

FIT WIC FUN AND GAMES PAGE

Movement and physical activity are essential for the healthy growth and development of young children.

You are your child's first and most important teacher. Young children need your help to learn physical play skills like jumping, catching and throwing. Being active has lots of benefits:

- Your child will learn positive things about herself, and that being active makes her feel good.
- Your child will be healthier and may sleep better at night.

Balance is an important skill that helps your child develop strength, flexibility and body control. Learning to master her own body movements builds your child's self-confidence and self-esteem. Like any other skill, developing good balance takes practice. Here's one fun activity you and your child can do often.

Balancing Act

1 or more players

Equipment: Just you and your child

Procedure: Find an open area of floor where you can play safely and comfortably. Get down on the floor with your child and ask him to try these balancing skills with you. The more often you practice with your child, the better he'll get.

Start out balancing on all fours, with hands, knees and feet touching the ground.

Then ask your child to balance on just his hands and feet.

Ask him to raise one leg.

Raise one arm.

Raise one leg and opposite arm at the same time.

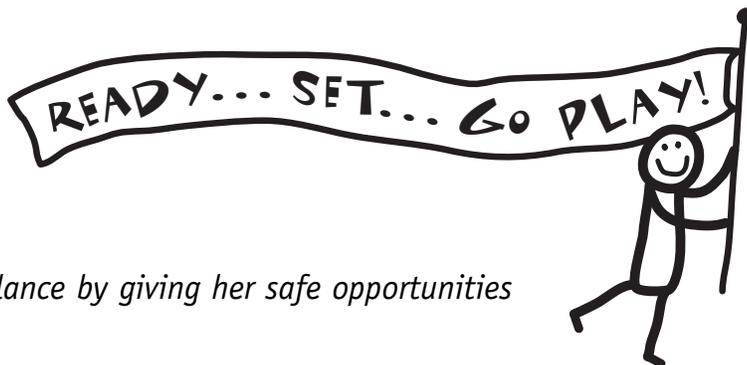
Ask him to balance on two knees and one elbow.

Balance on one knee and one elbow.

Ask your child to make up his own combinations of body parts to balance on.

**Your toddler may not be very good at balancing yet — praise her efforts, no matter how often she loses her balance! You might start out asking her to sit down and balance on his bottom.*

**You can help your young baby learn about balance by giving her safe opportunities to crawl and then to walk.*



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Let's Explore!

There is a lot to explore in your community all year-round. Summer is a great season to plan special outings with your family. Visit parks, trails, local farms and farmers' markets. These are fun outings for the whole family and good ways to introduce your child to your community.

Parks, Pools, Beaches and Trails

Call your Town Clerk or Town Office to find out what parks and recreation areas are available for children's play and family activities. Ask about parks, recreation areas, pools or swimming beaches, walking and biking trails, and special children's programs. Check out your local paper for activities offered by your town. You may also want to call nearby towns to find out what opportunities they offer.

Vermont State Parks

Vermont State Parks offer a variety of active play opportunities, including nature trails and swimming beaches, summer concerts and family programs, and even overnight camping. Locate State Parks in your area — you will find them on a Vermont State map, on their website at vtparks.anr.state.vt.us, or by calling their office in Waterbury at 802-241-3655. Day use is free at State Parks for children 3 years old and under. Children 4 to 13 years are \$2, children over 14 and adults are \$2.50 per day.

Visit a Farm

Vermont is known for its farms. There are many farms around the State that welcome visitors. Some farms offer "pick-your-own" — strawberries in early summer, other berries throughout the summer, apples and pumpkins in the fall. Look for ads in your local paper and be sure to call ahead to find out their hours and what's available for picking. Locate a farm to visit with your child on this website: www.vtfarms.org, or call toll-free for more information 877-VTFARMS.

