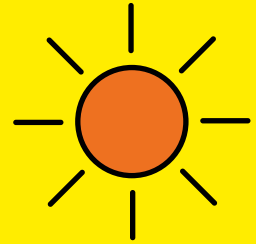


play 4 life

outdoor play



Fun ideas for
outdoor play



Created in partnership with

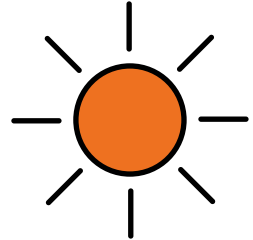


playing outside

Many of us have great childhood memories of playing outdoors – running around, climbing trees, building dens, inventing new games that kept us occupied for hours – these are all things that contribute to a happy, healthy upbringing.

Today, with less natural space and more distractions it's more important than ever to encourage kids to play. Wherever you live, the outdoors can be the ultimate play environment and children love looking for hidden play spaces near their home.

Lots of games and activities can be played in the garden if you have one. Or, if you live in a city, look for commons and parks, city farms or even areas of rough ground that are only a short walk or cycle ride away. If you live out of town, there will be village greens, local fields, woodlands and maybe even beaches to run around where kids can let off steam.



Whatever the weather

Try not to let bad weather put you off: play needn't be spoiled by a bit of rain. In fact, kids are usually less worried by a little cold and rain than their parents, especially if they're running around and keeping warm!

If it's wet and muddy outside, why not dress them in old clothes and wellies and let them splash around in your nearest park or the garden?

A place to play

- An area of woodland filled with trees, bushes and places to build a den.
- A local playground or park filled with challenging equipment for the children to test themselves on.
- An area of open space – a field, common or football pitch where they can fly kites, kick a ball around or simply run as fast as they can!
- If you're feeling adventurous, you could set up a campsite and even build an obstacle course through the trees.

Government support for outdoor play

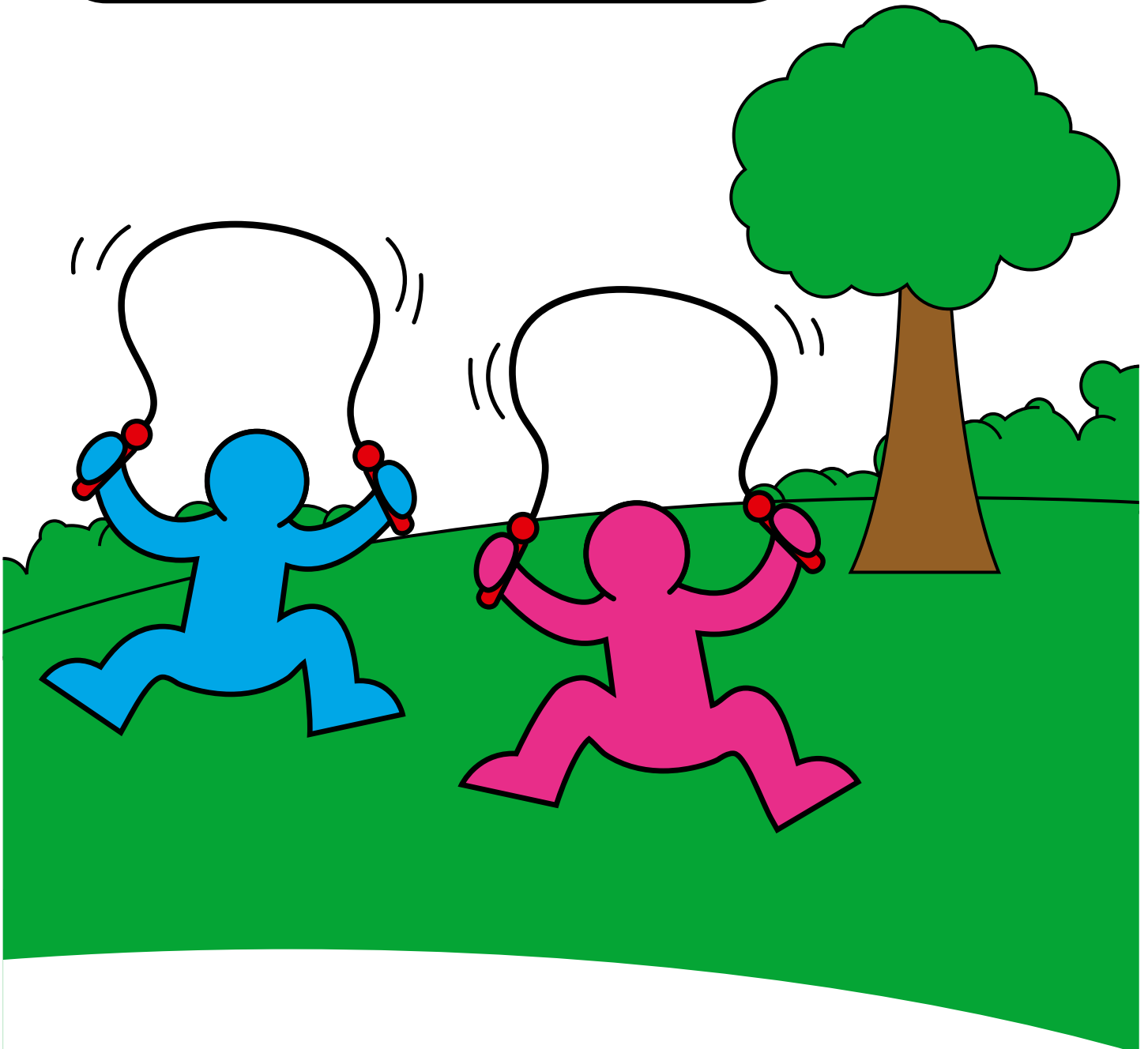
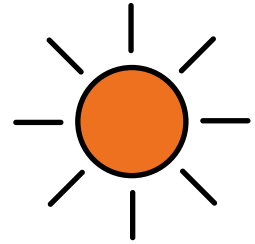
The Department for Children, Schools and Families is investing £235m between 2008 and 2011 to support local authorities, communities, parents and children in providing safe and exciting play facilities. This will fund 30 new, staffed adventure playgrounds and 3,500 new or refurbished play areas. All local authorities in England have been given at least £1m, so contact yours to find out where the nearest play facilities are or will be located.

