



PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & FITNESS THROUGH ACTIVE PLAY!

SUMMARY PUBLICATION





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**EVIDENCE-BASED PLAYGROUND ACTIVITIES
PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & FITNESS
THROUGH ACTIVE PLAY**

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IN PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN:



Disclaimer:

We created the activities in this program with safety in mind; we intend them to be implemented on playgrounds in compliance with current safety guidelines and recommendations. Each activity in Play On! contains information that will alert supervisors to specific safety considerations to be aware of during the play activity. Potential playground risks exist. Reference the PlayCore Safety Series available at <https://www.playcore.com/safety-series> for the Playground Inspection & Maintenance Guide and the Playground Supervision Guide for a complete list of maintenance, safety, and supervision recommendations.

The information and activities published in this book were compiled using the most up-to-date safety information available and were subjected to comprehensive safety review by SHAPE America. The authors, the program adviser, the sponsor, and SHAPE America do not accept liability for information contained within this publication, nor for any accident or injury sustained while completing the activities in this program. Appropriate and reasonable supervision is recommended at all times based on the age and capacity of each child.

PlayCore is proud to sponsor this program and promotes safe, supervised play, but cannot anticipate all conditions regarding any suggested activity in this program or recommend specific precautions beyond those set forth in the program and those warnings supplied by playground equipment manufacturers. PlayCore recommends that all warnings issued by the equipment manufacturer be complied with at all times.

SHAPE America, PlayCore, and its divisions provide this resource in the interest of promoting physical activity and youth fitness through the use of playground equipment and outdoor play environments.

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"It is critical to advocate for play initiatives, effectively communicate the developmental benefits of playgrounds, and demonstrate how investing in play can result in healthy outcomes."

- Russ Carson, PhD, Co-author of PlayOn!



THE FUN-DAMENTALS OF PLAY ON!

The purpose of *Play On!*[®] is to promote physical fitness and fun through the use of well-designed outdoor play environments and creative playground learning activities. This Summary was designed to share examples of the how play can help promote health, fitness, learning, and overall well-being in children. Designed with the insights and experiences of physical activity experts, practitioners and children, it's a valid tool for early childhood educators, elementary teachers and recreation professionals.

The 5 playground activities highlighted here are an example of the 125 developmentally appropriate activities found in the full program guide. They align with the National Standards for K-12 Physical Education and Active Start guidelines for preschool-age children, incorporate six key elements of play to promote youth fitness and moderate to vigorous physical activity, feature safety and teaching tips and offer realistic accommodations for children of all abilities and skill levels. Most of all, they make physical education fun for everyone.

Play On! offers a unique, highly effective tool to communities by contributing to overall child development and physical fitness. With the rates of childhood obesity growing, educators and recreation professionals are seeking new and innovative ways to incorporate physical activity into their school and recreation programs. Through careful design of play environments and innovative programming, communities can use their playgrounds to maximize the value of their play space, bring learning outdoors and increase physical activity.

The purpose of *Play On!* is to show educators and park and recreation professionals how to use playgrounds to promote physical activity, develop wellness habits and meet the National Standards, all in the context of fun. To begin utilizing playgrounds as the setting for guided physical activities to encourage fitness, you can request the full program here playcore.com/playon.

THE VALUE OF PLAY

Play is critical to healthy human development. Research shows that children are at their highest level of development when they are at play. As the foundation of learning, play helps to develop children's physical, social, cognitive, communicative and sensory needs, while providing emotional fulfillment and enjoyment.

It is important for teachers and recreation professionals to advocate for play initiatives and effectively communicate how investing in play results in healthy outcomes.



Following safety guidelines and proper supervision on playgrounds is crucial. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the PlayCore Safety Series resources for maintenance and supervision tips.

playcore.com/safety-series

- Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength.
- Play is important to brain development.
- Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles.
- Play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face challenges.
- Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate and to resolve conflicts.
- Some play must remain child-driven, children practice decision making, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, and engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue. When adults constantly control play, children revert to adult rules and concerns and lose some benefits of free play, particularly in developing creativity, leadership, and group skills.
- Play builds active, healthy bodies.
- Play provides a forum for parents and children to joyfully interact, bond and engage in recreation together, which is critical for all children and especially children in underserved areas.



BALANCED PLAY OPPORTUNITIES

Providing a balance of facilitated and free play opportunities is important for children's development.

Play On! contains activities designed for children to meet moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity, but we also ask them to use their imaginations and to engage in free play as they build and expand on these activities to make them their own.

- **Free play is play that is dictated and controlled by children without adult input or guidance.**
- **Imaginative play is a type of free play that involves children using their minds creatively; in other words, it's play that involves elements of dramatic play, pretend or make-believe.**
- **Guided play offers a loosely defined framework of social rules in which the environment may be more regulated than free play.**
- **Directed play is play that occurs under the direction of an adult, usually in order to meet a specific objective (such as physical fitness) that is not chosen by the children.**



Play On! is intended for everyone. Every child, regardless of ability or skill level, deserves the opportunity to actively play on playgrounds and to reap the many physical, mental, social, and emotional benefits playgrounds offer.

PLAYGROUNDS: THE PERFECT SETTING

Establishing physical activity habits in childhood is critical to the development of a physically active lifestyle. When children engage in regular exercise, they are more likely to continue exercising as adults.

Physical activity experts recommend that young people engage in 60 minutes or more of enjoyable and diverse types of physical activity each day. From birth to age 5, this daily activity should include periods of structured and unstructured physical activity that promote the development of movement skills. Preschool children should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping. Obesity researchers recommend the integration of physical activity in the preschool curriculum as a prevention effort.

For children ages 6 to 17, it is recommended that this daily activity be of moderate to vigorous intensity; be age-appropriate; and include aerobic (i.e., rhythmic movement of large muscles), muscle-strengthening (i.e., moving muscles against a resistance), and a bone-strengthening (e.g., producing impact force movement with ground) movements.

