

Physical Activity Resources and COVID-19



Why is physical activity so important during this pandemic?

Physical activity and movement has been shown to directly correlate with an increase in resilience and socio-emotional health and a decrease in anxiety^(1, 2). Specifically, resilience is correlated to indicators such as movement competence, capacity and confidence as well as engagement in an individual's physical environment⁽¹⁾. Additionally, when games and activities are focused on associating movement with pleasure, positive interactions with peers and non-competitive activities, depression and anxiety symptoms are reduced⁽²⁾.



What can we do to keep kids active?

Public health guidelines recommend taking movement that involves a lot of physical exertion outside⁽³⁾. Nevertheless, many activities that develop confidence, skill and motivation to be active can be performed in a diverse set of environments, including at home, in the classroom or on the playground. However, many physical activity resources that educators, early learning practitioners, parents and recreation professionals use to inform their physical activity knowledge and games were published in a pre-pandemic world.

Games and activities traffic lights

In order to expedite the process of educators, early learning practitioners, parents and recreation professionals finding and understanding activities that can be played within public health guidelines such as physical distancing, limited equipment sharing and sanitization protocols, PISE has created a ratings scale. This scale can be applied to existing documents to allow anyone looking at a published resource to ascertain what activities to use and which ones to avoid.



No modifications needed



Minor modifications



Major modifications



Avoid this activity





Green level game: A game that includes activity that allows participants to stay distanced from each other and requires no equipment. No modifications or adaptations to the game are necessary.



Yellow level game: This game will need minor modifications to the rules to incorporate distancing measures and will use a small amount of equipment. For example, tagging with pool noodles instead of hands, increasing playing area for the game to allow for more space to run and move, or using feet instead of hands when possible. Games in this category may be able to adapted quickly using equipment that is available.



Orange level game: Major modifications to rules and equipment will be needed to play this game. For example, children will be required to touch only the equipment that is designated to them, or the activity may need to be broken in to smaller groups or individual tasks. Games in this category may require planning in advance and extra equipment or supplies.



Red level game: This game is not recommended. The nature of this game involves lots of close contact or shared equipment. Modifications required are so extensive the game ceases to be as initially described.



How to use this system

While reading or looking at games and activities that are included in published resources, websites or your own documents, think where those activities or lesson plans would land on the traffic light scale. Use corresponding colour markers, stickers or letters to highlight the games that you would be able to use during your class, lesson or program for a quick reference guide. This process will give you recommended games and activities to begin your planning with, allowing you to become more comfortable with activity levels and begin to be creative with other modifications to games and activities.

When using this system or thinking of games and activities to use, please keep in mind all local health guidelines.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the system, please contact play@pise.ca

References

1. Jefferies P.; Ungar M.; Aubertin P.; Kriellaars D. Physical Literacy and Resilience in Children and Youth. *Front Public Heal.* 2019;7(November).
2. Philippot A.; Meerschaut A.; Danneaux L.; Smal G.; Bleyenheuft Y.; De Volder A.G. Impact of physical exercise on symptoms of depression and anxiety in pre-adolescents: A pilot randomized trial. *Front Psychol.* 2019;10(AUG):1-11.
3. Public Health Agency of Canada. COVID-19 guidance for schools Kindergarten to Grade 12 - Canada.ca [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2020 Aug 18]. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>