



UNIT 9:
Physical Activity
Play Hard!

A nutrition and physical activity curriculum designed to help children develop healthy habits during out-of-school time

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This document was created by the Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity for educational use in afterschool programs for children from kindergarten through fifth grade.

About Food & Fun After School

2nd Edition

The goal of **Food & Fun** is to assist program staff in providing healthier environments to children during out-of-school time. The curriculum is designed to incorporate lessons and activities about healthy eating and physical activity into regular afterschool program schedules. **Food & Fun** includes 11 teaching units that encourage healthy behaviors through active play, literacy and math skills development, creative learning, and hands-on snack time activities. With over 70 activities to choose from and a user-friendly layout for each lesson, Food & Fun makes it simple to promote healthy eating and physical activity in your program every day!

Environmental Standards for Nutrition and Physical Activity in Out-of-school Time Programs

- ★ Do not serve sugar-sweetened beverages.
- ★ Serve water every day.
- ★ Serve a fruit and/or vegetable every day.
- ★ Do not serve foods with trans fat.
- ★ When serving grains (like bread, crackers and cereals), serve whole grains.
- ★ Eliminate broadcast and cable TV or movies. Limit computer time to less than 1 hour each day.
- ★ Provide all children with at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day.

Teaching about healthy behavior is most effective when the program environment is consistent with the **Food & Fun** messages on healthy eating and physical activity. Programs are encouraged to work towards achieving the Environmental Standards for Nutrition and Physical Activity.

Food & Fun materials were created by the Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity in partnership with the YMCA of the USA's Activate America initiative to help individuals and families lead healthier lives. In addition to afterschool programs, these materials are appropriate for use in a wide variety of out-of-school time programs, like summer camps, sports programs, extended day programs, and before school programs.

For more information on the Environmental Standards, see the **Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center's Environmental Standards for Nutrition and Physical Activity in Out-of-School Time Programs**. All **Food & Fun** materials, including parent engagement tools, tip sheets on implementing the Environmental Standards, snack recipes, and assessment tools can be downloaded at no cost from the Food and Fun website: www.foodandfun.org or www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/

Unit 9 Information for Leaders

Behavior Goals

Children will “play hard” at least 3 times each week at afterschool.

Key Messages for Kids

- Doing activities that make you sweat or breathe hard will make you strong and keep your bones and heart healthy.
- Playing hard is fun when it’s something you like to do.
- Do an activity that makes you sweat or breathe hard at least 3 times per week.

Key Information for Program Staff

It is important to create an afterschool environment where children are able to participate in physical activity every day. When regular activity is not part of a healthy lifestyle, children are more likely to develop chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis when they grow up. Physical activity tends to decline as children enter the adolescent years, and inactive children and teens are more likely to grow into sedentary adults.

The goal is to engage all children in regular physical activity, regardless of physical or mental abilities, and for them to have fun while being active. Many schools have reduced physical education and recess times, so children come to afterschool programs ready to move! Children ages 6-17 need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. They should participate in vigorous activity on at least 3 days per week. To help children meet this goal, provide all children with at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day. Offer at least 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity on 3 or more days per week. Don’t forget proper hydration! Offer water before, during, and after all physical activity.

In this unit, children will learn what it means to “play hard”. Vigorous activities are games and sports that are more intense than fast walking. They make you sweat and your heart beat faster. This unit also encourages children to identify vigorous physical activities that are fun for them. Take time to learn about students’ cultures to be sure you offer meaningful and interesting activities for all the kids in your program. Kids will be more likely to take part!

Refer to the *“Everyone Participates!”* and *“Physical Activity!”* Tip Sheets for ideas on how to engage children and staff in physical activity at your afterschool program. The Tip Sheets are available on the Food and Fun website: www.foodandfun.org or www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/

Activity Options for Children



Arts & Crafts

Build an Activity Wheel – create a wheel with different types of physical activities pictured, and use the wheel to select the game or activity to play each day.