Schools are ideal settings for children to accumulate a significant portion of the recommended amount of daily physical activity. The widely endorsed school-wide approach is known as a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP), in which physical activity opportunities are promoted across the coordination of multiple components: physical education; physical activity during school (e.g., recess, classroom breaks); physical activity programs before and after school (e.g., active transportation, intramurals); staff involvement; and family and community engagement. CSPAP implementation provides a promising framework for youth to participate in daily physical activity and reap the associated health benefits.

Regular physical activity has numerous health benefits for children and adolescents:

- **Reduces risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, colon cancer and premature death.**
- **Helps attain/maintain healthy weight and prevent obesity.**
- **Develops healthy bones, lean muscles and nonarthritic joints.**
- **Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol.**
- **Improves cognitive skills and academic performance.**
- **Improves classroom conduct.**
- **Increases self-esteem.**
- **Reduces feelings of anxiety and depression.**



Among the findings of a recent survey, 100% of teachers surveyed said that recess is essential for young students' mental and physical development. Read more at playcore.com/playon.



Multiple benefits include:

- Helps schools and recreation facilities align with National Standards for Physical Education and 60 minutes of recommended physical activity.
- Promotes moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity.
- Teaches children, families, and communities the significant health and developmental benefits that outdoor play environments offer.
- Reinforces classroom learning outdoors through cross-curricular activities.
- Helps link to potential funding aligned to support health and wellness initiatives.
- Maximizes playground investments for use during free play, structured physical education, energizers, and before/after school programming



Download a complete matrix of the alignment between the learning activities of Play On! and the National Standards or Active Start Guidelines at playcore.com/playon

STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM

SHAPE America has established standards for developing physically literate students “who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity” (SHAPE America, 2014). These standards are the guiding principles for physical education content in grades K-12.

SHAPE America has also established guidelines for preschool children, ages 2-5, to engage in daily physical activity, both indoors and outdoors, that is both unstructured and structured, with materials designed to develop movement skills (SHAPE America, 2020).

Play On! fully aligns with the SHAPE America's physical education standards and Active Start guidelines while promoting fitness and fun on the playground. The 125 playground activities provide meaningful ways for schools and recreation professionals to effectively address health and wellness initiatives and provide active play through the use of six key play elements that promote fitness—balancing, brachiating, climbing, spinning, sliding, and swinging.

This unique program can become a vital component in efforts to strengthen, educate, and build healthier communities through play, while maximizing the potential of your playgrounds.

SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH

Research results were overwhelmingly positive and indicated that *Play On!* was effective in promoting physical activity for children.

Through a research grant contributed by SHAPE America, Dr. Yuanglong Liu and Dr. Suzan F. Ayers of the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, Western Michigan University, developed and implemented an objective analysis of the *Play On!* Program.

They conducted a national study to evaluate the program that provided specific information about the correlation between the program and physical activity benefits. Fourteen schools were selected through a national Beta Site selection process through SHAPE America, in which schools submitted an application to volunteer to participate in the research. Approximately 6,000 children from 14 beta sites in 5 states participated in the 4 month study. Research included a series of pre- and post- intervention surveys completed by the teacher, children, parents, as well as two focus groups at one of the Beta Sites to qualitatively measure physical activity and skill development.

Research Findings:

- **91% of teachers reported that playground use increased.**
- **90% of teachers plan to use the program in the future.**
- **100% rated the program 4-5 on a 5 point scale.**
- **25% of parents participated in more family activity after the *Play On!* program was initiated.**
- **100% of students reported having fun engaging in the activities.**
- **90-100% of teachers reported that *Play On!* motivated students to participate in regular, enjoyable, physical activity in a safe and supervised environment.**



Playgrounds can facilitate gross and fine motor development, improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and provide opportunities for creativity, free expression, social interaction, and overall physical fitness (Frost, Brown, Sutterby & Thornton, 2004).



PLAYGROUND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Physical educators and recreation leaders can play a critical role in the selection of playground equipment and designing the outdoor play and learning environment. By offering your expertise, you can have a direct influence on the intentional design of the playground to maximize programming and address the need to promote physical activity.

A well-designed play space provides a critical opportunity to address the needs of the whole child and offer activities that motivate, engage, and challenge all children. Playground components should provide opportunities for beginning, intermediate, and advanced users to engage in healthy risk-taking and offer challenge through a wide variety of play components and activities.



Download a complete list of the basic and supplemental equipment needed to Play On! at playcore.com/playon-resources

Specific design considerations can be made to encourage children to move, increase physical activity and develop important fitness skills. Consider the following design best practices to create healthy bodies through play:

- **Variety** - Offer various elements of play such as brachiating/upper body bilateral coordination (alternating arm swinging/hanging/crawling), climbing, swinging, sliding, spinning, and balancing.
- **Continuum of Skills** - Provide a developmental progression of skills by selecting equipment for beginning, intermediate, and advanced level users that will promote healthy risk taking.
- **Naturalization** - Naturalized playgrounds that combine manufactured equipment with the living landscape provide more opportunities for increased physical activity. Utilize child-friendly plant materials, pathways, and existing topography to encourage movement and increase play value. Learn more about Putting Nature Into Play™ at playcore.com/naturegrounds
- **Loose Parts** - Providing additional loose parts encourages children to move and cooperate together as they manipulate their environment.
- **Active Play** - Disperse equipment and consider pathway layouts for configurations that will encourage movement through running, chasing, exploring, and active play.



PLAYGROUND ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A well-designed play space provides a critical opportunity to address the needs of the whole child and offer a wide variety of activities that motivate, engage, and challenge all children. Specific designs can be selected that encourage children to actively move through play and develop important fitness skills that align with national standards for physical activity.