playing in the great outdoors

Play for kids is most rewarding when they start it themselves, and it doesn't take much to spark a child's imagination. Given half a chance kids will throw themselves into play, especially if there are friends or brothers or sisters around. If they have ideas of their own, why not help the kids develop them and see where they take them. Using their own imagination is the best way to play.

If you want to join in, and suggest some games to play, we've pulled together some great games and activities to get you started and help inspire the kids to make up their own.

Very few of the ideas need expensive equipment. Most of the time, all you need are some everyday household items, things you find outside, or just your imagination.



toddlers and preschool kids

Duck, Duck, Goose

Everyone sits in a circle. Then one player – the fox – walks around the outside, tapping people on the head and saying ‘duck’. But if they tap someone and say ‘goose’, that player jumps up and chases the fox around the circle.

If the fox makes it all the way around to where the goose was sitting and sits in their space, then the goose becomes the fox.

But if the goose tags the fox while they’re running around, the goose goes back to their space and the fox has to start again.



Hide and Seek

One person covers their eyes and counts to 50 while the others run and hide.

Once someone is found, they join the ‘seekers’ until everyone is found.

The last person to be found is the winner.

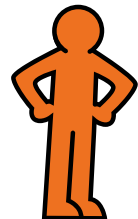


What’s the time Mr Wolf?

Everyone starts by standing in a line. One player is Mr Wolf and they take 20 paces forward and stand with their back to the others.

Then the others all call out together “What’s the time Mr Wolf?”. The wolf turns around and calls out a time, for example “8 o’clock”, which means the others take 8 steps forward. 3 o’clock is 3 steps, 5 o’clock is 5 steps, etc.

They keep on doing this until Mr Wolf decides to shout “DINNER TIME!” instead, and chases the group. If he catches someone before they reach where they started they become the wolf.



5-8 year olds

These games are really easy to play and they don't even need any equipment!

Bulldog

Mark out a large playing area with four sides.

One person is 'on', and the rest line up on one side of the square. They have to get to the other side without being touched by the person in the middle.

Once you have been touched, you join the player(s) in the middle until only one person is left. They are 'on' for the next game.



Tag

One person is 'it'. They chase the rest until they touch or 'tag' someone, who is then 'it'. Simple, but lots of fun!

