



CKL and COUNTY OF HALIBURTON Physical Literacy Handbook

Building Active Communities.
Supporting Lifelong Movement for Everyone.



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What Is Physical Literacy?

Physical literacy is the development of fundamental movements that build confidence and competence in the abilities of physical activity. The development of vital movement begins in infancy, where reaching, grabbing, pulling and pushing lay the foundation in which children will build upon throughout their childhood and youth (Sport for Life, n.d.).

In Canada, physical literacy is defined as “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life” (International Physical Literacy Association, 2014; Sport for Life, n.d.). It is far more than being good at a single sport — it is the combination of movement skills, confidence and enjoyment that helps a child choose to stay active throughout their whole life.

Activities and sports of all kinds require skills of balance and coordination of the senses. Learning how to gauge their movements and the consequences of actions is a learned behavior that takes practice. Children learn how to catch and throw by playing a simple game of “catch”. This can be further developed into games such as baseball or tennis, where they swing an object that has become an extension of their arm. It is recommended that children up to 17 years of age should get a minimum of 1 hour of activity per day to promote overall health (Government of Canada, 2025).

Movements of all kinds are considered physical literacy. Running, jumping, swimming, and throwing are common activities included in defining what physical literacy is. The literacy portion of this term refers to the brain and body coordinating these movements at the correct time to achieve our desired effect while maintaining balance and control of our bodies (Sport for Life, n.d.).



Figure 1. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Why Is Physical Literacy Important?

Physical literacy at a young age sets the foundation to continue a healthy lifestyle into adulthood. It promotes confidence and skill to participate in group sports and activities which aid in socializing skills and building relationships with peers. Encouraging children to be physically active for a minimum of one hour per day will have a positive impact on problem solving skills, conflict resolution, and teamwork (Kids Brain Health Network, 2018).

Importance for the role in physical health

Regular physical activity helps prevent chronic disease (Miller et al., 2016).

- Prevents Cardiovascular disease
- Prevents Diabetes
- Prevents cancer
- Decreases risk of obesity

Studies also show a correlation between physical activity and a decreased risk of depression and anxiety (Miller et al., 2016). Keeping children active can decrease behavioral risk tendencies and improve focus in the classroom and at home.

Building physical literacy early also supports lifelong participation in sport and recreation. Children who feel confident and competent in their movement skills are more likely to stay active as teenagers and adults, while children who miss these foundational skills often withdraw from physical activity as the games and sports around them grow more complex (Sport for Life, n.d.).

Canada's national guidelines reflect how important daily movement is at every age. The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines recommend that children and youth aged 5–17 accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day, together with several hours of light physical activity (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2016). Meeting these targets is linked to healthier body composition, stronger bones and muscles, improved cardiovascular fitness, and better mental health and academic outcomes.

Physical Literacy in the Early Years



Figure 2. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

It's important to be creative and incorporate a variety of activities for young children. Utilizing music and dance can make the activity more fun and help the child engage with movements through feelings. Slow music to rock back and forth to and fast music to jump up and down to. Every child is different and will respond differently so it's important to make it fun to decrease pressure or stress.

For the youngest children, Canada's movement guidelines set clear, age-specific targets. Infants under one year should be physically active several times a day through interactive, floor-based play, including at least 30 minutes of tummy time spread throughout the day. Toddlers (1–2 years) and preschoolers (3–4 years) should accumulate at least 180 minutes of physical activity at any intensity across the whole day, and for preschoolers at least 60 minutes of that time should be energetic play. More daily activity is associated with better motor development, growth and learning (Tremblay et al., 2017).

These early experiences connect directly to Ontario's early-years framework, *How Does Learning Happen?* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014), which positions active, play-based exploration as central to children's belonging, well-being, engagement and expression. Educators and caregivers play a vital role by offering safe spaces, varied materials and daily opportunities to move.

Resources in the CKL – County of Haliburton

Kawartha Lakes Sports and Recreation Council

From this website, choose your location and activity. This resource offers activities for all ages, from babies to seniors.

[Find an Activity, Kawartha Lakes Sports, Recreation](#)

City of Peterborough

The city of Peterborough website through the provided link has programs for young children, families and school aged sports, day programs and camps.