Playgrounds can be designed to fully implement the *Play On!* program, while incorporating the six key elements of play to promote fitness and help children reach moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity. Physical educators and recreation professionals can play a critical role in the selection of playground equipment and the overall design of the outdoor play and learning environment.



Incorporate six key elements of play that promote physical activity — balancing, brachiating, climbing, spinning, sliding, and swinging.



1. BALANCING

- Increases understanding of efficient body positioning and control, principles of gravity, equilibrium, base of support, and counterbalancing.
- Promotes muscular strength and endurance throughout the entire body.

2. SLIDING

- Enhances core stability, dynamic balance, and leg and hip flexibility.
- Provides body and spatial awareness experience.

3. BRACHIATING

- Improves muscular strength and endurance.
- Promotes hand-eye coordination and rhythmic body movement.

4. SPINNING

- Develops kinesthetic awareness and postural control.
- Improves understanding of speed, force, and directional qualities of movement.

5. CLIMBING

- Enhances spatial awareness and coordination.
- Fosters whole-body muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility.

6. SWINGING

- Promotes aerobic fitness, muscular force, and whole-body awareness.
- Emphasizes the importance of timely energy transfer during movement.



USING PLAY ON! EFFECTIVELY



There are different activities and strategies for different age groups. Playgrounds are designed for specific age groups and the activities are aligned respectively.

Recommendations for Preschool-age Children (Ages 2 – 5)

Research literature documents the fact that physical activity has a positive impact on all developmental domains for young children. Several leading national organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and SHAPE America have echoed these sentiments and recommend that preschool-age children have access to a variety of physical activity daily, indoors and outdoors., that is both structured and unstructured. Specifically, SHAPE America suggests that young children ages 2- 5 engage in physical activity, both indoors and outdoors, daily. Teachers should plan at least 30 minutes of structure physical activity for children ages 2-3 years, and at least 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity daily with materials that are designed to develop movement skills.

Activities around the six play elements (climbing, spinning, balancing, brachiating, swinging, and sliding) exist for this age group, as well. However, playground equipment should be lower to the ground, have a wider base of support, and incorporate upper-body components that are designed to support young children's body weight at a very low level. Activities that focus on upper body bilateral coordination and the patterning for climbing are the prerequisite skills that provide a foundation for brachiating and have been addressed in the preschool activities.

NAEYC recommends that children as young as age 2 have access to environments that allow them to move freely and achieve mastery of their bodies through self-initiated movement in order to practice emerging skills in coordination, movement, and balance and perceptual-motor integration. Additionally, older children (preschool/kindergarten) should have opportunities to engage in large-motor experiences that stimulate a variety of skills, enhance sensory-motor integration and develop controlled movement (balance, strength and coordination). These experiences should range from familiar to new and challenging and include structure that help children learn physical games with rules.





Recommendations for school-age children (K-12)

SHAPE America has established standards (competencies) for developing physically literate individuals “who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity” (SHAPE America, 2014). Devised by a team of experienced elementary and secondary physical education teachers, curriculum and pedagogy specialists and authorities in measurement and evaluation, these nationally accepted standards now define what student learning looks like in quality physical education programs. The National Standards have become the hallmark of meaningful and significant content in the physical education discipline.

Play On! fully aligns with the National Standards and the Active Start guidelines while promoting fitness and fun on the playground. Each learning activity card identifies the National Standards or the Active Start guidelines that are emphasized. The charts below offer an at-a-glance matrix of which activities align with which standards and guidelines.



Download a complete matrix of the alignment between the learning activities of Play On! and the National Standards or Active Start Guidelines at playcore.com/playon

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

You play a critical role in ensuring that the playground learning activities are implemented in a way that optimizes physical fitness, fun and learning. Here are some guidelines to help you most effectively employ *Play On!* in your setting.

You can use *Play On!* in a variety of ways including:

- **As a warm-up or instant activity to physiologically prepare students for the day's activities or to review previously learned skills or concepts.**
- **As a fitness activity to ensure that, regardless of the lesson topic, children experience a health-related fitness component each time you meet.**
- **As the main lesson to teach intended topics within the psychomotor, cognitive or affective learning domains of physical education.**
- **As the end-of-lesson wrap up to assess the retention of physical skills (such as dynamic balance), or cognitive concepts (such as spatial awareness), or attitude development (such as teamwork) taught in the lesson.**
- **As an entire curricular unit by crafting a collection of *Play On!* activities to incorporate as a primary unit within the school year.**

This program is intended for everyone. We believe that every child, regardless of ability or skill level, deserves the opportunity to actively play on playgrounds and to reap the many physical, mental, social, and emotional benefits playgrounds can offer.

While it is important to practice inclusion, the playground on which you execute the *Play On!* activities should be accessible as well. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) bans discrimination on the basis of disability, and this law applies to public playgrounds at parks, schools, childcare facilities, and public gathering areas. To determine if your playground is in compliance with ADA, you can consult the United States Access Board for detailed information regarding playground accessibility.





The learning activity cards offer adaptations for children with disabilities and include modifications for children to participate successfully.



*Download the Play On! Skill
Assessment Worksheets to assess the
physical, fitness, social, and personal
development of goals of the children
participating in the program*
[*playcore.com/playon*](http://playcore.com/playon)

TEACHING STRATEGIES

It is our goal to make sure all *Play On!* facilitators have the basic pedagogical knowledge to employ this playground program successfully. Here are six research-based characteristics to a quality lesson that you can apply to *Play On!* to deliver a quality and constructive program:

- **Engage children in developmentally appropriate activities for a large percentage of time.**

During the early years, children can differ vastly in skeletal maturity. We recommend you select *Play On!* activities that match the grade group of your children, but please be aware that you may need to alter the activity in either direction (more challenging or easier) to meet the developmental needs of each child. Children should feel challenged and successful the majority of the time.

