

ACCESS to Play Facilitation Guide



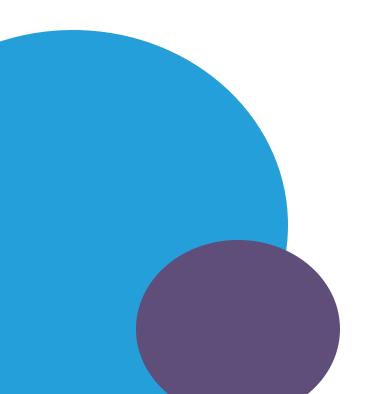
What is ACCESS to Play?

ACCESS to Play was written by members of the AZ Health Zone State Implementation Team in the FY2021-2025 Grant Cycle with the assistance of local implementing agencies. This guide was created based on a need for resources as identified by local implementing agencies.

Special thanks to local implementing agency staff at Yuma County Public Health, Coconino County Health and Human Services Department, Gila County Public Health and Human Services, Maricopa County Department of Public Health Administration, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension - Apache, Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal Counties. An additional special thank you to Keri Schoeff at the Arizona Department of Education!

The purpose of this guide is to assist local implementing agency staff who may be new to AZ Health Zone or physical activity work to understand the benefits of physical activity, how to safely facilitate physical activity events, and how to speak about and encourage movement in a trauma informed manner. As one of the goals of AZ Health Zone is to create access to safe spaces to be physically active, the acronym ACCESS covers these important topics related to physical activity facilitation:

Anatomical Overview
Cognitive, Social-Emotional, and Physical Benefits
Connection to Policy, System, and Environmental Change Efforts
(Lived) Experience and Trauma Informed Awareness
Safety
Settings, Audience, and Facilitation



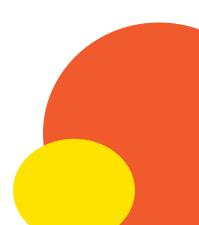


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Why Physical Activity (PA) is Important

Many Americans know that physical activity is a part of a healthy lifestyle. As research on physical activity grows, new benefits to being physically active are discovered, further driving the importance of movement. In short, being physically active improves a person's quality of life! Quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept in the same way that health and how it may be achieved is. Quality of life refers to the overall well-being and satisfaction a person experiences in various aspects of life. This includes physical health, emotional, social, and environmental factors. An example of aspects impacting quality of life include work satisfaction, personal relationships, health status, access to resources, and happiness.

When looking at health as a multi-dimensional concept, physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing are all important. Achieving good health involves addressing exercise, diet, mental health support, and access to healthcare. Health requires a comprehensive approach, as does quality of life. Both are influenced by a range of factors and cannot be fully understood or achieved by focusing on just one dimension. In essence, improving quality of life and achieving health involves considering and addressing multiple aspects of a person's life, rather than focusing on a single element.

An individual's or population's quality of life is a subjective measure of wellness and satisfaction, considering the many aspects of day to day life whether it be positive or negative. As a result of life's ever changing circumstances, quality of life varies over time. Not only can physical activity improve a person's quality of life in the moment through the release of endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin which are feel-good hormones, movement can also improve quality of life long-term, and aid in disease prevention, increasing longevity, and more which are described later in this guide. While the benefits of physical activity can be discussed in many ways, this section will cover the impacts based on physical, cognitive, and social emotional categories.

Physical Benefits

Numerous physical health benefits stem from being physically active. Being physically active can be achieved at any age, any health status, or level of physical ability. Some benefits may be more apparent based on age and health status, but generally everyone can benefit because all movement counts. Some physical health benefits can include:

Children and Adolescents

- Improved bone health (ages 3 through 17 years)
- Improved cardio-respiratory and muscular fitness (ages 6 through 17 years)
- Improved cardio-metabolic health blood pressure, glucose, insulin resistance (ages 6 through 17 years)