Active Games

Warm Up and Cool Down activities – do these whenever you play hard!

Play Soft, Play Hard – this game helps children understand the difference between moderate and vigorous activity.

What happens when...? – best for older children who can recognize physical changes in their bodies, such as increased heart rate from taking a pulse.



Books

Jonathan and His Mommy by Irene Smalls takes children along a fun walk through the neighborhood and can be used for an interactive circle time.

Salt in His Shoes by Delores Jordan tells the inspirational story of Michael Jordan and how perseverance led him to become a successful basketball player.

Connect with Parents!

Key Messages for Parents

- Kids should get vigorous activity (that make them breathe hard or sweat) at least 3 times a week.
- Vigorous activities build strength and endurance and are good for the heart and bones.
- Be a good role model and make time for vigorous physical activity.

Options for Parent Communication

It is important to engage parents on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Here are some ways that you can engage parents at afterschool:

- Have a conversation with parents at pick up
- Create a bulletin board with the key messages from each Food & Fun unit
- Involve parents in daily physical activities and snack time
- Hold regularly scheduled events each month
- Train for a 5k run! Find a 5k fun-run in your area and start training! Schedule a weekly run with families, and encourage running on other days of the week as well. Make it an annual event for families to participate in!
- Family field trip. Take a field trip to your local YMCA to use the gym equipment, swim in the pool, or participate in a class the Y might be offering for families to do together!

Refer to the Parent Communications and Parent Handouts, available in English and Spanish, to reinforce the messages in this unit of Food & Fun:

1. **Newsletter Article:** “Get Moving! Feel Great!”. Insert this into your program newsletter.
2. **Email message:** “Healthy Habits Power Tips: Get Moving!”. Email this message to parents at the start of this unit.
3. **Parent Handout:** “Activate your Family!”. Send this handout home in a mailing, insert it into your next newsletter, or have copies available for pick-up at your program’s sign-out area.

Parent Communications and Parent Handouts are also available on the Food and Fun website: www.foodandfun.org or www.hsph.harvard.edu/research/prc/projects/food-fun/

Resources

Web Sites:

Food & Fun After School has an interactive website, where you can download materials for free:

www.foodandfun.org



The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans describe the types and amounts of physical activity that offer substantial health benefits to children and adults.

www.health.gov/paguidelines/

The Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity works with community partners to design, implement and evaluate programs that improve nutrition and physical activity, and reduce overweight and chronic disease risk among children and youth. The Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center offers additional materials and resources on nutrition and physical activity:

www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/

Let's Move is First Lady Michelle Obama's initiative to provide parents with the support they need to make healthy family choices, provide healthier school foods, help kids to be more physically active, and make healthy, affordable food available in every part of the U.S.

www.letsmove.gov/index.html

National Association for Sport and Physical Activity (NASPE) offers guidelines on activity for children and publishes curricula for in-school and out-of-school time.

www.aahperd.org/Naspe/

Alliance for a Healthier Generation is a joint venture between the American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation with a mission to reduce the nationwide prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015 and to empower kids nationwide to make healthy lifestyle choices.

www.healthiergeneration.org

Action for Healthy Kids is a nonprofit and volunteer network fighting childhood obesity and undernourishment by working with schools to help kids learn to eat right, be active every day and be ready to learn. Their website includes tools and fact sheets about childhood obesity, nutrition and physical activity.

www.actionforhealthykids.org/

President's Fitness Challenge inspires children (and adults) to get moving each day. Use the guidelines and log charts to create a challenge within your center, or enroll children in the challenge through the web site.

www.presidentschallenge.org/home_kids.aspx

The Nemours Foundation's Center for Children's Health Media created KidsHealth to provide families with doctor-approved information that they can understand and use. Includes sites for parents, children, and teenagers and provides a variety of health information, including nutrition and fitness topics. Also available in Spanish.

