

# MOVEMENT in the Primary Grades



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## Why Physical Activity Is Important

Students need regular, vigorous, physical activity to:

- ensure optimum growth and development;
- help bones and muscles become stronger;
- build important connections in the brain, and between the brain and students' muscles; and
- maintain healthy weight.

For students in the primary grades, active play is the main opportunity for these kids to participate in vigorous physical activity. Active play is unstructured physical activity such as playing on the playground. Daily physical activity helps students to develop habits of lifelong physical activity, and to develop these habits they should be active every day.

It is important for students of all abilities to have the opportunity to participate in active play.

### How Much Physical Activity?

The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines suggest at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day for students in Grades K–3, including physical activities to strengthen muscles, at least 3 days per week.<sup>2</sup> The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines further state several hours of both structured and unstructured light physical activity throughout the day as well as limited sitting for extended periods of time.

### What Is Meant by Physical Activity?

Physical activity means using the large muscles of the body—where students walk, run, jump, kick, and throw. Students need activities that incorporate the different types of fundamental movement skills. Gross

motor movements (movements that involve large muscle groups) occur when students are engaging in a variety of physical activities such as climbing and jumping, in both structured and unstructured play. This type of physical activity is natural for children and provides movement that students need.

### Types of Activity

Students need to participate in different types of physical activities.

**Non-locomotor skills** – like balance, moving the arms and legs in rhythmic ways, as well as developing coordination.

**Locomotor skills** – like crawling, walking, wheeling, running, skipping, jumping, leaping, rolling – and other ways to get from one place to another.

**Manipulative skills** – like throwing, catching, kicking and striking objects with a bat or stick.

Students should also play in different environments, both indoors and outdoors.

### Reducing Screen Time

The Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines highlight the interconnection between physical activity and the reduction of screen time and sedentary time, making the following recommendations:

- Kindergarten: limit routine or regular screen time to less than one hour per day.
- Grades 1–3: limit routine or regular screen time to less than two hours per day.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, [www.csepguidelines.ca](http://www.csepguidelines.ca)