Fun at Farmers' Markets

A trip to the farmers' market is fun for the whole family. Use your Farm to Family coupons this summer at any designated farmers' market around the state (see the other side of this page for more information) for fresh, tasty vegetables and fruits.

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Young children are naturally active and enjoy exploring their world through movement. Many people, young and old, learn best by *doing*. Health experts recommend several periods of active time each day for all age groups. Regular physical activity keeps our bodies and our minds healthy and happy.

Making your own obstacle course gives your child a chance to practice a variety of movement skills. You can include things to crawl through, jump over, run around, climb up and duck under.

Over, Under, Around, Through

1 or more players

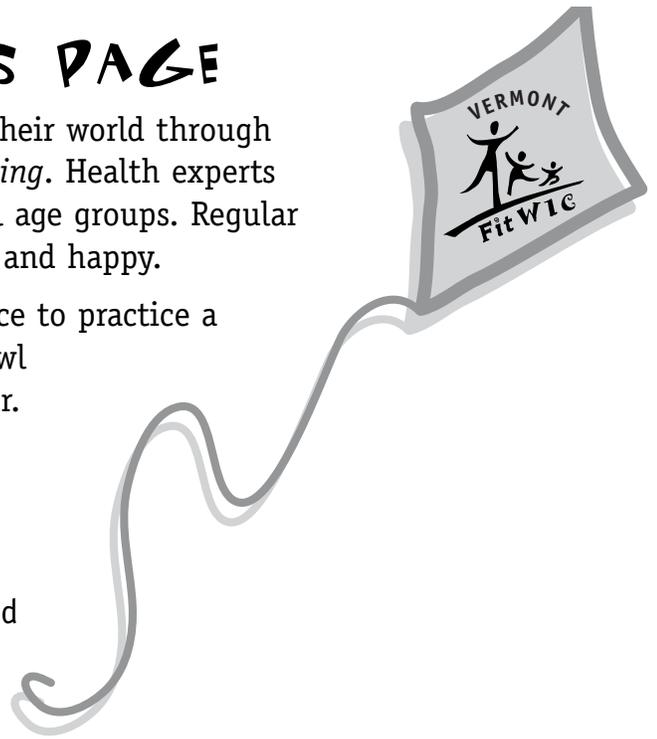
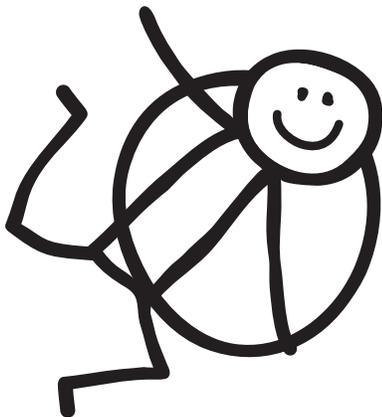
Equipment: Objects to crawl through like large, open-ended boxes; stacks of pillows to climb over; plastic hoops to hop through; milk jugs to run around; boards to balance on; milk crates to jump from. These are just a few ideas — be creative!

Procedure: Choose a large, safe area in your yard or home where you and your child can set up a series of obstacles that require different active skills. Let everyone move through the course at his/her own pace. Emphasize that this is not a race. Try going forward and backward through the course.

Make it easier: Use fewer obstacles or let your child skip the ones that seem too hard.

Make it harder: Add more obstacles that require more skills. For example, have your child dribble a ball with her feet or hands as she runs around the milk jugs.

Safety Tip: If more than one child is in the course at a time, make sure everyone is moving in the same direction.



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Winter Fun

Some adults may feel blue during the short daylight hours of winter. Children can get cabin fever too. Help beat cabin fever by going outside to play on as many days as you can. You may notice your child is in a better mood after she has spent time playing outside. Children are happiest when they can be active and it's easiest to be active outdoors, even during winter.

Some days the weather in winter may be too stormy to let your children play outside, but most days, if they are dressed warmly for the cold, children will enjoy playing outside in the snow. Even you may feel better after getting outside in the sunshine and fresh air with your child.