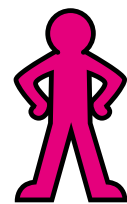
For a fun addition to the rules, a player can avoid being tagged for a short while if they crouch down and shout out the name of a vegetable - this means that they are safe.



Stuck in the Mud

Like Tag, but when one player is caught, they must stand still with their legs apart. This means they are 'stuck in the mud' and can only be set free by another player crawling through their legs.

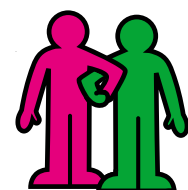
The last person to be caught is 'it' for the next game.



Blob Tag

Start with two people as 'the blob' by linking arms - they are not allowed to break the link.

Once the blob tags someone, they become part of the blob - so now it's a three person blob. Only the ends of the blob can tag someone, so other players can go through the rest of the blob without being caught. The winner is the person who has escaped the blob!



5-8 year olds

These next games mostly just need a couple of items to play, and they're all things you might be able to find around the house or pick up cheaply.

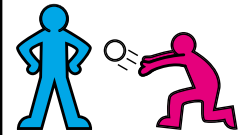
Dodgeball

Equipment needed - 6 large, soft balls

Find an area you can play in and split everyone into 2 teams. You'll also need someone to be a referee.

Each team starts with 3 balls and throws them at players on the other team. If a player's body is hit, they are out (the head is not a target and doesn't count).

If someone on the other team catches the ball, then the thrower is out! The winning team is the team with the last player left in.



Five Pin Football

Equipment needed - 5 empty 2-litre plastic bottles, a few footballs

Divide the kids into 2 teams and get them to line up at opposite ends of an open space. Half-fill the 5 bottles with water and put them in the middle of the area.

At the start signal, get players to kick (or roll if they are very young) the footballs from their line to knock down a pin. If a player knocks down a pin, they must run out and set it back up.

Teams score one point for each pin knocked down and the first team to five points wins.



5-8 year olds

Sponge Toss

Equipment needed - 2 buckets and a big sponge per team

This game is great if you've got a large group.

Split everyone into teams of 4 or 5 and give each team 2 buckets and a sponge (a car sponge is ideal). Fill one bucket with water and mark the empty bucket with a line about half way up.

Then teams stand in a line with the full bucket and sponge at one end and the empty bucket at the other.

Player 1 dips the sponge in the full bucket and throws it to the next player, who's standing a few feet away. The sponge goes all the way down to the final player, who squeezes it into the empty bucket.

The last player then runs back to the water-bucket at the front and everyone moves down one place. This carries on until one team wins by reaching the line marked on the second bucket.

But remember - if the sponge is dropped it must be returned to the start of the line!



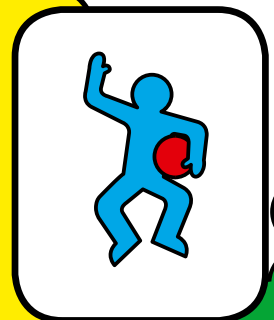
Softball Olympics

Equipment needed - 2 softballs

Create two teams and give each team a ball. Then do the following relay races:

- Put the ball under your armpit and run to a line and back.
- Put the ball between your knees and hop to a line and back.
- Two team-mates run and throw the ball back and forth between them.
- Team-mates line up in a leapfrog formation and the first player hops over players while holding the ball, and then tosses it to the next player in the line to do the same.

Teams score ten points for a win and minus one point every time the ball is dropped. At the end of the Olympics, tot up the scores to see who wins!



Useful tip: It's up to you whether you supervise these games, but sometimes it's useful to have an impartial referee to keep things running smoothly! Try to make the games competitive but also fun, so losing is no big deal and kids are happy to play again.

5-8 year olds

Many of these next games can be played by kids of all ages.

Ball games

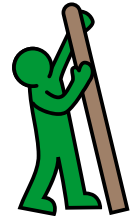
One of the all-time easiest ways to get kids running around and making up games is to bring along a ball. Any ball will do:

- A football, rugby ball, beach ball or even a volleyball.
- Or, try a bat and ball, racquet and ball or swingball.
- And don't forget other 'props' like frisbees and kites to get the kids running and playing.



Building games

These can be anything from making a den in the woods or building a tree house to putting up a tent in the garden. Once the kids have a base to get started, their imaginations will go into overdrive building other games around the den!