[Recreation Programs | City of Peterborough](#)

City of Kawartha Lakes

The city of Kawartha Lakes website, through this provided link, provides schedules and fees for swimming at the Lindsay recreation complex as well as Forbert recreation complex in Bobcaygeon.

[Recreation, Leisure and Sports | City of Kawartha Lakes](#)

County of Haliburton

The County's recreation page links to each of the four member townships — Algonquin Highlands, Dysart et al, Highlands East and Minden Hills — where you'll find community centres, trails, beaches and seasonal programs.

[Recreation | County of Haliburton](#)

Municipality of Dysart et al

Register for family drop-in programs, public and parent-and-tot skating, soccer and seasonal community events in and around Haliburton village.

[Recreation Programs, Activities and Registration | Dysart et al](#)

Canadian Tire Jumpstart & the Kawartha Lakes Sport & Recreation Council

Financial-assistance programs help children aged 4–18 take part in sport and recreation — hockey, gymnastics, soccer, dance and swimming — so that cost is never a barrier to being active.

[Subsidies & Financial Assistance | Kawartha Lakes Sport & Recreation Council](#)

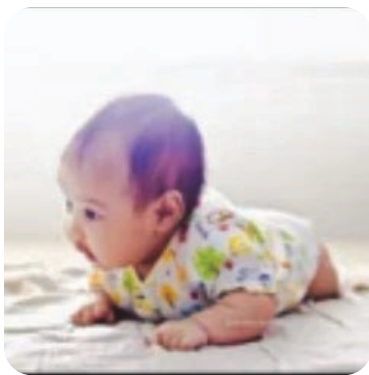
SECTION 05

Activities That Promote Physical Literacy

Age-by-age ideas for movement and play — from a baby’s first tummy time to backyard games for school-age children. Each activity below builds fundamental movement skills through play, and can be adapted to suit every child’s stage and ability.

INFANT • 0–18 MONTHS

Activities That Promote Physical Literacy



Tummy Time

“Tummy time” for babies up to 6 months is especially important to build strength in the shoulders, neck, back and arms. Caregivers can also gently move the baby’s legs to make a pedaling motion and circular motions with the arms. This type of play should be encouraged for a minimum of 30 minutes per day (Northern Health, n.d.).

Figure 3. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).



Figure 4. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Reaching & Crawling Toys

Providing toys that babies can reach for, and gradually crawl to, will begin the development of perception and coordination. Pushing, pulling and stacking toys such as blocks or balls should all be introduced between 0–12 months. Again, a minimum of 30 minutes of interactive play is recommended (Northern Health, n.d.).

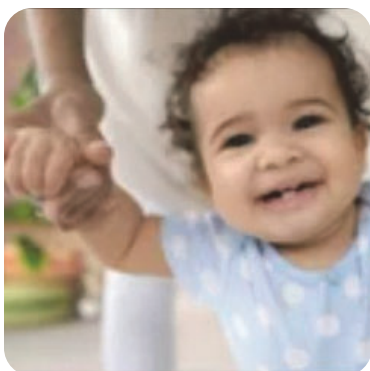


Figure 5. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Songs & Dances

Between 12–18 months, babies can begin to follow songs and dances that focus on stretching, twisting, and bending. Songs such as “I’m a little teapot” and “head, shoulders, knees and toes” promote self-awareness (Northern Health, n.d.).



Figure 6. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Peekaboo & Mirror Play

Simple games of peekaboo and playing in front of a mirror encourage babies to track movement with their eyes, turn their head, and reach toward what they see. These early games build visual tracking, coordination and social connection while babies begin to recognize themselves and others.



Figure 7. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Rolling & Soft Ball Play

Encouraging babies to roll from their back to their tummy, and gently rolling a soft ball for them to watch and reach for, helps develop core strength, balance and hand-eye coordination. Sitting a baby up with support to bat at a lightweight ball is a fun way to build control of their arms and hands.

Activities That Promote Physical Literacy



Figure 8. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Water Table / Activities

Alternative ideas can be as simple as a bucket and plastic cups. Hand/eye coordination, perception and balance can be learned through water play.



Figure 9. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Walking / Running

Children begin to walk between 9–15 months old and will be running between 18–24 months (Northern Health, n.d.). It's important to provide a safe space for them to explore, fall on a soft landing and get back up!



Figure 10. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Climbing

Children at this age will want to climb everything and they should be given a safe place to develop this vital skill. Going to the park is a free activity that offers many opportunities with adult supervision.