- **Create a structure with little waiting and management time.**

Keep children moving as much as possible. One effective strategy for maximizing participation and self-paced learning is a station, or circuit-training approach. When using activities that do not involve the whole playground, divide children into small groups and position them at dispersed playground equipment; assign a learning activity to each station. Teach each activity to the whole group ahead of time and establish a smart rotation procedure to minimize transition time (such as rotation to a new station upon facilitator command). Post a task sheet at each station that clearly illustrates and describes the task to children.

- **Provide a positive, caring, success-oriented learning atmosphere.**

Offer generous praise and encouragement that focuses on the child's effort and performance. The more opportunities children have to practice the activity, the more likely they will be to become proficient. At the same time, expect mistakes and explain that mistakes are a key part of learning any new activity.

- **Provide clear instruction and demonstration.**

Although the descriptions on each activity learning card are clear and concise, we recommend that you demonstrate (or ask a child to demonstrate) so that the children know (and see) exactly what to do.

- **Monitor performance and offer informative feedback.**

Ensure that children are on task and performing activities correctly by scanning visually from child to child or by positioning and repositioning yourself in close proximity to all children. Offer positive, immediate feedback to all children that is specific to the desired movement of activity.

- **Be enthusiastic and involved in the instruction process.**

Be a positive role model by engaging yourself in the activity, modeling various options for implementation, offering the developmental benefits of the activity, sharing your enthusiasm for movement and interaction often with your students.



Request to purchase the
complete activity guide at
playcore.com/playon.

PLAY ON! PLAYGROUND ACTIVITIES

The 125 learning activity cards in *Play On!* are the heart of this program. The activities are designed based on current motor development principles, according to the specific developmental needs of particular developmental age groups and grade levels and are organized into the following formats:

- **Preschool-age children (ages 2-5)**
- **Kindergarten and Grade 1**
- **Grades 2 and 3**
- **Grades 4 and 5**
- **Fun for all school-age children (grades K-5)***

In this program, we offer what we think is the best of all worlds. We have designed the activities in this curriculum for children to meet moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity, but we also ask them use their imaginations and to engage in free play as they build and expand on these activities to make them their own.

This program enables teachers and community leaders to take children to playgrounds and to engage them in playground learning activities that are physically challenging, designed to encourage creativity and provide memorable play experiences with their peers.

A note on safety: The activities in this program are designed with safety in mind, and are intended to be implemented on playgrounds in compliance with current safety guidelines and recommendations. Items that should never be worn on playgrounds include clothing with drawstrings, bicycle helmets, scarves or loose clothing; all are strangulation hazards. Follow the safety guidelines outlined in the *Playground Safety Series* and the guidelines in *Play On!* available at playcore.com/playon.



Lily Pad Leap

Children assemble in the middle of the playground where a series of mats or hula hoops "lily pads" have been arranged on the surface. Children pretend to be frogs and hop from pad to pad to complete the lily pad obstacle course without falling in. Note: This activity can also be performed using the deck of the playground structure as the lily pads and the ground as the water. Children can sit up or down the equipment to balance completely (disembarked) or to the ground (water).

PLAY ELEMENT: Balancing

ACTIVE START GUIDELINES: #1, #2, #4, #5


EXTRA EQUIPMENT: Lily pads (mats, carpet squares, hula hoops or polypots)

BENEFITS:

- Develops gross motor strength and balance.
- EOP - Gross motor jumps in place 20-25 minutes, jumps forward 5-5.5 years
- NAEYC 2.C.2, 3.C.4, 9B.01

TEACHING TIP:

- Incorporate elements of dramatic play and learning by singing pond-hop-themed songs, making the sound of a frog as they hop.



SAFETY TIPS:

- Be sure that lily pads are affixed to the ground or are made of non-slip material.
- If you are using elevated surfaces as lily pads, ensure that there is sufficient playground safety surfacing under and around the equipment.

VARIATIONS:

- **Easier:** Place lily pads closer together for younger children.
- **More Challenging:** Place lily pads farther apart. Create a course incorporating play equipment so that children have the opportunity to go over, under and around different pieces of play equipment while following the lily pad course.

DID YOU KNOW?

Frogs may use lily pads to rest or hunt for prey.

Play On! Preschool Age Children (Ages 2-5)

Exploration Transformation

Children explore the playground equipment, they will form their bodies into shapes in as many different places on a climbing structure as possible. For example, they might ascend at the corner of the apparatus and form a particular shape, move to a bridge and form a triangle shape, and then climb down to a lower level and form a round shape.

PLAY ELEMENTS: Climbing, balancing

NATIONAL STANDARDS: #1, #2, #3, #5

BENEFITS:

- Develops flexibility and muscular endurance.
- Enhances body awareness and management skills.
- Provides enjoyment through movement exploration.
- Reinforces knowledge of shapes.

TEACHING TIP:

- Children should try to hold shapes for at least 5 seconds.



SAFETY TIPS:

- Spot for younger children.
- Monitor children to assist them in climbing down if necessary.
- Ensure that children maintain good footing and hold on to handholds while posing on elevated platforms.
- Ensure that there is sufficient playground safety surfacing under and around the equipment.

VARIATIONS:

- **Easier:** Have children perform the activity on a stable climbing apparatus, identify the exact locations on the climbing structure where the shapes should be executed.
- **More Challenging:** Increase amount of time the children hold the shapes, have children make shapes while standing on one foot.
- **Adaptation:** Assign a partner to help the child make shapes, encourage pairs of children to form a shape (e.g., circle, figure 8) with their two bodies.

DID YOU KNOW?

The toy Transformer originated in Japan and was first produced in 1984. Now, it is one of the largest toy franchises in the world.