Make it easier to get outdoors

- Organize outdoor clothing in one place near the door so it will be easier to get your children bundled up. Give each child a box, bin or basket for mittens, scarves and hats. Put up hooks for jackets and snow pants. Teach your child to take off and put away his outdoor clothing in his special place.
- A plastic mat or piece of cardboard on the floor can catch drips from melting snow after she comes back inside.
- Don't forget to use sunscreen on exposed faces even in the winter.
- Remember to offer a bathroom visit last thing before suiting up.

Snowtime WICtivities

Take a walk in the snow, meet friends at a nearby park and explore

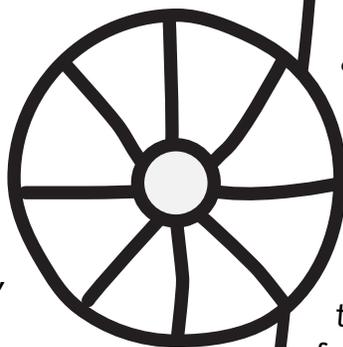
Build a snow fort, make snow angels, build a family of snowpeople

Go sledding or ice skating

Help shovel the walkway

Help brush snow off the car

Play **Fox and Geese** (see inset) or other outdoor games



Fox and Geese:

Stamp down the snow into a large wagon wheel shape (see picture). The "fox" starts in the middle of the circle and the "geese" on the outside circle. Players can run on the spokes or outside circle. The geese try and make it to the middle of the wheel. The fox tries tag the geese, and protect the middle of the wheel. The first goose to make it to the middle gets to be the fox for the next round. If the fox tags all the geese, that player gets to be fox again.

Playing with your children helps them grow stronger, smarter, healthier and happier. They may even sleep better and you may feel better, too.

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Let's Go Fly a Kite!

Kite flying is a perfect family activity for Spring! National Kite Month starts Tuesday, April 1. You and your family can celebrate by making one of the kites described below. Take your homemade kites out to the yard or park, away from any power lines, trees or other unsafe obstacles. Run and let your kite catch the wind! Get together with friends for a kite parade, or play follow-the-leader in the sky.

Making a kite can help you teach your child about art and science. Flying a kite gives your child a chance to practice important physical skills. Remember to follow the 3 C's of kite safety — caution, courtesy and common sense. Get outside and enjoy spring — go fly a kite!

Paper Kite

Equipment needed: (1) 8½ x 11" piece of paper; (1) 8" wooden skewer, chopstick or dowel; 6–10 feet of ribbon; masking tape (in your Fit WIC kit) or other tape; 6–10 feet of string, scissors, hole punch (optional), (1) small piece of cardboard (use an empty cereal box to cut out a 1" x 3" piece)

Procedure: Fold a sheet of 8½" x 11" brightly-colored or decorated paper in half to 8½" x 5½". Fold again along the diagonal line A in Figure 2.

Fold back one side forming kite shape in Figure 3. Place tape firmly along fold line AB to stiffen the spine of the kite.

Place wooden skewer from point C to D and tape it down firmly.

Cut off 6–10 feet of ribbon and tape it to the bottom of the kite at B.

Flip kite over and fold the flap back and forth if needed until it is perpendicular to the front of the kite.