Figure 11. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Bubble Chasing

Blowing bubbles for toddlers to chase and pop is a simple, joyful way to build running, jumping and hand-eye coordination. Reaching up, stretching and tracking the bubbles as they float encourages balance and whole-body movement in a way that feels like pure play.



Figure 12. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Push & Pull Toys

Wagons, toy strollers and pull-along toys give toddlers something to steer and move, which builds leg strength, steady walking and spatial awareness. Loading and unloading these toys also strengthens the arms and encourages problem solving as children navigate around furniture and obstacles.

PRESCHOOL • 2.5 – 4 YEARS

Activities That Promote Physical Literacy



Figure 13. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Playing Catch

Throwing and rolling a ball back and forth or with a group. This can be introduced earlier, however, by this age they are understanding how to share. Promotes social skills by taking turns and sharing.



Figure 14. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Duck, Duck, Goose!

This is a great game to teach regulation of physical force. Children gently tap the head of peers. This game requires moving quickly from a sitting position to standing, walking and tapping, running and then sitting back in the circle.



Figure 15. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Freeze Dance

Freeze dance with music, learning how to control the body by stopping, starting, standing on one foot, etc., and adds a fun element of music, rhythm and dance.

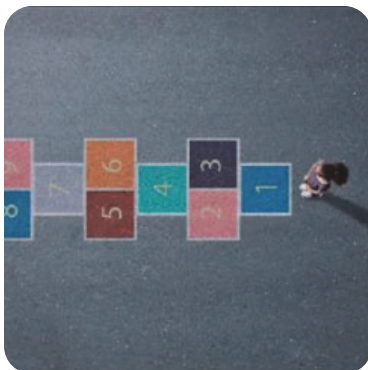


Figure 16. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Hopscotch

A hopscotch grid drawn with sidewalk chalk invites children to hop on one and two feet, balance and change direction. Tossing a marker and remembering the sequence adds counting and turn-taking, building balance, coordination and early number skills all at once.



Figure 17. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Animal Walks

Pretending to move like animals — bear crawls, crab walks, bunny hops and frog jumps — is a playful way to build core strength, coordination and body awareness. Children love imitating animals, and the different movements challenge balance and whole-body control.

Activities That Promote Physical Literacy

At 4–6 years of age, children can grasp more detailed rules of playing games.



Figure 18. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Musical Chairs

A classic game that builds listening skills, quick reactions and body control. Children move around the chairs while the music plays and must react quickly to find a seat when it stops — a fun way to practise agility and self-regulation.



Figure 19. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Soccer

Aiming to kick the ball into a net. If a net isn't available, the use of anything to create a boundary to aim in between will work!



Figure 20. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Softball

Batting, throwing and catching a softball combines several fundamental movement skills. A soft ball and a lightweight bat let children practise timing, hand-eye coordination and running the bases while learning to take turns as part of a team.



Figure 21. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Tag & Red Light, Green Light

Chasing games such as tag and red light, green light build running, dodging and the ability to start and stop on cue. These games sharpen agility, spatial awareness and listening skills, and they are easy to play with a large group in a gym, backyard or park.



Figure 22. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Skipping / Jump Rope

Jumping rope builds timing, rhythm, coordination and cardiovascular endurance. Beginners can start by stepping over a rope held still on the ground, then progress to swinging and jumping — a rewarding skill that grows with practice.

SCHOOL AGE • 6 – 12 YEARS

Activities That Promote Physical Literacy



Figure 23. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Swimming

Swimming has many health benefits. It promotes coordination, cardiovascular health, stamina and flexibility. Swimming is also known to improve mental health and decrease stress. Encourage the child to float by relaxing the body to achieve this goal. Other benefits of swimming is that it can be enjoyed year round and improves social skills if children are involved with group swim lessons (Making Waves Swim School, 2026).



Figure 24. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Mini Put

This game will require more patience and precision and is excellent for articulation. If families do not have a course close to them, golf clubs and balls can typically be purchased at a local dollar store and played in the backyard or living room!



Figure 25. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Games

Getting children outside at this age can be fairly easy as they are able to invent new games. Creating obstacle courses is fun and can be made up of just about anything. Two lawn chairs and a broom can become something to jump over or crawl under. Children can be in charge of changing the course to motions they enjoy. For example rolling over a yoga mat can be one obstacle.