Play On! Grades K-5

Acrobats

Children attempt to manipulate an object in as many different ways as possible while balancing on a playground balance component (beam, plank, or balance pod). They might choose to roll, lean, and/or turn the object. They might move along the object in a body part, or circle it around their waist or legs. They might move along the balance component as they manipulate the object (such as holding the beam while leaning back on the ground). Once comfortable with the object and the balance component, they can play catch with each other.

PLAY ELEMENT: Balancing

NATIONAL STANDARDS: #1, #2, #3, #5

EXTRA EQUIPMENT: Manipulable objects (balls, bean bags, etc.)

BENEFITS:

- Provides an opportunity to practice a full gamut of fundamental motor skill and movement concepts.
- Fosters creativity, personal expression, hand-and-foot-eye coordination and teamwork.

TEACHING TIPS:

- Encourage children to explore a wide range of possibilities relative to where (direction, height, pathway) and how (force, speed, resistance, etc.) their body and object move in place (on/around) or across the balance component (downward).
- Encourage children to talk to each other about where they want to receive it (high, low, left, right) when tossing an object.

SAFETY TIPS:

- Remind children to dismount if they are having difficulty balancing.

More Challenging: Children develop a series of movements to perform as a multi-free (without dropping the object) routine. Two children count how many times they can pass an object between them, children work in pairs and gradually increase the distance between themselves.

Adaptation: Child begins on the lowest balance equipment and carries an object while walking across. Progress to more difficult skills.

DID YOU KNOW?

An acrobat is a person who is really good at gymnastics such as tumbling, walking a tight rope or swinging on a trapeze bar.

Play On! Grades 2-5

Relay Climb

Divide children into two or more teams and disperse teams throughout the playground. The object of the relay is to make sure the entire team ascends and descends all climbing structures. For example, the first team member ascends a climbing structure and touches a teammate waiting at the top. This teammate descends and touches a teammate waiting at the bottom of this structure. Next, to keep all children moving, each child should then follow along behind the teammate after descending so there is eventually a parade of children following the lead child.

PLAY ELEMENT: Climbing

NATIONAL STANDARDS: #1, #2, #4, #5

BENEFITS:

- Develops upper and lower body muscular strength and endurance.
- Emphasizes the importance of child interdependence, collaboration and respect when achieving a common goal.
- Tests a combination of locomotor and body management skills.

TEACHING TIPS:

- Teams should consist of no more than four or five youngsters to minimize waiting time.
- Allow teams to practice ascending/descending the apparatus beforehand.
- Spot as needed.

SAFETY TIPS:

- More than one team is playing at once, remind children to watch out for each other.
- Ensure that there is proper playground safety surfacing under and around the climbing equipment.

VARIATIONS:

- **Easier:** Limit the parade of children, use only one apparatus, with each member



More Challenging: Teams complete the climb twice, once following the original pattern and the second time in reverse.

Adaptation: Children travel a shorter ascent before touching a teammate.

DID YOU KNOW?

The longest ladder is made of wood and measures 150 feet long.

Play On! Fun for All School-Age Children (Grades K-5)

Each activity card features:

- **Description of Activity:** Succinct descriptions enable caregivers to implement each playground activity easily and provide instructions to children with little wasted time standing around or being sedentary.
- **Play Element(s):** Here you can identify which of the six key elements of play that promote youth fitness are required for the activity.
- **Active Start Guidelines for Preschoolers:** All *Play On!* preschool activities (1-25) are aligned with the Active Start guidelines for preschool-age children. In this section of the activity card, you will find the Active Start guidelines that are address by each activity. A complete matrix of the alignment between the activities and the guidelines can be downloaded at playcore.com/playon.
- **National Standard(s) for K-12 Physical Education:** All *Play On!* K-5 activities are aligned with SHAPE America's guidelines for current physical education curricula (SHAPE America, 2014). In this section of the learning activity card, you will find the National Standard(s) addressed by each activity. A complete matrix of the alignment between the learning activities and the Standards can be downloaded at playcore.com/playon.
- **Extra Equipment:** If additional equipment (bean bags, hula hoops, scarves, balls, etc.) is needed to enhance the learning activity, it will be listed here. Download the list of basic and supplemental equipment needed to implement the *Play On!* activities at playcore.com/playon.
- **Benefits:** Here we describe some of the primary physical, cognitive, social and overall developmental benefits of the activity.
- **Teaching Tips:** We suggest key tactics or strategies to help children get the most out of the activity and help you involve as many kids as possible.
- **Variations(s):** To accommodate a range of skill levels and abilities, all activities include easier and more difficult variations. Use your judgment and the children's feedback to determine which students need which type of variation.
- **Did you know?** The activity cards offer interesting facts to help bring learning and further discussion outdoors.



Did you know?

Ant hills have one queen, who lays the eggs.



ANTS GO MARCHING

Preschool-Age Children (Ages 2-5)

Children march around the playground, following the leader over various surfaces and obstacles such as stairs, ladders and slides. Children take turns leading the group as they imitate the designated leader (The ants go marching up the stairs! The ants go sliding down the slide!, etc.) Children may wish to incorporate the song in their movements as they perform.

Play Elements: Climbing, Sliding

Active Start Guidelines: #1, #3, #4, #5

Benefits:

- Encourage gross motor skills while following a model.
- EIDP - Gross motor imitates one part body movement
3 - 3.5 years, imitates body movements with integration of both sides of body 4 - 4.5 years

Teaching Tips:

- Add more challenges to the march, such as spinning, hopping or crawling, for variation.
- Lead the group to get started and model the activity, then allow the children to take turns being the leader.
- Ensure that multiple children have a chance to lead the group by either specifying a starting and ending point or timing each child's turn.

