities introduced in this month's articles on Saturday March 26th 2011 between 09.30 and 12.00. Throughout our themed morning 'Active Play - Active Learning', feel free to bring along your young child and explore together the array of learning opportunities. Qualified staff will also be on hand to chat with you and share more ideas that are right for your child. Please register your interest by clicking on the button 'Active Play - Active Learning