

# How to Grow an Active, Healthy Child

One of the most important gifts we can give to our children is a love for physical activity and sport. It is a gift that will allow them to stay **Active for Life!**.

We hear from many parents that it can be difficult to navigate the various activity programs in order to determine what is best for their child *in the long run*. We recommend that parents seek out sport and recreation programs that have **clear outcomes** (Ask: What I you expect my child to learn by the end of the session?) and a curriculum that takes into consideration the **developmental age** of the participants (not all 6 year olds are at the same level of physical development), and progresses or builds in a logical manner. Seek out leaders who challenge their participants with the ‘right activities’ at the ‘right time’ in order to set the foundation upon which more advanced skills can be built.

## THE STARTLING TRENDS:

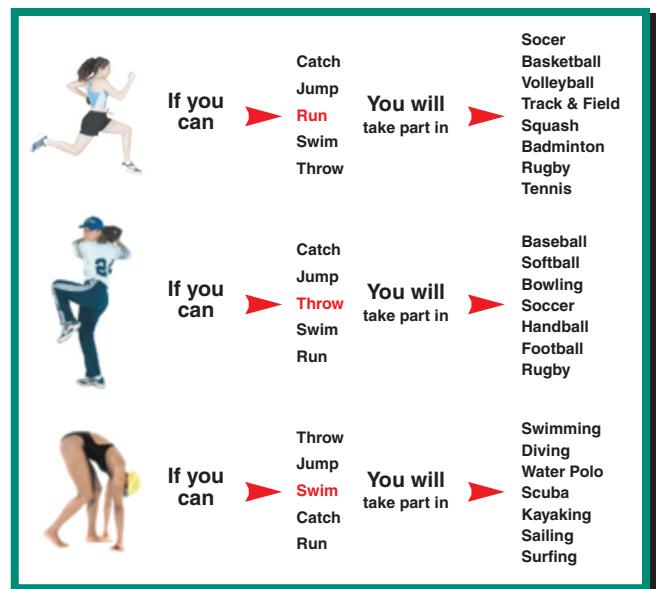
- As a result of low activity levels and rising obesity levels, today's generation of children have a **lower life expectancy than their parents**
- Across Canada, only **9% of boys and 4% of girls** get the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.
- Children who received **greater parental support for physical activity** are more likely to engage in 1 or more hours of physical activity per day.

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF LITERACY

Movement is a child's first language, and our ability to move is the most fundamental means we have of interacting with our world. It's called **physical literacy**.

To develop physical literacy, there are certain **fundamental movement skills** and **fundamental sport skills** our children need to learn the right way, at the right time during their development. These skills include movements such as running, jumping, hopping, balancing, throwing and swimming.

If any of these skills are not developed properly, future development is restricted. Children may be excluded from many sports and activities later in life. But give a child a strong foundation of movement skills and they'll be ready to learn more complex movements and sport skills when the time is right.



## LOOK WHAT YOUR CHILD IS ALREADY LEARNING!

An easy way to check if you are on the right track is to take a look at “**Discover Physical Literacy**” tab on the [www.activeforlife.ca](http://www.activeforlife.ca) web site. Make it a **FUN** challenge to find ways through both **structured programs** and **active family time** to build a variety of movement skills and environments into your child's active time throughout the year.

**Want to learn more? Check out these great resources:**

[www.activeforlife.ca](http://www.activeforlife.ca)  
[www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca)  
[www.activehealthykids.ca](http://www.activehealthykids.ca)

*Spark. The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*  
Written by John Ratey, MD. (Copyright 2008 ,Published by Little, Brown and Company)  
This handout was created by the CS4L AB Community Sport and Recreation Group



Recreation for Life

Dear Mom and Dad,

I know I didn't come with an instruction manual, but somehow you knew I need to be active for my developing body and mind. Out of all the sport and recreation programs out there, you choose the ones that help me to discover fun activities that I feel good about doing.

I know some parents don't like it when we just play games but! I heard a leader talking about all the important things the games are teaching us. Just like I am learning letters and words in school, which help me to read, the leader was talking about teaching me the "fundamental movement skills" that I need in order to be active. I think "fundament" includes things like running, jumping, throwing, skipping, hopping, twisting, balancing and rolling - all the skills that you need to play sports and do fun activities like swimming and hiking and skiing and stuff. Don't worry, I'll teach you some of the games we are playing so you can have some fun too! My leader also said it is really great for parents to be active - not just for themselves, but to set an example for their kids.

So mom and dad, thanks for helping me stay active in lots of different ways. I know it's good for me, but do you want to know the best part? It is SO MUCH FUN! With smart parents like you helping me find great programs, I know that I will be active for life!

Love,