Variations:

- **Easier:** Assist children in completing gross motor activities by providing physical assistance or additional support.
- **More Challenging:** Put out additional obstacles such as crawl tunnels or cones to increase the complexity of the course. Encourage children to march across balance beams and ramps already on the playground; this adds to the complexity of the course.



Did you know?

A space shuttle is a reusable space vehicle that is designed to return to Earth like a giant glider.



A young child in a blue shirt and khaki pants is climbing a green play structure with circular cutouts. The child is seen from the back, reaching up with one hand. The structure is part of a larger playground set with a metal pole. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

SPACE SHUTTLE LANDING

Grades K & 1

An adult or designated child leader “launches” (throws) a ball as high as possible in the air. Others start at the base of the climbing equipment and climb to see how high they can get the ball before it lands. When the ball lands, the thrower yells, “space shuttle landing!” and retrieves the ball as everyone freezes. The child who climbed the highest become the launcher and the game begins again.

Play Elements: Climbing

National Standards Guidelines: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5

Benefits:

- Enhances focus and develops the ability to perform under pressure.
- Develops upper and lower body strength and endurance.

Teaching Tip:

- Limit participation to the number of children who can safely climb available equipment at one time; integrate others in a circuit system.

Variations:

- **Easier:** Allow children to keep climbing through two or more launches.
- **More Challenging:** Have children jump twice before climbing.
- **Adaptation:** Give some children a head start.



Did you know?

*Mr. Olympia is the title
given to the best body
builder in the world.*



A close-up photograph of a child's arm and hand reaching upwards, palm facing up. The child has light skin and is wearing a green shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with sand and green foliage.

SPINNING BODYBUILDERS

Grades 2 & 3

A team of children stand on a spinning apparatus. On command, a second team pushes the apparatus to get it spinning, then watches what develops. As the spinning apparatus spins, children establish a firm base of support with their legs, then perform a series of bodybuilder poses of their choice. They continue posing until the whirl or spinning apparatus stops. They then jump off and “hand off their pose” to another child who jumps on. The hand off can be a high five, a handshake or another creative means of tagging. The first team now pushes the apparatus for the second team as team members imitate, as best they can, the poses of the children who tagged them.

Play Elements: Spinning, Balancing

National Standards Guidelines: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5

Benefits:

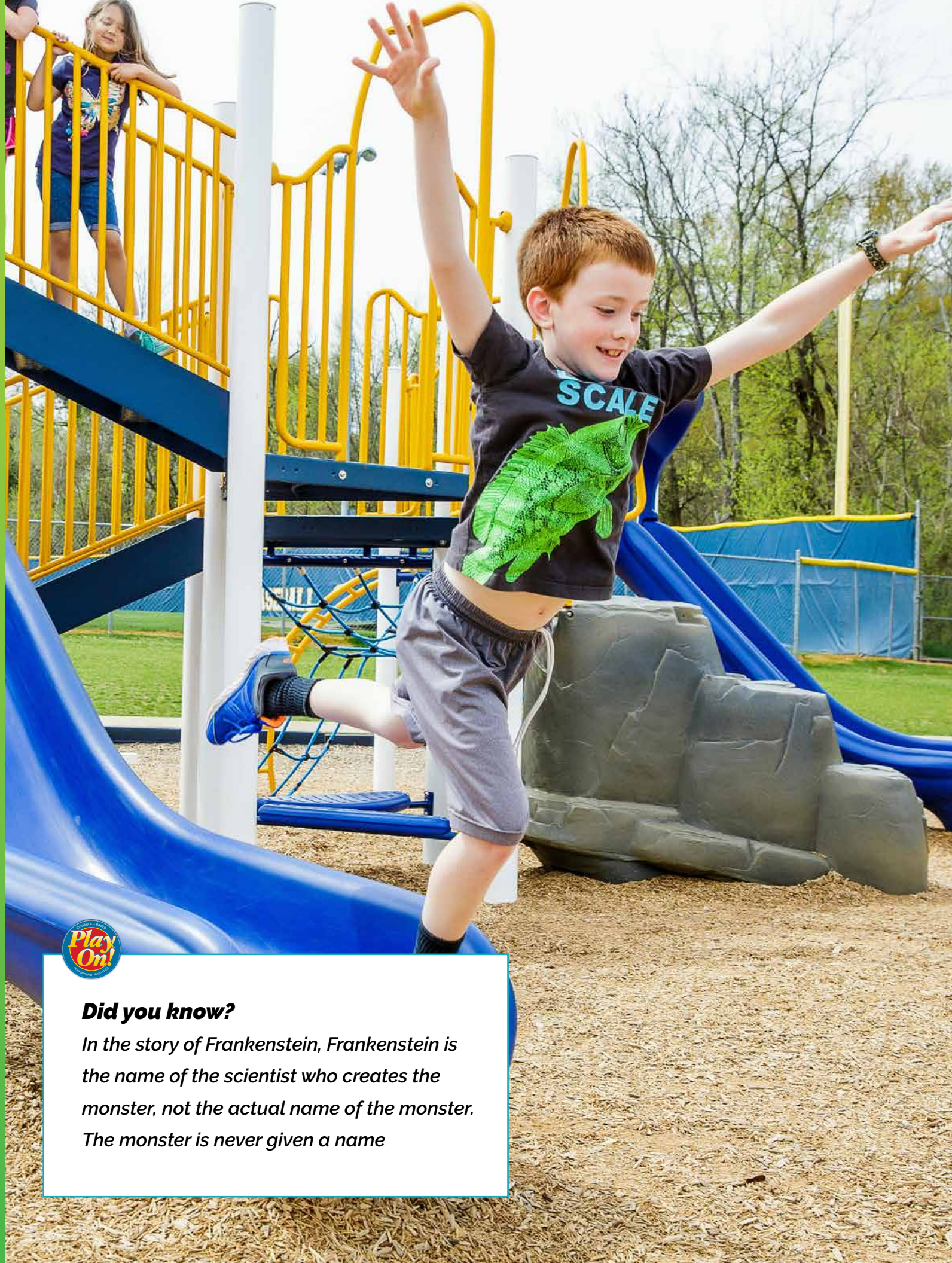
- Cultivates awareness of and respect for the diverse characteristics of others.
- Improves body control, kinesthetic awareness and ability to perform in public. Improves balance and core stability.