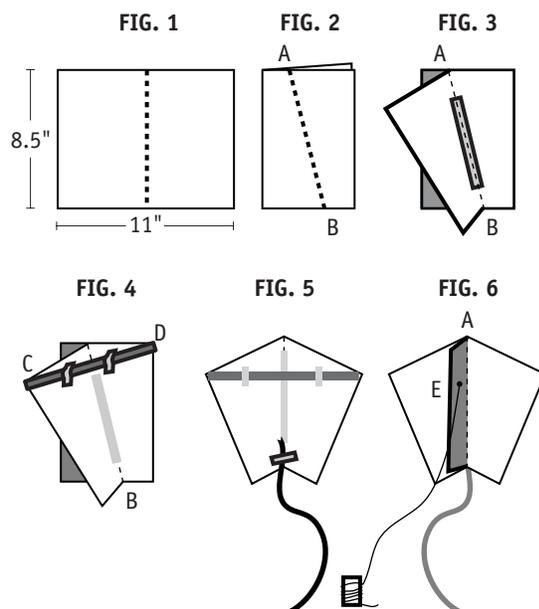
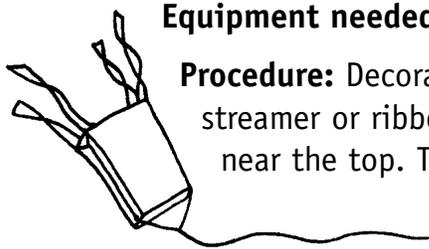
Punch a hole in the flap at E, about 1/3 down from the top point A.

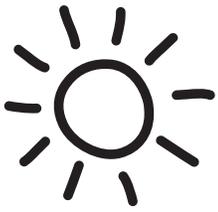
Tie one end of the string to the hole and wind the other end around a small piece of cardboard that will be your string winder.

Paper Bag Kite

Equipment needed: paper bag, crepe paper or ribbon, hole punch (optional), string, scissors

Procedure: Decorate a paper bag using crayons, markers, stickers, etc. Glue a crepe paper streamer or ribbon to each bottom corner. Punch a hole in 2 opposite sides of the bag, near the top. Tie a short piece of string through the holes to make a loop. Attach a long string for a flying line to the loop.





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Visit a Farm

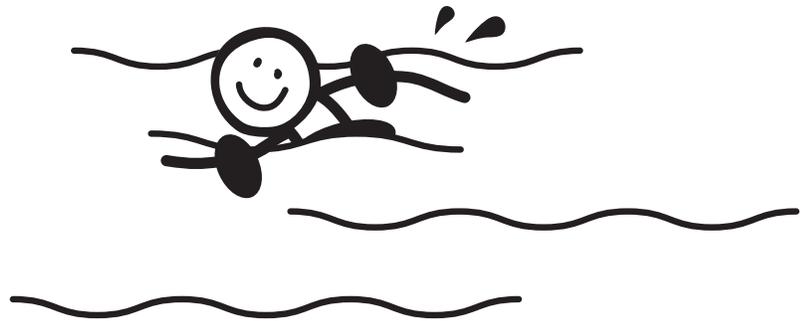
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Fall Into Fun!

Autumn leaves make great outdoor fun! Rake leaves together — young children like to be involved and feel like they are helping. If you don't have a small rake for your child to use, they can help scoop leaves into bags with a small pail, or an empty plastic milk jug with the top part cut off, with tape over the cut edge so it isn't sharp.

Here are some other ideas for fun with leaves...

Rake up a big pile of leaves and jump into it.

Rake leaves into smaller piles. Chase around and in between the piles of leaves.

Rake up a path between the fallen leaves and let your child run or kick a ball along the path. Try a straight path, a curvy path or a zig-zagged path.

Young children enjoy making forts with leaves. Help them build the "walls" with leaves or use bagged leaves to make the walls.

Make several small piles of leaves close together. Have your child jump from one to the other, or hop over small piles.

Make "leaf angels" in large piles of leaves.

Take turns covering each other up with leaves.

Scoop up a bunch of leaves and throw them in the air — make it rain leaves.

Try catching the leaves as they fall.

