

Physical activity cards

Early Years



We all want children to develop their motor skills and confidence while finding ways to move their bodies in a way they enjoy.

Accompanying resources

Activity cards:

Take a look at our activity cards to get you started with new activities within your service. Feel free to use our suggested activities or try your own. Please note that these are suggestions and should be adapted to suit the capabilities of your group of children.

Resources for families:

You can share the activity cards with families to encourage them to try a new activity, go for a walk, or integrate more movement into their day.

Resources for staff:

See the activity ideas for staff that could spark some inspiration for something you can encourage staff to participate in.

Early Years

Physical activity guidelines



Infants aged 1 and below:

Physical activity: Active several times throughout the day including interactive floor-based play and tummy time. Aim for at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day.

Sleep: Aim for 14 to 17 hours of sleep for 0-3 months old, and 12 to 16 hours for 4-11 months old. This includes naps.

Toddlers aged 1 to 2:

Physical activity: Physical activity should consist of at least 180 minutes spread throughout the day. Energetic play is included in this.

Sleep: Aim for 11 to 14 hours of sleep, including naps. Sleep and wake-up times should be consistent day-to-day.

Pre-schoolers aged 3 to 5:

Physical activity: Physical activity should consist of at least 180 minutes spread throughout the day. 60 minutes of this should be energetic play.

Sleep: Aim for 10 to 13 hours of sleep, this could include a nap. Sleep and wake-up times should be consistent day-to-day.

A note on sedentary behaviour and screen time: Children should not be restrained or sitting for more than an hour at a time (such as in a car seat or stroller). Limit screen time as much as possible.

Early Years

Activity card: Yoga



Purpose:

Yoga is a gentle movement activity that can also benefit emotional regulation. This focuses on fun and trying new shapes to move our bodies in.

Equipment required:

- Space for children to move in
- Optional soft mats

Instructions for activity:

Gather children in a clear space. Yoga can be a structured activity or spread throughout the day—choose what works best.

If doing a full session, start by releasing energy with **star jumps, running in place, or shaking out their bodies**. Then, have children sit cross-legged and notice their surroundings—**how does their body feel? What can they hear?**

Explain that they'll try **fun yoga poses**, making new shapes with their bodies. Demonstrate each pose, relating it to **animals or objects** for engagement. If teaching poses names, play a "**Yogi Says**" game, calling out poses for quick recall. Start with a few and add more as they learn!

Yoga can be adapted to suit various ages and stages, please consider the children and their development at your service.

Early Years

Activity card: Yoga

Example poses:

Warrior:

With a wide stance, lean into the front leg with a lunge. Turn the back foot on an angle and stretch the arms out wide. Feel strong like a warrior.



Stretched tree pose:

Stretch up tall from standing and reach the arms towards the roof and slightly backwards. Imagine you are as tall as a tree.



Cobra pose:

Lay on the ground on your tummy. Place hands on the ground underneath your shoulders and stretch the back backwards gently curling up from the ground like a cobra.



Butterfly:

Sit on the floor up tall. Bring feet together forming a triangle or butterfly wings with your legs.



Early Years

Activity card: Yoga

Example poses:

Cat and cow:

Kneel on the ground on all fours with the arms underneath the shoulders and knees underneath hips. Curl the back and lift your head up into a 'cat' then curl your head down and flex the back into a 'cow'.



Boat:

Sit on the ground and bring your legs up straight in front of you. Bring your arms out straight to reach towards them and balance.



Tree:

Stretch up tall to the ceiling and bring your hands together in front of you. Carefully bring one foot up to rest on the inside of the standing leg. Test your balance and be strong like a tree.



Downward dog:

Begin on all fours on the ground. Slowly push up onto your hands and stretch out your legs. Lean backwards and push your head towards your legs, stretching like a dog.



Early Years

Activity card: Animal movement



Purpose:

This is a fun, creative way to get children running, stomping and hopping. It will help foster imagination, develop motor skills, balance and social interaction.

Equipment required:

- Space for children to move in
- Best completed outside
- Animal cards/images (optional)

Instructions for activity:

Introduction (5 min)

Gather children in a circle and introduce the activity: "Let's pretend to be animals! We'll move, sound, and think like them." Show animal pictures to spark imagination and have them guess and describe movements.

Warm-up (5 min)

Prepare their bodies with simple stretches:

- Shake arms and legs.
- Stretch up like a giraffe, down like a frog.
- Play animal-themed music to set the mood.