Teaching Tip:

- Instruct children to hold on with one or two hands, as needed.

Variations:

- **Easier:** Children hold on with two hands at all times..
- **More Challenging:** Children all face a certain direction, as if having their picture taken, despite the spinning of the apparatus.
- **Adaptation:** Have the child perform a bodybuilder pose off the equipment or from a sitting position on the equipment.



Did you know?

In the story of Frankenstein, Frankenstein is the name of the scientist who creates the monster, not the actual name of the monster. The monster is never given a name

CREATURE FEATURE

Grades 4 & 5

The youngest child is the first leader. All other children spread out on the playground equipment in an area where they can spin around freely (but in close proximity to the play equipment). The leader yells, "Zero!". The children must "freeze" in the form of a creature (person, animal, or monster) while balancing on the play equipment. For example, one child might pose as Frankenstein then goes around to each of the "frozen" creatures and tries to guess what they are. The first correctly named creature in the next leader, and a new round of play begins. If no creatures are identified correctly, the leader tries again!

Play Elements: Spinning, Balancing

National Standards Guidelines: #2, #3, #4, #5

Benefits:

- Promotes muscular endurance and static balance (center of gravity over base of support).
- Fosters creativity, child interaction and leadership opportunities.
- Provides a body- and spatial-awareness movement experience.

Teaching Tips

- Clearly identify and mark boundaries (i.e. playground surfacing).
- Ask children to choose their pose before the activity begins.

Variations

- **Easier:** To lessen the length of time poses are held, creatures that are not being guessed may relax until approached or multiple leaders may guess simultaneously.
- **More Challenging:** Children complete courses that span the entire playground/children complete the course in reverse.
- **Adaptation:** The child completes the course with a partner.

For safety tips, reference the Safety Strategies section of Play On!





Did you know?

At the end of basic training, Marines have to complete the Crucible, a 54-hour field event to test what they've learned.

BASIC TRAINING

All Ages (Grades K - 5)

Together with the children, devise an obstacle course through the playground. Include each play element: climbing, brachiating, swinging, sliding, spinning, and balancing. Some children may wish to be timed to see how quickly they can complete the course — either individually or as an entire class.

Play Elements: Combination (climbing, brachiating, swinging, sliding, spinning, balancing)

National Standards Guidelines: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5

Benefits:

- Integrates fundamental motor skills and movement concepts in a pleasurable way.
- Develops muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility.
- Provides self-challenge, social interaction, and a sense of group membership.