Playing on wheels

Bikes, skateboards, roller-skates, scooters, go-karts – playing on wheels is active, fun and develops useful skills of balance and co-ordination. It's worth taking a bit of time to find a good place for these activities; a nearby park or playground that allows bikes and skates, so you know your kids are playing where it's safe.



Skipping games

Skipping is a great way to get active, especially if there isn't much space to run around. If you can't remember any good skipping games, why not ask friends or neighbours? There are hundreds all around the world and you can find some good ones on www.playgroundfun.org.uk



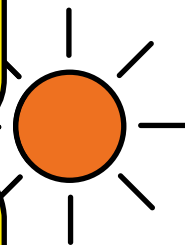
Play for all families

At Change4Life, we believe that all children should be encouraged to play. Some of the games outlined in this guide may not be suitable or practical for all families, but many of them can be adapted to individual families including children or parents with disabilities.

Parents can get more ideas for play geared towards disabled children or families by downloading the following documents from the 'Contact a Family' website:

www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/holidays.pdf

www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/westmids/WM061.pdf



Sources for more ideas

Here are some great websites where you'll find loads of ideas to help your kids play outdoors:

www.sustrans.org.uk – Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity with lots of cycle routes around the country. Look out for the blue cycle signs near you!

www.playday.org.uk – Playday is the annual celebration of children's right to play, where children, young people and communities get out and play at hundreds of locally organised events across the UK.

Here are some more websites for you to visit:

www.gameskidsplay.net

www.playgroundfun.org.uk

Playful parenting: top tips

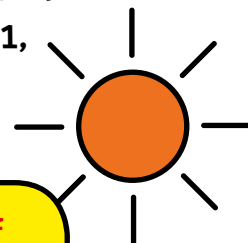
When playing with children it's less about what you do and more about the way you do it. Here are some handy 'dos and don'ts' to get you thinking about the way to play with your kids:

1. **Do** give them the chance to choose what games they play and how they play them. Forcing them to do something doesn't make play-time much fun!
2. **Don't** solve every task for kids – encourage them to solve the problem themselves.
3. **Do** remember kids are all different. Think about the kinds of activities your child likes and let them take the lead.
4. **Don't** be a competitive mum or dad. Learning how to lose is an important social skill for a child, but try to keep games enjoyable and let them win too – sometimes!
5. **Don't** be afraid to join in with make-believe games. Kids love it when parents play-act and it lets their imagination run wild.
6. **Do** let them enjoy physical challenges like climbing trees. Kids learn through taking risks. Don't be over-protective if the worst that can happen is a bump or a scrape.
7. **Do** get outdoors and play: it's healthy, and if they get dirty or wet, well that's what baths and washing machines are for.
8. **Do** share a game you used to play as a child. Think of the things you most enjoyed, the chances are your kids will enjoy them just as much!
9. **Do** enjoy playing. If your child is having fun but you aren't, just leave them to it. If they're not having fun, suggest something else.

This and more information about play is available at www.playday.org.uk

the safe outdoors

Everyone's neighbourhood is different, but wherever people live there's sure to be a local park or playground nearby. And with the Government providing funding for local authorities to create 30 new adventure playgrounds and develop 3,500 new or refurbished play areas in England by March 2011, there are bound to be even more options in the near future.



When playing outdoors, if you are unsure about safety, you should check the area yourself before taking children to play there. Most modern play areas are made from impact-absorbing materials rather than concrete, and grass is an ideal surface along with most other natural surfaces. If kids are on their bikes, you can read *Tips for Safer Biking*, which is part of the *Bike4Life* toolkit available on the *Change4Life* website.

Traffic is another consideration. Make sure your kids know the basics of road safety to help them to play safely in your neighbourhood and on the way to play areas and school.

Talk through potential safety issues openly with your kids and tell them how you would want them to respond if things go wrong, while they are out playing. This way they are in a much better position to be able to judge situations for themselves, and to avoid danger.

Risk and reward

Try to allow kids to test and stretch themselves – just as you did at their age. Remember, small risks are an essential part of play, which often means mastering new tasks or conquering fears. This is an important part of developing new skills and independence.

The key is knowing the risks involved and balancing them with all the benefits and rewards of playing.

Sometimes, kids and parents are worried about anti-social behaviour, such as bullying. If this is a serious concern, speak to your school or the neighbourhood police for expert advice.