www.kidshealth.org

kidshealth.org/parent/en_espanol/esp_land_pg/spanish_landing_page.html

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sponsor two programs for 9-13 year olds. VERB is a national, multicultural, social marketing campaign which encourages tweens to be active every day. For information about the VERB campaign, which includes materials for parents, go to:

www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/

Web Sites for Kids:

The BAM! (Body and Mind) program provides tweens with tips on nutrition and physical activity. Children can explore the over 30 physical activities, including the necessary gear and how to play. They can also find great ideas for healthy snacks and meals.

www.bam.gov

KidsHealth also has a website especially for kids in English and Spanish.

kidshealth.org/kid/index.jsp?tracking=K_Home

kidshealth.org/kid/en_espanol/esp_land_pg/spanish_landing_page.html

Materials:

The CANFIT Physical Activity Pyramid is a fun, colorful guide to different types of physical activities kids can enjoy after school. Use it to think of new ways to get kids activity during your program or post it on your site's bulletin board.

canfit.org/pdf/PAPyramid4AS.pdf

Activities



BUILD AN ACTIVITY WHEEL

Objective:

Children will contribute ideas of what they like to do to play hard, and then program staff can use these child-approved activities to plan the program's active time.

Materials:

- Cardboard, cut into one large circle
- Paper fastener and large popsicle stick
- Poster-board or large pieces of construction paper cut into triangles
- Plain or colored paper
- Markers, crayons, or other art supplies of choice
- Scissors and tape or paste

Leader Preparation:

Create a spinning wheel around which the children will paste their physical activity drawings or pictures cut from magazines. While small spinning wheels may be available at a craft or education supply store (or even from an old game!), you can make one by attaching a flat wood popsicle stick to a paper fastener and securing to cardboard.

Instructions:

1. Tell the children that they will be creating an activity wheel that they can use to choose the games or activities they will do in the afterschool program.
2. Children should think of physical activities that get them “playing hard”. Explain:
 - When we “play hard”, our heart beats faster, our breath may become heavy or faster, we feel warm or sweat, and it may be hard to chat with friends. Our bodies are “highly active” (you could use the term “vigorous” activity with upper elementary children) when we play team sports, run, ride bikes, dance, play kick ball, tag, or basketball. We should do these things **most days** of the week to build strong hearts and bones and to improve fitness (when we are fit, it becomes easier to play hard).
3. Invite the children to draw pictures that represent their favorite ways to play hard and tape the pictures to the different triangles on the wheel (you may have children cut their pictures out so they fit).
 - *Note:* Some children may draw the same thing and that is ok – just put similar pictures on the same triangle.
4. Spin the wheel to choose an activity to do today!

5. Encourage children to move their bodies every day, and use the pictures or listed activities to guide the activity choices in your program.

Extension Activities:

- Some children may list enjoyable activities that cannot be done during program time (like roller skating, swimming, etc.) or that they do as part of their daily routine (such as walking the dog). Create “personal” activity wheel for kids to use at home. This can include active as well as quiet time activities that they can do alone or with their family. Have children share their personal activity wheels with the group.
- Invite children to draw pictures to create a collage poster of **every day** things that they do to keep their bodies healthy. Ask the group to name some active things they do each day. Give examples, like walking to school, cleaning your room, helping around the house, or playing at recess. Tell the group that it is good to move your body every day!
- It is important to balance strength and flexibility activities with playing hard, so children may enjoy ballet dancing, martial arts, or yoga a few times each week. Create another collage poster with these pictures. Pictures of enjoyable activities that children may only do once in a while, like canoeing, miniature golf, or sledding, also can be pasted to this poster.
- Have students label the different pictures in both English and the languages they speak. See how many different words you can learn for the same activities!

WARM UP, COOL DOWN



Objective:

It is important for children (and adults!) to warm up their muscles and get the blood flowing before engaging in more vigorous/heart pumping activities. It is also important to allow the body to slow down instead of abruptly stopping an activity. Below are some ideas to help children ease into and out of the physical games.

