



Criterion 4

Daily child-initiated and adult-guided active play is a significant component of the service curriculum and is consistent with Australia's 24 Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 Years).

To meet this criterion include the following in your service's practice and policy:

- Provide or schedule outdoor active play two or more times per day, for children 1- 5 years.
- Free and creative active play is part of the daily curriculum (spread through the day).
- Adult-guided play experiences such as dance, drama, moving to music, climbing and active games are planned on a daily basis (spread through the day).
- Provide age-appropriate, active play opportunities which challenge and encourage children to explore, make mistakes and test limits.
- Indoor or outdoor active play is not withheld as punishment.



Quick tip: It is OK to copy and paste the above dot points into your policy if it is happening in practice.

Add your 'Move Play and Go' progress sticker to your Member Certificate when all parts of this criterion are happening in practice and written into policy.

Why is this criterion important?

This criterion helps children meet the Australian 24 Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 Years). ¹

The opportunity to play in ways that provide challenges, test limits and explore boundaries is important for the development of physical skills, problem-solving, independence and learning about injury and risk for children. ²

Physical activity (active play) helps children develop social, emotional, cognitive, physical skills and confidence. Active play benefits children by:

- increasing balance, agility, flexibility, coordination and cardio-vascular health
- increasing fine and gross motor skills
- promoting bone health
- providing opportunities to make friends
- supporting good mental health ³
- contributing to an energy balance assisting in weight management
- learning to cooperate, share, problem solve and resolve conflict
- practising nurturance, guidance and other pro-social behaviours
- acting out skills and situations for life-developing communication skills.

Reasons for action:

- The early childhood setting provides a unique opportunity for young children to meet the Australian Guidelines. Less than half of young children met the recommended level of physical activity daily. ⁴
 - Children are most active when playing outdoors so providing opportunities for outdoor play is particularly important. ⁵ An Australian study found that pre-school age children are significantly less active during the hours they spent in organised childcare than outside care hours. ⁶
 - Following the physical activity guidelines of at least 3 hours of active play each day for 1-5 year olds is associated with better mental health and wellbeing. ¹
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Australian Recommendations advise:

Australia's 24 Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years 0-5 recommend that children aged 1-5 years spend three hours per day being physically active. This can be accumulated throughout the day as adult-guided play, child- initiated play, active transport or everyday physical tasks.¹

Tips and strategies

Music and dance for movement

Children of any age enjoy moving their bodies to music, so include dancing to music regularly in the program. You can use music or musical instruments from a diverse range of cultural groups to provide a particular rhythm. You might provide lengths of material or scarves for children to use in dance.

Developing movement skills

Using outdoor equipment and playing outdoor games assists children to learn to balance, climb, run, jump and develop many other movement skills. Equipment such as balls (try different sizes), balloons, beanbags and chalk can be used in games and activities where children catch, throw and kick. Jumping and hopping are also important skills that can be encouraged through games such as hopscotch, obstacle courses and modificationsto musical chairs or duck duck goose. Find movement skill activities for [babies](#), [toddlers](#) and [pre-schoolers](#).

Movement and creative play

- Being able to manipulate the environment enhances play opportunities for children.
 - Outdoor child-initiated active play can include exploring playground equipment and toys but this type of active play is enhanced by providing equipment, space and props – including boxes, barrels, mats and pieces of material – for the children to explore in their own way and in their own time.
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Challenging play

Parents and early childhood educators can learn to balance safety with children's need to participate in age-appropriate challenging play. Dangers or hazards are risks which 'cannot be overcome by learning or through experimentation' ⁷ and should be minimised. However, a safe environment can enable children to explore, test limits and try new activities. Parent and early childhood educator attitudes are critical in enabling this type of play.⁸

Educators and families may need to discuss what challenging play means. Research shows that the attitudes of parents and educators have a significant influence on children's play behaviours.

It is important that there is shared understanding among staff and parents about what is meant by this and how a service might provide these type of play experiences for children. Developing the confidence to enable children to engage in age-appropriate challenging play may require support, training and resources that go beyond the health and safety focus of regulators and the National Quality Framework.