Adults and Older Adults

- Lower risk of cardiovascular disease (including heart disease and stroke)
- Lower risk of hypertension
- Lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- Lower risk of cancers of the bladder, breast, colon, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, lung, and stomach
- Improved quality of life
- Improved sleep
- Improved bone health
- Improved physical function
- Lower risk of falls (older adults)
- Lower risk of fall-related injuries (older adults)

Pregnant and Postpartum Women

- Decreased risk of pre-eclampsia
- Gestational hypertension
- Gestational diabetes
- Delivery complications
- Newborn complications

Some of the aforementioned benefits can be felt immediately, and other benefits occur over time as individuals become more active in their daily lives. Promoting physical activity in a way that makes it safe, enjoyable, and culturally-relevant ensures a positive experience that will help people be more active. Additionally, certain improvements in physical health and fitness can be due to specific types of movements and activities. For example, bone health and muscle strength or endurance will be improved by weight training activities (see aerobic vs. anaerobic section). Cardiovascular improvements are typically from aerobic workouts. Improved mobility comes from stretching and strengthening muscle groups and ligaments (see Anatomy Overview).

Social-Emotional and Cognitive Benefits

Social-emotional learning (SEL) starts at birth and is a developmental process that continues through the lifespan. Social-emotional skills are needed to support a healthy sense of self, decision making, and relationships. Additionally, SEL skills promote academic achievement, positive life outcomes, and wellbeing in addition to resilience (Weissberg et. al, 2015). While there is great importance placed on SEL skill development in children, these skills can be obtained throughout the lifespan, and one very important way they are developed is through physical activity.

Physical activity offers significant social-emotional benefits. Socially, it helps people build connections, improve communication skills, and foster a sense of community through group activities. Emotionally, exercise reduces stress, enhances mood, and boosts self-esteem by releasing endorphins and achieving fitness goals. Overall, engaging in physical activity supports both social interactions and emotional well-being, contributing to a more fulfilling and balanced life.

Cognition can also be improved by physical activity. Cognition includes academic performance, neuropsychological aptitude, memory, and executive function. Cognition, like SEL, also develops throughout the lifespan, until older age, when cognition starts to decline (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

The following table highlights the significant benefits of SEL and cognitive improvements across different age groups. These benefits matter because they underscore how SEL and cognitive improvements can enhance overall well-being, academic success, and mental health across the lifespan.

SEL Overall	Cognition Overall
 Better mood Better self-concept Better self-esteem Better self-efficacy Improved resilience 	 Improves learning and memory Improves attentional processes and executive processes Improves assertiveness, confidence, internal focus of control Improves positive body image, and self control
SEL in Children and Adolescents	Cognition in Children and Adolescents
 Self-awareness Self management Responsible decision making Relationship skill Social awareness High levels of self-efficacy, tasks, goal orientation, and perceived competence 	• Increase in academic achievement
SEL in Adults and Older Adults	Cognition in Adults and Older Adults
 Improved quality of life Reduced anxiety Reduced risk of depression Reduced risk of postpartum depression Decreases risk of dysfunctional and psychotic behaviors, hostility, tension, phobias, and headaches 	 Prevention of cognitive decline Reduces risk of dementia in elderly patients

(Mandolesi et al., 2018); (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018); (World Health Organization, 2022)

Local Implementing Agency Scope of Work

As an AZ Health Zone local implementing agency, creating policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes at the sites and communities engaged will provide opportunities for sustainable changes that improve access to safe spaces to be physically active. Providing education on and demonstrating physical activity, facilitating movement sessions, providing physical activity equipment, and utilizing train-the-trainer and professional development models, are considered PSE-supporting activities.