Animal Movement (15-20 min)

Demonstrate and have children imitate various animal movements (examples on the next page). Encourage them to move around, adjusting speed and coordination. Let them suggest their own animals!

Cool-down (5 min)

Guide gentle stretches to relax and slow their bodies:

- Stretch tall like a giraffe.
- Sit like a butterfly, flapping arms as wings.
- Breathe deeply to calm down.

End with a quick reflection: "What was your favourite animal?"

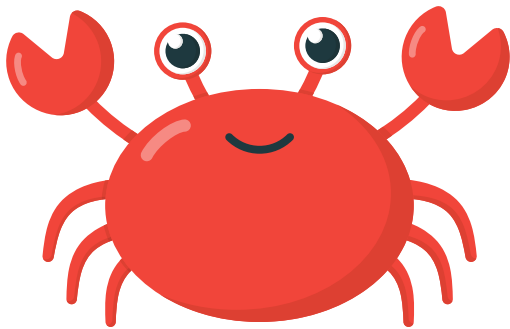
Early Years

Activity card: Animal movement

Example animals:

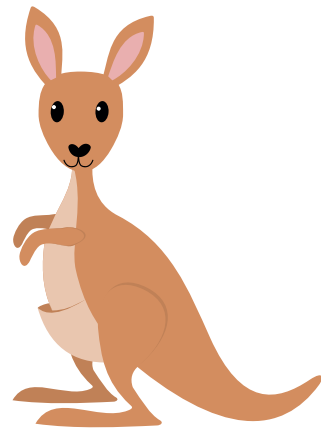
Crab walk:

Bend your knees and half squat down like a crab. Shuffle from side to side and use your hands as pincers.



Kangaroo hops:

Jump like a kangaroo! Hop with your legs together, arms forward.



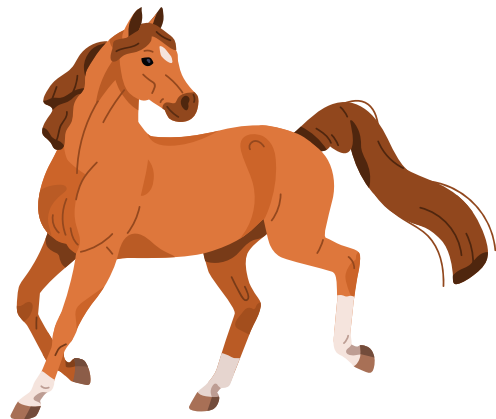
Frog hop:

Now, let's be frogs! Squat down low, put your hands on the floor, and then jump like a frog. Boing, boing.



Horse gallop:

Gallop like a horse. Stand tall and bend your knees a little, lift one knee up high and then the other as you gallop.



Early Years

Activity card: Animal movement

Example animals:

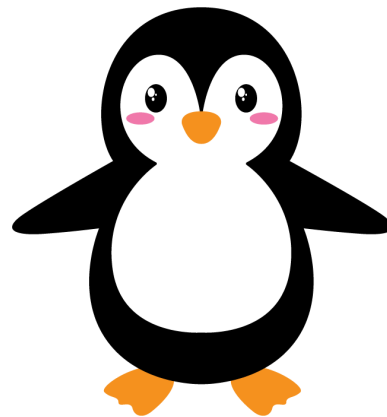
Bear crawl:

Now we're bears. Get down on your hands and feet and crawl across the floor, growling like a bear.



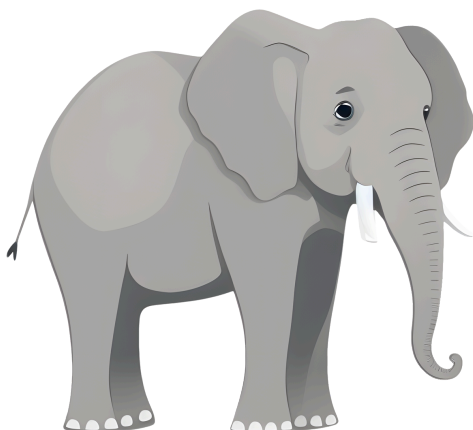
Penguin waddle:

Waddle like a penguin. Keep your arms tucked in, and shuffle side to side.



Elephant stomp:

Let's be elephants. Stand tall and make big stomps with your feet while swinging your arm like a trunk.



Bird flap:

Pretend to be birds flying! Open your arms wide and flap them up and down.



Early Years

Activity card: Dance freeze



Purpose:

This activity aims to get children moving to music and freezing in various fun poses when the music stops. It helps develop their ability to listen, respond to rhythms, and coordination.

