



PARTNER PAGE

Help and facts for parents and teachers about learning, parenting, and working together for the Christian education of your children.

Now that the sun is finally out, I thought I would find an article on outdoor play. At Clover, we have always felt outdoor play was essential – and we are blessed to have such a great place to do it! After a grey winter, the sun’s rays seem to make everyone cheerful again. But besides “mood enhancement,” there are some benefits mentioned here that you don’t always hear about. Read on . . . then let’s GET OUTSIDE!!



Top 5 benefits of children playing outside

Time outside daily aids a child’s mind, body and emotions

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June 26, 2018

On average, American children spend four to seven minutes a day in unstructured outdoor play compared to seven or more hours in front of a screen. Here are five good reasons why it’s so important for parents to incorporate children playing outside.



Playing outside, especially in unstructured activities, helps kids develop physically and emotionally.

(iStock photo by Getty Images)

1. Build physically healthier children.

Nowhere is better than the outdoors for running, jumping, throwing balls, catching, pulling things, lifting and carrying objects. All these actions require motor skills that improve with practice. Children playing outside get aerobic exercise and gain skills, such as pushing and pulling outdoor play equipment. Studies show children burn more calories outdoors, helping to prevent obesity and strengthen bones and muscles. Playing in the sun builds vitamin D in the body, which means stronger bones and less likelihood of chronic diseases. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, many children have vitamin D deficiencies.

2. Contribute to cognitive and social/emotional development.

Unstructured outdoor play helps kids learn to take turns, share and develop other positive behavioral skills. They are more likely to be inventive, explore and learn about the world around them and use their own abilities. While they invent and play games with siblings or friends, these interactions help improve communication, cooperation and organizational skills. Additionally, fresh air and free play reduce stress levels.

3. Improve sensory skills.

An optometry and vision science study showed children who play outside regularly have better distance vision than children who are always indoors. Preschoolers, in particular, learn new things through their senses. Think of a toddler’s delight at seeing new animals (sight), stopping at a bed of

fragrant flowers (smell and touch), watching the water form puddles for stomping (hearing and touch) or eating a parent-approved berry from a bush (taste). On the other hand, children glued to television and electronic devices use only two senses (hearing and sight). This can negatively affect development of perceptual abilities.

4. Increase attention spans.

Children who play outdoors regularly are more curious, self-directed and likely to stay with a task longer. Children who spend most of their time indoors with little exposure to activities requiring their own initiation and follow-through show less ability to initiate or participate in new activities. In fact, studies of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) found that children with ADHD who spent significant time outdoors exhibited fewer symptoms.

5. Grow in happiness and immunity.

Outdoor light stimulates the pineal gland. This part of the brain is vital to keeping our immune system strong and making us feel happier. Spending time in nature is also associated with improving mood and happiness. An added bonus is that children who identify with nature are more likely to become adults who appreciate nature and want to protect the environment.

Source: <https://news.sanfordhealth.org/childrens/play-outside/>