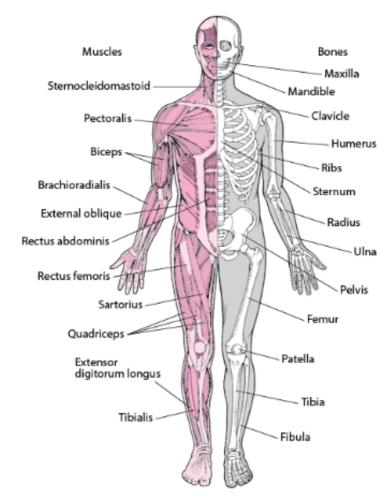
For additional information on the scope of work of physical activity, and PSE changes, please refer to the following materials:

- USDA SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance
- AZ Health Zone Program Guidance and Policy Manual
- AZ Health Zone Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Guide Page 14: Interventions

Anatomy Overview

Understanding the anatomy, or structure of the human body, provides a scientific foundation for understanding how to speak about the body and physical activity during demonstrations or facilitation of activities. An anatomical review of the human body, as seen in diagram A, will cover many of the bones and muscles of the body. For a comprehensive and interactive review of the musculoskeletal system including bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons, bursae and joints, please visit the Merck Manual, Consumer Version. While understanding and naming bones, muscles, and joints is helpful for instructional and facilitative purposes, it can also help identify sprains, strains, and other injuries covered in the Safety section of this guide.

Diagram A: Musculoskeletal System



(Merck Manual, Consumer Version, 2022.)

Anaerobic vs. Aerobic Systems

Physical activity is generally put into two categories, aerobic, and anaerobic. Aerobic activities stress the use of the cardiovascular system which includes the lungs and heart. Aerobic activities are often described as cardio or endurance activities, and coordinated movement of larger muscle groups over a sustained period of time. Some examples are:

- Brisk walks
- Jogging
- Cycling
- Hiking
- Swimming

Anaerobic activities focus on individual muscles or muscle groups for strengthening by applying resistance. Anaerobic activities stress muscles rather than the cardiovascular system. These activities include:

- Weight lifting
- Body-weight workouts like calisthenics (push ups, lunges) and plyometrics (squat jumps, burpees)
- Rock climbing
- Sprints

Because different activities provide different health benefits, consider exposing participants to a variety of aerobic and anaerobic physical activities and encourage them to find movements that they are able to do and enjoy (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

Warm-ups and Cool Downs

Warm-ups and cool-downs are important components to physical activity sessions, especially if engaging in strenuous or vigorous physical activity. A warm-up is meant to gradually increase your heart rate and widens blood vessels for better oxygen supply. The body's temperature will increase, which will improve flexibility and mobility of joints and muscles. Warming up is a great way to ease into sessions of physical activity and prevent injuries. Warm-ups typically last 5-10 minutes (American Heart Association, 2024).

A cool down provides the opposite of a warm-up by moving your body in a way that still promotes activity, but is less taxing than previous movements. A cool-down creates spaces for your heart rate to gradually decrease while doing activities that promote muscle and joint recovery such as stretching. Benefits of cooling down for 5-10 minutes involve decreasing the build-up of lactic acid which contributes to the feeling of soreness, and letting your heart rate and body temperature regulate overtime to avoid feelings of disease (American Heart Association, 2024).

See the table below for examples of warm-ups and cool-downs.

Warm-Ups	Cool-Downs
 Walking/brisk walking Jumping jacks Slow cycling Rowing Arm circles Leg swings 	WalkingCat-cow stretchCalf/glute stretchesSeated twistDeep breaths

Safety

Hydration and Nutrition

Fueling the body with the proper nutrition and hydration is crucial for being able to participate in joyful movement and physical activity safely. Hydration and nutrition needs will vary greatly across groups and individuals based on a variety of factors including age, activity or fitness level, the type of activity about to occur, climate, elevation, and health status. Being properly hydrated and fed helps concentration, energy levels, promotes heat regulation, and improves endurance levels. Additionally, it can help prevent emergencies such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke (Better Health, 2022). Please remember that in SNAP-Ed we are here to provide general nutrition education to a group of individuals, not medical nutrition therapy or specific advice tailored to an individual participant's needs. If participants express that they are interested in individualized nutrition and physical activity advice, please refer them to their medical provider or a registered dietitian.