Warm Ups:

- Walk around the gym or field, or up and down corridors if you have limited space for activity. Begin at a slow pace, then increase the speed of each lap, but do not run.
- Play a short movement game such as “Red Light, Green Light” (children move across room when you say, “Green Light”, and stop when you call out, “Red Light!” Alter movement instructions with each start, e.g.: tip toe, hop or gallop.)
- Play “Simon Says” and incorporate stretching moves (such as “reach to the sky” or “touch your toes”) along with warming moves (such as “march in place” or “hop on one foot”)
- Perform simple stretches sitting on the floor. Remind children not to bounce or pull. For younger children, offer visual cues like, “reach forward and hug the beach ball”, or “paint a rainbow with your right hand...now paint one with your left”.

Cool Downs:

- Race across the gym or field, or do laps, with progressively slower movements: run then gallop then skip then walk then tip toe, etc.
- Repeat simple stretching activities.
- Introduce deep breathing or simple yoga moves as a way to cool down and relax (remind children that these can be used any time!).
 - Slowly (to the count of five) breathe in while bringing your hands together and rising over the head. Then slowly breathe out with a loud “whoosh” while bringing your arms down to the side.
 - “Cat” pose: create a table, supporting the body with the hands and knees. Breathe in and arch back so that the belly moves to the floor and the shoulders move back to look up. Breathe out to reverse the curve of the back like a cat stretching its back.

PLAY SOFT, PLAY HARD

Adapted from Eat Well Play Hard's "Musical Fare" game



Objective:

To circle the room until the music stops, at which point players go to the nearest activity card and act out that activity when the music plays again.

This game demonstrates the difference between low to moderate intensity activities and vigorous activities.

Preparation and Materials:

- Copy the activity cards, cut out, and tape to the walls around the gym. If needed, make extra copies, or add other activities to the list
- CD player/iPod and peppy music
- *Optional:* try playing culturally diverse music like salsa, merengue, or hip hop

Instructions:

1. Arrange children in a circle around the room. Inform them that this game is played like musical chairs. They will walk around the room while the music plays, then stop at an activity card along the wall when the music stops. In this game, there should be enough activity options or more for each child, and cards/children are not eliminated from play.
2. When the music stops and all players are at a different activity card, ask the children to raise their hands if the activity makes them "play hard". If it makes them "play soft" then those players will take two steps into the middle of the room. If it is not active at all then kneel down.
3. When the music starts again, children who are raising their hands should try to act out their activity as they move around the room (or simply jog). Children who stepped forward should go to the middle of the gym and walk around slowly. Children who are kneeling should go to an open space and remain kneeling out of action for the next set of music.
4. Play a few rounds and then stop to ask children if they have noticed the changes in their bodies as they go from being still or moving slowly to moving quickly or playing hard. Help them recognize changes: they feel warm, they breathe more quickly, their heart beats faster.
5. Remind children that their bodies like to play hard because an active body is a healthy body.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN...?

Best for Upper Elementary Children



Objective:

Older children will perform different movements to understand how their bodies react to physical activity. Children will learn to take their pulse.

Preparation and Materials:

- Clock or watch
- Teach yourself and your staff how to take a pulse before teaching kids

Instructions:

1. After children have been sitting doing homework or some other quiet activity, announce that they need a movement break.
2. Before getting up, lead the children through some simple chair stretches:
 - Reach up to the sky like a tall tree
 - Sway the outstretched arms slowly side to side as if swaying in the breeze
 - Bring arms down, then circle arms around as if hugging a large beach ball
 - Reach over to touch toes and hang like a rag doll
3. Ask how their muscles felt after stretching. Teach kids how to find their pulse. Ask children to count the number of beats they feel as you time 10 seconds. Tell the kids to remember the number or have them write it down on a piece of paper.
4. Stand up and walk to an open area (large corridor or gym).
5. Instruct the children to take large, slow steps around the gym or down the hall.
6. Return to a circle and march in place. Do 10 jumping jacks. Now, how do they feel? Are they feeling warm? Can anyone feel their heart beating? Take another 10-second pulse. Is this number bigger than the first time?
7. Move into more vigorous activities. Jog around the room, play a game of tag or a relay race to get children moving quickly. Play hard for 10 minutes then take a break to check in with how they feel. Take another 10-second pulse – everyone's number should have increased at this point. If it did not, then that child was not being very active.
8. Continue to play (invite the group to choose their favorite games) for another 10-20 minutes.