Figure 26. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Cycling

Riding a bike builds balance, leg strength, endurance and road awareness. The many trails across Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton make cycling a great family activity, and learning to ride is a milestone that gives children independence and confidence.



Figure 27. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Basketball

Dribbling, passing and shooting build hand-eye coordination, footwork and teamwork. Even a driveway hoop lets children practise aiming and control, while playing with others teaches communication, strategy and good sportsmanship.



Figure 28. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Hiking & Nature Walks

Walking local trails builds stamina, balance and strength as children navigate uneven ground, roots and hills. The Haliburton Highlands and Kawartha Lakes offer countless trails, and exploring nature also supports curiosity, focus and a love of the outdoors.



Figure 29. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Skating

A winter favourite in our region, skating builds balance, core strength and leg power as children learn to glide, stop and steer on the ice. Local arenas and outdoor rinks offer public skate times, and it's a skill that leads into hockey, ringette and figure skating.



Figure 30. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Canoeing & Kayaking

Paddling on our region's many lakes builds upper-body and core strength, coordination and rhythm. Learning to steer and balance a canoe or kayak — always with a life jacket and supervision — is a wonderful way to connect physical activity with the natural beauty of the Kawarthas.

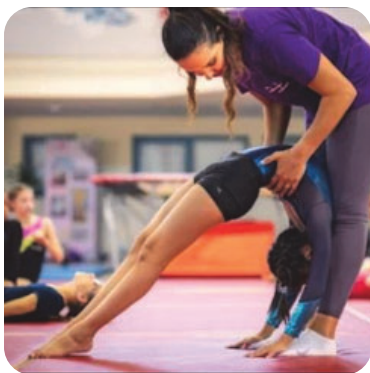


Figure 31. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Gymnastics & Tumbling

Rolls, cartwheels, balancing and tumbling build strength, flexibility, coordination and body awareness (Sport for Life, n.d.). Practised on a soft mat, gymnastics helps children understand how their body moves through space and develops confidence in trying new physical challenges safely.



Figure 32. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Volleyball

Bumping, setting and serving build timing, hand-eye coordination and teamwork. A lightweight or beach ball and a low net make volleyball accessible for beginners, and rallying back and forth teaches communication and quick reactions.



Figure 33. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Tennis & Badminton

Racquet sports sharpen reaction time, footwork, precision and hand-eye coordination. A lightweight racquet and a foam ball or shuttlecock let children rally in a driveway or park, building agility and focus as they track and return the ball.

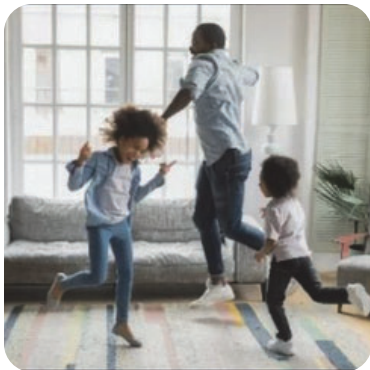


Figure 34. Photograph from Microsoft 365 stock images (Microsoft, n.d.).

Dance

Any style of dance — from freestyle in the living room to a class at a local studio — builds rhythm, flexibility, balance and memory. Following steps and moving to music strengthens coordination and gives children a joyful, expressive way to stay active.

Making Activities Inclusive

Every child deserves to take part in movement and play, regardless of ability. The STEP framework is a simple, practical way to adapt any activity so that all children can join in and succeed. By adjusting one or more elements — Space, Task, Equipment or People — an activity can be made easier, more challenging, or more welcoming without losing the fun (Kiuppis, 2018).

Small changes make a big difference: shrinking or enlarging the play space, simplifying the rules, swapping in a larger or softer ball, or pairing a child with a partner or peer model can turn an activity a child finds frustrating into one they enjoy and want to repeat.

Making activities inclusive: change the STEP



Space

Make the area larger, smaller, quieter or less crowded.



Task

Simplify rules, reduce steps, change the goal or allow more time.



Equipment

Use a larger ball, lighter object, visual marker or stable target.



People

Use a partner, smaller group, peer model or one-to-one support.

Example: Roll a large soft ball to a nearby floor target instead of throwing a small ball into a raised basket.

Adapted from the STEP framework (Kiuppis, 2018).

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