Because food is fuel for our body, it's important to emphasize that skipping snacks or meals can be harmful to the body and can inhibit someone from fully enjoying their physical activity, play, and everyday movement. A great way to prepare for physical activity that will fuel your body and promote hydration is to eat foods high in water content, such as fruits and vegetables! Being sufficiently hydrated maintains concentration and performance, increases endurance, and prevents excessive elevations in heart rate and body temperature (Better Health, 2022). Due to variation in hydration and nutrition needs, below are recommendations to provide before, during and after facilitating physical activity:

Before activity:

- Ask participants if they have eaten recently, and confirm they have the energy to safely participate.
- Ask participants if they have been hydrating themselves, and making sure they have access to water when needed.

During activity:

- Remind participants to make fluid replacement (such as water or electrolyte drinks) a priority when being physically active.
- Encourage participants to take a break if they feel light headed, nauseous, or if they are overheating they may need to drink water or electrolytes and have a snack.

After activity:

Encourage students to hydrate and have a snack or meal soon, if possible.







Listening to Your Body

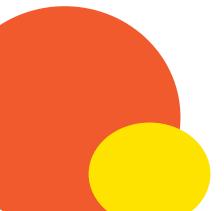
When facilitating physical activity, it's important to emphasize with participants the importance of listening to their body, and empowering them to prioritize their health and safety first. Many individuals, especially youth, may feel very dedicated to completing a physical activity session, game, or play time, even if they feel unwell or sustain an injury. Facilitators can encourage participants to check in with themselves by modeling what this looks like. This can help individuals identify if they feel well enough to start, continue, or resume activities.

Along with the above questions and reminders for participants about nutrition and hydration, which promote a level of awareness, some additional prompts to provide before, during, and after physical activity are:

- Do I have enough energy to participate in physical activity or games right now?
- Can I safely participate in light physical activity, moderate physical activity, or vigorous physical activity without normal risk of injuries to myself or others?
- Do I have the mental and emotional capacity to focus on this game or activity, and be a team player?
- Do I have any injuries or other physical concerns that I should take into account before starting or resuming physical activity?
- Is it safer for me to participate with modified movements so as to not injure myself or prevent healing of an injury?

The above questions can be modified based on the setting and populations being served. Furthermore, when working with populations that might need specific accommodations or are high-risk for injury, such as seniors or those with chronic conditions, it is important to advise these groups to consult their doctor or care team before engaging in new or unfamiliar types of physical activity.

It's important to help create an emotionally safe and positive perspective and environment when it comes to physical activity. Continue to emphasize that all movement counts. Remind participants that there is no specific way or standard approach to health and wellness, and encourage participants to incorporate physical activity as a way to help meet other life goals (ex: time with family and friends, having energy for job/work, focus on school/projects). Making physical activity its own goal can be overwhelming and provide challenges such as making it difficult to dedicate additional time for physical activity, or enduring activity they do not enjoy or are too difficult. This may result in participants feeling unwell, developing an injury, or unhealthy relationship with exercise if one does not feel supported or is not taking the appropriate steps in prevention and preparation.



Accidents and Emergencies

While everyone does their best to avoid accidents and injuries, some events are unavoidable and out of anyone's control. As a facilitator, it's important to be equipped with knowledge to know when to instruct participants to take a break or seek medical advice. The AZ Health Zone staff are not medical professionals and cannot diagnose injuries or acute health events. However, it is important to be familiar with various afflictions that may occur while hosting physical activity. While SNAP-Ed funds cannot be used to pay for CPR and first responder certifications, the AZ Health Zone encourages staff working with vulnerable populations and physical activity to explore these certifications through the American Red Cross or local organizations.

AZ Health Zone staff must highlight the importance of proper nutrition, hydration, rest, and self-awareness before facilitating physical activity. If any participants feel unwell before the beginning of an activity, check in with them and provide them the option to sit out, or do modified movement until they feel capable of participating more comfortably. Please emphasize with participants the importance of listening to their body, which includes being honest with themselves, facilitators, or site staff about their capacity to participate in activities, and asking for support or rest. Taking these steps can help avoid initial injuries or worsening an existing injury.