How to Find your Pulse

- The pulse in the neck is from the carotid artery. It is usually easier for children to find than the pulse at the wrist.
- Instruct children to use their second and third fingers to run along the windpipe and then along the jaw until they feel a pulsing sensation.
- Tell children to move their fingers slowly back and forth so they don't pass over it.
- Because this artery supplies blood to the brain, they should not press on both sides at the same time, or they will lessen the blood flow.

9. Cool-down. Take a final 10-second pulse. This number should be like the second one they took. If it is still high then they need a few more minutes to cool down.
10. Explain that when they play hard on a regular basis, their bodies get used to moving and that makes it easier to play for longer periods of time (called endurance).

Worksheet List

Activity Cards for Play Hard, Play Soft

Pages 16-37

- Activity List for Leaders
- Activity Cards

Play Hard, Play Soft

Activity Card List for Leaders

| Get Moving Activities: | Stay Still Activities: |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Take a Walk | Watch TV |
| Jog or Run | Surf the Internet |
| Roller Blade | Sing |
| Shoot Hoops | Read a Book |
| Play on Jungle Gym | Color, Draw or Paint |
| Swim | Do a Puzzle |
| Play Tag | Play Video Games |
| Dance | Do Homework |
| Play Kickball | Talk on the Phone |
| Clean Room | Eat a Meal |

| Very Active Moves | Moderate Moves |
|--|-------------------------|
| Hip Hop Dance | Walk to and from School |
| Hockey or Ice Skating | Take the Stairs |
| Basketball | Carry in Groceries |
| Volleyball | Skateboard |
| Martial arts—Karate, Judo, Tae Kwon Do | Sweep Floors |
| Play Soccer | Play on a Swing |
| Ride Bikes | Toss a Frisbee |
| Jump Rope | Play Catch |
| Tennis | Play Hopscotch |
| Swim Laps | Help with Chores |

Play Hard, Play Soft

Take a
Walk

Watch TV

Play Hard, Play Soft

Jog or
Run

Surf the
Internet

Play Hard, Play Soft

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| <p>Roller Blade</p> | <p>Sing</p> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|

Play Hard, Play Soft

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| <h1>Shoot Hoops</h1> | <h1>Read a Book</h1> |
|----------------------|----------------------|

Play Hard, Play Soft

Play on
Jungle Gym

Color, Draw
or
Paint

Play Hard, Play Soft

Swim

Do a Puzzle

Play Hard, Play Soft

Play Tag

Play Video
Games

Play Hard, Play Soft

Dance

Do
Homework

Play Hard, Play Soft

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| <p>Play Kickball</p> | <p>Talk on the Phone</p> |
|----------------------|------------------------------|

Play Hard, Play Soft

Clean Room

Eat a Meal

Play Hard, Play Soft

**Hip Hop
Dance**

**Walk to and
from School**

Play Hard, Play Soft

Hockey or
Ice Skating

Take the
Stairs

Play Hard, Play Soft

Basketball

**Carry in
Groceries**

Play Hard, Play Soft

Volleyball

Sweep
Floors

Play Hard, Play Soft

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| <p>Martial Arts—Karate, Judo, Tae Kwon Do</p> | <p>Skateboarding</p> |
|---|----------------------|

Play Hard, Play Soft

Play Soccer

Play on
Swings

Play Hard, Play Soft

Ride Bikes

Toss a
Frisbee

Play Hard, Play Soft

Jump Rope

Play Catch

Play Hard, Play Soft

Tennis

Play
Hopscotch

Play Hard, Play Soft

Swim Laps

Help with
Chores