

Large Motor Play

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

IV. Supporting Children's Development

E. The provider offers a wide range of opportunities for children's sensory, large, and small motor development.

1. Children have daily opportunities for large motor activities while using safe and developmentally appropriate equipment.



Tricia's Harmony House



Flourish Family Child Care



Little Rascals Family Daycare

The Basics

Large motor play, involving the arms, legs, and torso, incorporates whole body movement and includes running, jumping, dancing, climbing, and balancing. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends 180 minutes per day of large motor play for toddlers and preschoolers and frequent opportunities for infants (Muth, 2020; HHS, 2018). Due to children's amount of time spent in early education programs, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) advises programs to offer at least 60 minutes in each half day of large motor opportunities (Cullen et al., 2011).

Why is large motor play essential? Large motor play directly supports children's brain growth and functioning (Migueles et al., 2020; Shi & Feng, 2022). These opportunities strengthen brain *plasticity* (adaptability) and *connectivity* (networks) because motor behavior requires the coordination of primary and nonprimary motor brain regions (Marrus et al., 2017).

Large motor play also supports...

- physical health which includes bone density, sleep, mood, and body mass index.
- executive functioning or the ability to plan, direct attention, and regulate behavior.
- language development or the ability to comprehend and produce language.

How do I promote large motor play?

- **Go outside.** Children engage in large motor play twice as much when outdoors than when indoors (Tandon et al., 2018), so it is important to spend time in the outdoor environment every day (weather permitting).
- **Set up your environment.** Offer children a variety of movement opportunities with proper space and equipment. Some examples include materials for throwing (balls, scarves, and bean bags), objects for climbing (climber, ladder, and stairs), and equipment for balancing (stepping stones and balance beams).
- **Model active play.** Educators promote active play by encouraging and modeling movement (Crumbley et al., 2019). Some examples include dancing to music, doing yoga, and going for a walk with children.

I want to learn more!

- [Health Benefits of Physical Activity for Children](#) (Resource)
- [Building gross motor skills and why it matters](#) (Article)
- [Playing Outside: Why It's Important for Kids](#) (Article)
- [We have the moves! Physical Activity Resource](#) (Resource)
- [Active Early: A Wisconsin guide for improving childhood physical activity](#) (Resource)

Books available through Satellite's lending library:

(for Satellite participating programs only)

- *Active for Life: Developmentally Appropriate Movement Programs for Young Children* (Sanders, 2002)
- *Brain games for babies, toddlers & twos* (Silberg, 2002)
- *Nature's Playground: Activities, Crafts, and Games to Encourage Children to Get Outdoors* (Danks, 2005)