Below are common injuries or medical events that may occur while being physically active. Potential symptoms of each injury are displayed, as well as possible next steps to take. Please note that while working with site partners, notify them immediately of a suspected injury or medical event as they may have specific procedures to follow in such an event, or have medical professionals available for support. When working with you, notify caretakers as soon as possible.

Sprains	Strains
 Occurs in a ligament Sharp, localized pain at joint Swelling and bruising along joint Feeling of looseness 	 Occurs in muscles Dull to sharp pain in muscle Swelling along muscle Pulling sensation in muscle after attempted use and pain Muscle weakness and instability in joint

If a participant comes to you with any of the above concerns, ask them to take a seat for the remainder of the activity. If possible, have them elevate and ice the affected area and encourage them to see their healthcare provider if possible.

(Center for Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine, 2024)

Bone Bruises	Bone Fractures
 Normally caused by falls or high impact Bruising and swelling at site Pain upon pressure or use 	 Normally caused by falls or high impact Bruising or discoloration Pain upon pressure or use Inability to move that part of the body as normal New bump or deformity Broken skin (compound fracture)

If a participant approaches you with the above concerns, ask them to take a seat for the remainder of the event. If bruising or swelling is present, ice if possible. If broken skin is present or pain is expressly high, contact a nurse hotline, 9-1-1, or onsite medical professional.

(Cleveland Clinic, 2022)

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
 Heavy sweating Cold, pale, and clammy skin Fast, weak pulse Nausea or vomiting Muscle cramps Tiredness or weakness Dizziness Headache Fainting (passing out) 	 High body temperature (103°F or higher) Hot, red, dry, or damp skin Fast, strong pulse Headache Dizziness Nausea Confusion Losing consciousness (passing out)

A heat stroke is a medical emergency and 9-1-1 should be contacted immediately. Do not give a person with heat stroke liquid to consume. In both scenarios, attempt to cool the participant down with a damp cloth. For heat exhaustion, encourage sips of water. If a person is vomiting or symptoms last longer than an hour, seek medical help.

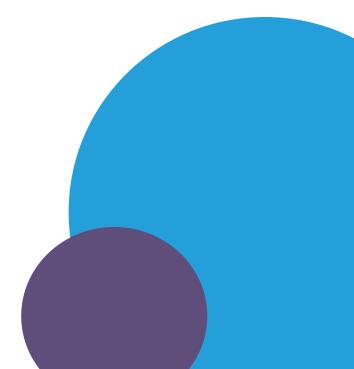
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024)

Heart Attack	Stroke
 Pain or discomfort in the chest Light-headedness, nausea, or vomiting Jaw, neck, or back pain Discomfort or pain in the shoulder or arm Shortness of breath 	 Numbness or weakness in arm or leg, especially on one side of the body Numbness or drooping in one side of face Speech is slurred

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Heart attacks and strokes are medical emergencies. If someone is experiencing these symptoms, ask for additional assistance from site staff and call 9-1-1 immediately.

(American Heart Association, 2022); (American Stroke Association, 2024)



Facilitation

Assessing the Space

Before starting physical activity with a group, it's important to assess the physical activity setting not only for safety, but also to make sure you are ensuring the best use of the space. Assessing the space might look like:

- Being indoors versus outdoors, and weather considerations
- Shaded and unshaded environments
- Being in a classroom, gymnasium, park, indoor or outdoor recreating space
- Being on grass, turf, dirt, or sidewalk
- Proximity to busy streets and crosswalks
- Access to air conditioning, fans, or heaters
- Ability to organize the space (navigation of chairs, tables, benches, ect.)
- Loading and unloading equipment
- Noise restrictions and the ability for participants to easily hear the facilitator
- Access to site staff (if applicable), emergency exits, water, and restrooms

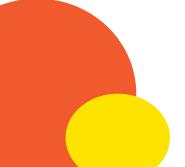
The above factors are important to keep in mind when reserving space for physical activity, or when facilitating activities and trainings for site partners. If you will need lots of space, classrooms might not be the best environment, or, you might have to modify your activities for the smaller space. It's important when working with sites to ask questions related to the above bullet points so you can avoid surprise and plan ahead.