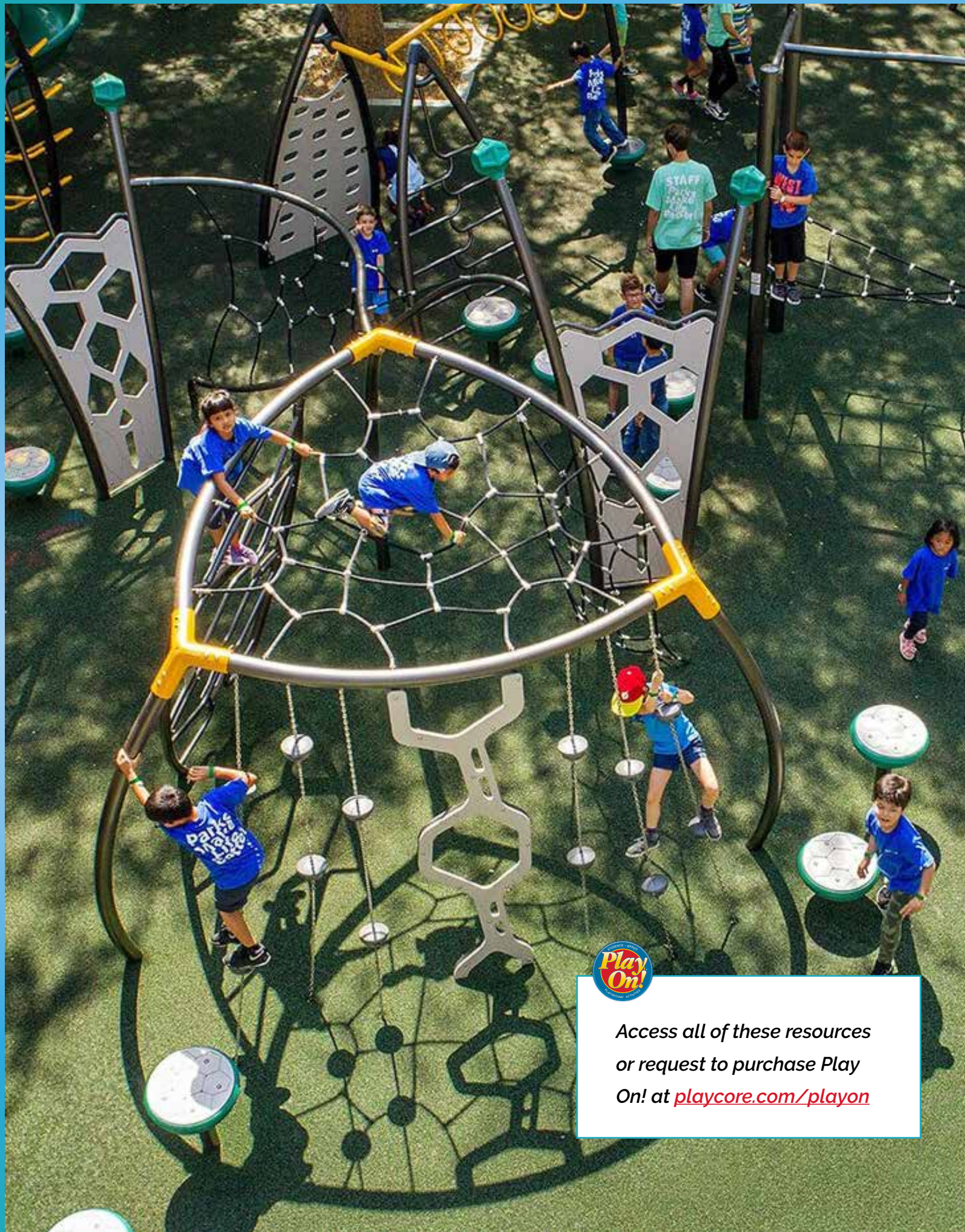
Teaching Tips

- If necessary, post arrows to help children follow the activity sequence.
- Provide children with plenty of time to practice the activities and sequence.

Variations

- **Easier:** Children complete several shorter courses that collectively address all play elements; children complete the course with a partner.





Access all of these resources
or request to purchase Play
On! at playcore.com/playon

PLAY ON! RESOURCES

Teachers and recreation professionals have a wide range of needs, interests, teaching knowledge and playground experiences. The success promotion of physical activity and fitness in youth heavily relies on two key ingredients:

- **Make the activities fun.**
- **Involve a playful enthusiastic and engaged adult leader.**

In addition to the 125 standards-based playground activities for grades PreK-5, *Play On!* also offers several additional resources to help ensure your *Play On!* playground is a success.

Assessment worksheets and equipment lists:

- Use [these worksheets](#) (separated by age group) to assess the physical (specifically the six play elements), fitness, social and personal development goals of your children through *Play On!* The 10 observable indicators listed beneath each development goal can be used for instructional cues, to track student progress and to provide feedback.

National Standards of Physical Activity alignment matrix:

- *Play On!* fully aligns with the [National Standards and the Active Start guidelines](#) while promoting fitness and fun on the playground. Each learning activity card has the National Standards or the Active Start guidelines that are emphasized. The charts offer an at-a-glance matrix of which activities align with which standards and guidelines.

Safety, implementation, inclusion, and teaching strategies:

- Playgrounds are great fun. Inappropriate use and lack of maintenance can lead to unnecessary risk and even injury. Proper and constant supervision and maintenance is a necessary discipline of making playground environments safer. Download the PlayCore Safety Series Maintenance and Supervision guidebooks to learn more: playcore.com/safety-series.

Send Home Resource (in English and Spanish):

- As you know, family and parental support and involvement play a crucial role in children's' education. In the case of physical fitness, children are much more likely to get fit and stay fit if families promote physical activity and engage in it themselves. [This resource](#) provides families of students more information about the *Play On!* curriculum and activities so they can understand and support your efforts.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

We believe high-quality recreation environments play a critical role in promoting community health. Research indicates that when stakeholders are engaged in the planning process, evidence-based design principles are implemented with the built environment, and supplemental programming is offered to further enhance user experiences, then positive outcomes occur.

PlayCore's Center for Outreach, Research, and Education (CORE) leads the National Demonstration Site Network as an important effort for raising national awareness and helping local communities share the positive impact they are making on community health and wellness. The initiative is also important for convening a network of community leaders committed to sharing insights, information, and reporting outcomes. National Demonstration Sites illustrate community vitality across a variety of influences, including social-emotional, environmental, health, community engagement, public services, and educational opportunities.

National Demonstration Sites (NDS) exemplify evidence-based best practices in design and implementation, support health-related initiatives, and provide meaningful ways for community stakeholders to gather data about the sites' impact on the community. There are five NDS programs that help communities turn research into practice in local park destinations. Choose to utilize one or a combination of NDS designations to thoughtfully support playful pathways, nature play, adult fitness, youth physical activity, and inclusion in outdoor play and recreation settings.

High-quality play and recreation destinations are lasting evidence of a community's dedication to supporting health and wellness and providing meaningful outdoor environments that turn research into practice. Intentionally aligning to National Demonstration Site design criteria ensures that your community can maximize the value of your investment by implementing scholarly best practice research to activate meaningful play and recreation spaces.



Learn more about the PlayCore National Demonstration Site Network and visit a Play On! site near you!

playcore.com/nds

Best Practice Implementation of a *Play On!* National Demonstration Site:

- Incorporate six key elements of play that promote your physical activity — balancing, brachiating, climbing, spinning, sliding, and swinging.
- Provide a developmentally appropriate progression of skill opportunities through beginning, intermediate, and advanced elements.
- Design the layout of the space to encourage movement through running, chasing, and exploring.
- Program the environment utilizing *Play On!* learning activities and additional loose parts to encourage active play and social interaction.



PLAY ON! PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & FITNESS THROUGH ACTIVE PLAY



Play On! provides educators and programmers with a unique resource to promote physical fitness, health, strength, endurance, flexibility, and balance through play. Developed in partnership with SHAPE America and a team of physical activity experts, *Play On!* aligns to National Standards for K-12 Physical Education and Active Start guidelines for preschool-age children and is a vital component in maximizing the value and potential of your playground.

Request to purchase the complete guide with 125 standards-based playground activities for grades PreK-5 or access the downloadable resources below at playcore.com/playon.

- Skill Assessment Worksheets
- Playground Equipment Lists
- National Standards of Physical Activity alignment matrix
- PlayCore Safety Series
- Send-Home Resource for Families (in English or Spanish)
- List of *Play On!* Citations and References
- National Demonstration Site Network Brochure