Equipment required:

- Space for children to move in
- Music playlist with upbeat tunes

Instructions for activity:

Dance Freeze Game Instructions:

1. Introduction:

- Gather the children and explain:
 - "Dance to the music, but when it stops—FREEZE!"
 - "You can freeze like a statue, an animal, or a silly shape!"
- Demonstrate a few freeze poses (e.g., a tree, a rock, an animal).

2. Warm-Up:

- Stretch to the sky like reaching for the stars.
- Wiggle arms and legs like noodles.
- Sway side to side like the wind.
- Play gentle music during the warm-up.

3. Dance Freeze (10-15 minutes):

- Start music—let kids dance freely (twirl, wiggle, hop, bounce).
- Stop the music suddenly and say, "Freeze!"
- Encourage fun, creative freeze poses.
- Restart the music and repeat.

Early Years

Activity card: Dance freeze



Extension ideas for activity:

You can occasionally pause the music and make suggestions for a type of freeze, like:

- "Freeze like a tree!"
- "Freeze like a lion, ready to pounce!"
- "Freeze like a snowman!"

Variation (Optional):

- Add movement challenges before freezing you can include some "dance tasks" that the children need to do before they freeze. For example:
 - "Dance like you're swimming, and when the music stops, freeze like a fish!"
 - "Dance like you're hopping on the moon, and when the music stops, freeze like an astronaut!"
- You can also ask the children to come up with their own freeze poses as a group, perhaps taking turns leading the freeze creatively.

Cool-down (5 minutes):

- After playing a few rounds, help the children calm down by gradually slowing the music down and guiding them through a cool-down.
 - "Let's stretch and relax our bodies after all that fun dancing!"
 - You can suggest slow, gentle movements like swaying side to side or stretching their arms and legs.
 - "Now, let's sit down and breathe in and out slowly to calm our bodies."

Tips for Success:

- Vary the music: Play different types of music (fast and slow) to help children experience different rhythms and tempos.
- Encourage creativity: Praise the children for their creativity in the freeze poses and dance moves.

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Activity card: Balloon bounce

Purpose:

An easy and fun short activity to get children moving and help assist with hand and eye coordination, as well as team work.

Equipment required:

- Space for children to move in
- Several balloons blown up

Instructions for activity:

Gather the children into a clear space. Bring in the balloons and encourage the children to keep them in the air without touching the ground. Children can tap the balloons to keep them up.

Children should try to work together to keep all the balloons in the air.

To increase the difficulty of this activity, you can start with only a couple of balloons and keep increasing how many are released. This means the children need to work together to keep more and more balloons in the air.



Early Years

Activity card: Colour relay



Purpose:

This game is an engaging way to help children develop teamwork skills and coordination.

Equipment required:

- Space for children to move in preferably outside
- A variety of coloured balls
- Markers to designate start and finish lines
- Bucket at the starting line

Instructions for activity:

Organise the Space: Set up a course with a start and collection lines. Make sure there's enough space for the children to run back and forth safely. Place the coloured balls in a pile at the collection point.

Instructions:

1. **Split the children into teams of 3-4**, depending on the group size. Each team should line up behind the starting line.
2. **Explain the game:** Tell the children that they will be participating in a fun relay race. They must run to the coloured balls, pick a specific colour, and return it to their team bucket.
3. **Start the Relay:**
 - The first child in each team will run to the pile of balls.
 - Call out a colour (e.g., "Red!") for each child to find.
 - The child will then search for and grab the ball of that colour.
 - Once they have the correct ball, they return to their team and drop it into the bucket.
4. **Next Player's Turn:**
 - The second player repeats the same process, running to the pile of balls and picking up a different colour (or the same, depending on how you want to play).
 - The relay continues until each child has had a turn and all balls have been collected.
5. **Winning Team:** The first team to complete the relay race with all their children having a turn and collecting all the correct coloured balls wins the game.

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Activity card: Outdoor scavenger hunt

Purpose:

This is an outdoor activity for children to explore nature, develop motor skills and problem-solving skills. This could be undertaken in the service yard or could be extended to be an outdoor excursion.

Equipment required:

- Outdoor space for children to explore
- List or pictures of items to collect or find (you can utilise the next page)
- Small bags for children to collect items in

Instructions for activity:

1. Choose the Outdoor Location: Select a safe outdoor area such as the service yard or an external park.
2. Prepare the Scavenger Hunt List: You can use the pictures of items on the following page by printing this out.
3. Divide the Children into Teams: Split the children into small teams of 2-3 (depending on the group size) to encourage teamwork and collaboration or you can get the children to find things individually. Give each team or child a picture list and a collection bag or container.
4. Set the Boundaries: Clearly explain the boundaries of the scavenger hunt. Ensure the children know where they are allowed to go and where they should stay within the designated safe area.