Come to an agreed understanding at your service about what challenging play is and how Educators will find the balance between safety and challenging play. Use the Challenging Play tip sheet (adapted from Helen Tovey's *Playing Outdoors: Spaces and Places, Risk and Challenge*).

Building skills and confidence in educators

Provide professional development for educators and support staff related to children's physical activity.

Children need role models, encouragement and positive reinforcement for physical activity. Educators can provide positive feedback and encouragement to children. Educators can join in active games with children.

Encourage the sharing of active play activities between Educators at staff meetings. If your service has partner services, meet with them to share active ideas and promotions.

Overcoming barriers

Parents or staff may think it is too cold for children to go outside:

- Encourage parents to provide warm clothes and a hat or beanie. Cold weather is a great time to get children out and playing actively to warm themselves up.
- Reassure parents their child will be warmly dressed and that it is important for children to be outside and active.

Keep providing information to parents on [activity ideas](#). Have [poster displays](#) with photos of children being active so all families can access the information.

Some families may be concerned about their children getting dirty outside:

- Suggest to families that children come to the service in clothing suitable for the outdoors, such as activity footwear, loose clothing and wide-brimmed hats.
- Parents may wish to provide other clothing for outdoor play, especially if they are going out somewhere afterwards.
- For wet weather encourage families to provide coats and gumboots.

Parents and staff may be concerned about sun exposure:

- Encourage parents to provide long-sleeve tops, wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses.
 - Cancer Council Tasmania recognises the importance of outdoor play for children. Avoiding unprotected sun exposure during peak UV times is important. To ensure sun safe play visit the Cancer Council Tasmania website.
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Activities

Book of rainy day games

Educators, children and families could develop a book of games and other active play ideas that can be used with the children. This can help if it is a rainy day or at other times when you need some ideas.

Gardening activity

Gardening with children can be physical and fun. Activities include:

- Raking leaves into piles so children can run through them and jump over them.
- Digging in the garden, preparing for planting of vegetables, herbs or fruit trees.
- Carrying water in buckets to water the garden – ensure children are not carrying buckets that are too heavy for them.

Success stories

Active Play Every Day Program

At Giggles Early Learning Service in Smithton the Early Childhood Educators provide a program for physical activity and movement opportunities every day. This program may include movement games and activities such as yoga, dance to world music, use of a parachute, skipping ropes, hula hoops or scarves.

The service has a strong focus on dance, movement and music in a combined form to allow children to explore their creativity and to learn how their bodies can move. Props such as clapping sticks, ribbons, cloth and instruments are used so children are able to find a beat and move their bodies to it. These movement games and activities are provided for the children for a number of reasons including: development of gross motor skills, muscular development, strong bone development, artistic and cultural development and to give children the opportunity to move and stretch their bodies.

Many of the children share their newly learnt movement games with their families and Giggles encourages families to play these games at home.

Where to go next



Website

The following sections of *Move Well Eat Well* website can help provide support and useful tools to help you with the 'Move Play and Go' message and criteria:

- [Move Play and Go 'Early Childhood Services' section](#)
- [Move Play and Go 'Families' section](#)

References

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3. XiuYun Wu PhD, Kerry Bastian PhD, Arto Ohinmaa PhD and Paul Veugelers PhD Annals of Epidemiology, 2018-02-01, Volume 28, Issue 2, Pages 86-94.
4. Hnatiuk, J. Understanding young children's physical activity, Thesis Presentation. Deakin University, April 2015.
5. Coleman, B., & Dymont, J. E. (in press). Factors that limit and enable preschool aged children's physical activity on child care centre playgrounds. Journal of Early Childhood Research.
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7. ParticipACTION. The Biggest Risk is Keeping Kids Indoors. The 2015 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Toronto: ParticipACTION; 2015.
8. A.Lindsay, A, Greaney, M, Wallington, S, Messa T and Salas C. A review of early influences on physical activity and sedentary behavior of preschool-age children in high-income counties. J Spec Pediatric Nurs. 2017;22:e12182 <https://doi.org/10.1111/jspn.12182>