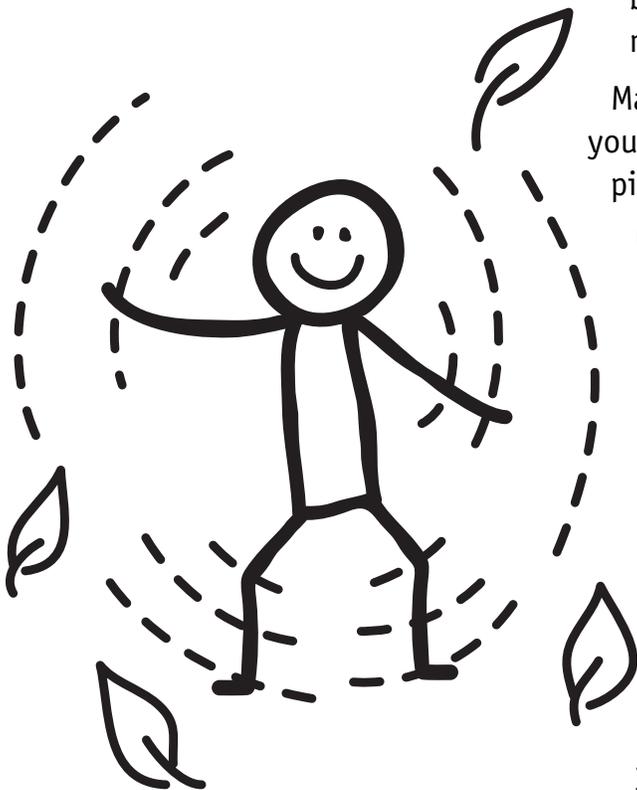
Go for a nature walk to take in the sights and sounds of fall. On your walk, have your child collect different shapes and colors of leaves. (You can even do this right in your own yard). When

you get home, have your child

press the leaves in or under some heavy books.

Leave them there for a few days. For a quiet

time activity, let your child glue the leaves onto paper to make a collage, stick them to small magnets to put on the refrigerator, or with your help, string them along a piece of fishing wire to decorate the room.



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Snow people, snow forts, snow balls, snow angels — are you “READY...SET...to GO PLAY” this winter?

Here’s a fun activity to play with your child this winter. It’s most fun to play outside, with or without snow. If it’s too cold outside, you can play indoors too. It’s best to have a large space where your child can run around freely.

Snow People on the Go!

1 or more players and 1 leader

Equipment: none, unless you are playing indoors and want to use music

How to play: Have your child run around in a safe space outdoors. When you say “freeze,” have your child stop and remain still in one spot. Pretend to freeze in place like a snow person! Then when you say “go,” have your child start moving around again. Your child can pretend she is a snow person running and playing!

- Ask your child to try “freezing” in different shapes (high or low, with arms out to the sides or up in the air, with feet apart or together, etc.).
- Have your child try moving in different ways when you say “go” — in different directions or at different speeds. Try starting out walking slowly and gradually moving more quickly.
- When you say go, have your child try skipping, jumping or galloping.
- Ask your child to try stopping as quickly and quietly as he can.

Variation: *If you play indoors, you may want to suggest that your child walks, rather than runs. You can play music when you say “go” and stop the music when you say “freeze.”*



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Hunt for Signs of Spring

It's spring! Go out on a scavenger hunt with your family and look for signs of spring around you.

Bring along a paper and marker to write down what you find. What else can you and your child find that's a sign of spring? When you get home, your child can draw pictures of the favorite things you found on your hunt for signs of spring.

See how many of the following you and your child can find...

- melting snow and ice
- green grass
- crocuses
- buds on trees
- robins
- puddles
- sound of birds singing
- tulips
- maple sugaring
- mud
- caterpillars
- bird's nest
- ducklings
- rain
- bird's eggs
- frogs
- daffodils
- dandelions
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Scavenger Hunt

Set up a scavenger hunt for your child outside, or inside if it's raining. Use colored plastic eggs inside or outside, or hide other objects and have your child search for them, such as small toys or blocks or small stuffed animals. Give your child clues about where the items are — move forward, backwards, to the left, to the right.

Vermont Fit and Healthy Kids Day

This April celebrate active kids and families! Look out for more information about what's happening in your community.