Beginning the hunt:

Explain the Rules:

- Tell the children they will be going on a scavenger hunt to find different items in the outdoor area. Show them the list or pictures and explain each item they seek.
- Emphasize the importance of staying together as a team and only picking up safe items (e.g., not touching anything dangerous like sharp objects or poisonous plants).
- Remind them to respect the environment and only collect natural items (or items they are sure are safe).

Finish the Hunt:

- Once all teams have found their items or after a set time limit, gather the children back to the starting point. Each team can show off what they found and describe their items.

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Activity card: Outdoor scavenger hunt

Outdoor scavenger hunt card:

A green leaf:



A smooth rock:



A flower:



A feather:



An interesting stick:



A piece of bark:



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Activity card: Digging for treasure

Purpose:

This activity will help engage children's sense of exploration and connection to nature. It will also help to develop fine motor skills.

Equipment required:

- A sandpit or sensory tray filled with sand
- Small items to hide (e.g. toys such as dinosaurs or cars, or natural items such as rocks)
- Small shovels

Instructions for activity:

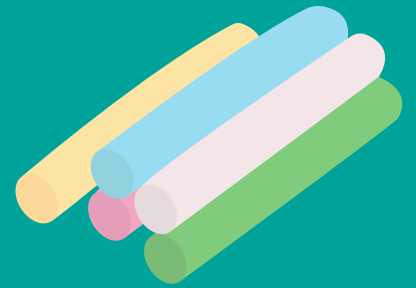
Set up your space for the activity either outside in a sandpit or using a sensory tray. Bury the small items within the sand. You could set this up with a theme in mind (such as pirate treasure or dinosaur fossils) or make the items random.

Once ready, encourage children to dig through the sand to find the items. Get them to explain what they find as they go and explore the item before digging to find another item.

At the end of the activity you can use some reflection questions relevant to the theme.

Early Years

Activity card: Colour run



Purpose:

This is a simple, fun activity which will get children running and improving on their spatial awareness.

Equipment required:

- Space for children to move in which has some pavement
- Coloured chalk

Instructions for activity:

In your identified space, set up the activity by drawing coloured circles or squares on the pavement. The number you draw will vary depending on the number of children you have. Children can help with drawing the shapes.

You can make the shapes varying sizes, so that smaller shapes may only fit one child standing in it and larger shape may fit several children.

Once the space is set up, gather the children to begin the game. Explain that you will call out a colour and children need to run to one of those coloured areas. Children need to have all of their feet fitting on the colour to be 'safe'.

Begin the game by calling out a colour. Once all children have got to the colour, call out a different colour. Continue to do this and gradually you can make it a competition between children. After a few goes, the child who gets to a colour last will become out.

Early Years

Staff activity ideas

Early years educators are key role models for promoting positive health and wellbeing. Looking after yourself also means that not only will you feel great but it will help you have the energy for the children in your care.

Ideas for how staff can get active:

Start your staff meeting with a 10-minute walk or stretching session. This will also help boost productivity and focus.

Organise a staff walk before or after work. This could become a weekly group walk.

Set up a competition that staff can participate in. This could be seeing which staff member can achieve the highest amount of steps across a week.

For a team building activity, look into attending a yoga or pilates class as a group.

Place some stretching cards in the staff room to encourage staff to stretch throughout the day.

Read about the inspiring stories from our [Make a Move, Make a Difference campaign](#). These may spark inspiration for how you can encourage staff to get active.

Early Years

Additional resources: Active play

Websites:

1

Raising Children's Network:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/nutrition-fitness/physical-activity/physical-activity-how-much>

2

NSW Munch and Move:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/nutrition-fitness/physical-activity/physical-activity-how-much>

3

Make your move – sit less, be active for life – family guide:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/nutrition-fitness/physical-activity/physical-activity-how-much>

Books:

1

Are you Wiggly: by Tim Button (Author), Ana Larrañaga



2

Stomp, Wiggle, Clap, and Tap - My First Book of Dance: By: Rachelle Burk



3

I Got the Rhythm: By: Connie Schofield-Morrison, Frank Morrison



4

Clap Your Hands: By: Lorinda Bryan Cauley