Another component of assessing space includes the culture around health. Are you in a space that promotes health, wellness, and physical activity? Is the space inspiring of movement, or does it feel dark and gloomy? Is the space set up for participants of all sizes and abilities to move in a way that supports them? Does the space have equipment, such as chairs or benches you can utilize for those who need modifications? Does the space provide physical activity equipment such as balls and bands, or do you need to provide them?

Things you can do to liven up the physical space and promote a culture of joyful movement when facilitating activity include:

- Wearing bright colors
- Smiling and frequently using words of encouragement
- The use of NERI's
- Celebrating at the end of class, game, or session
- Using trauma informed language
- Providing informational materials on health
- Engaging site partners and community members to learn what health means to them
- Working with site partners and community members to find ways to sustain physical activity programs and promote health long term in community

Keep in mind, equipment can also be used to create boundaries for play or movement. Any physical activity equipment provided should come with proper instructions to ensure safe and effective use. For example, stretch bands, which are popular in the AZ Health Zone program NERIs, should include guidance on correct grip to prevent snapping and proper placement to avoid discomfort for individuals with arthritis.



Trauma-Informed Language and Approaches to Physical Activity

Throughout this guide, several aspects of physical activity have been reviewed, considering its many benefits and components of health and safety for those engaging in physical activity. Enhancing understanding of these topics and implementing positive, supportive language during AZ Health Zone physical activity events, games, demonstrations, and messaging are wonderful ways to incorporate trauma-informed approaches into programming and communications.

An Excerpt from the Language of Health: An Editorial Style Guide to Effectively Communicate to the Public (pg. 11):

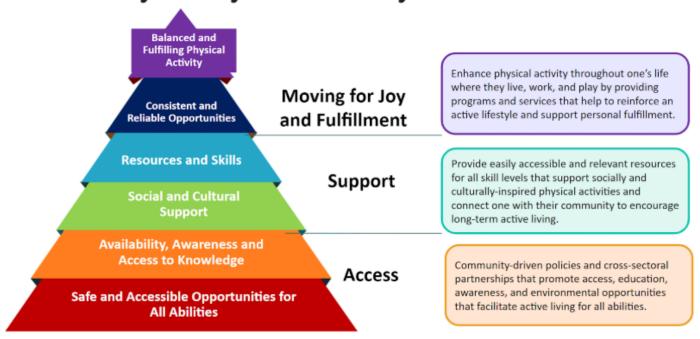
Guiding Philosophy

Physical activity is meant to be enjoyed and improves quality of life.

There are many ways to be physically active, and any type of movement counts. Promoting physical activity in a way that makes it safe, enjoyable, and culturally-relevant ensures a positive experience that will help people be more active. There are many benefits of being active, including improving both mental and physical health. (Lorts, 2019).

To support equitable and person-centered programing, it's important to avoid assuming equal or easy access to physical activity for all individuals. Consider the following Hierarchy of Physical Activity Needs to help meet people where they are at in their relationship with physical activity and how they incorporate movement into their everyday lives.

Hierarchy of Physical Activity Needs (HOPA)



The framework for HOPA was developed by partners in Arizona, led by Partners in Brainstorm with contributions from state and local health departments, AZ Health Zone, state university researchers and students, and community organizations, as well as input from residents and community members.

Although physical activity provides many benefits and improves quality of life, people's relationship to physical activity or rigid beliefs and perceptions of physical activity can interfere with their ability to find and engage in joyful movement. Messages that emphasize all movement counts and that being active at all fitness levels is possible, and encourage finding movement that fits into other health goals are effective and relatable. Remember to keep your audience in mind when crafting messages for physical activity; consider potential challenges or barriers they may be facing during different phases of life, different body sizes, or abilities.

Consider the following questions when planning physical activity messaging and programming:

- How am I centering safety? Are my words, media images, or actions inviting, encouraging, and nonstigmatizing? Have I assessed the physical space to remove obstacles and took precautions to avoid injury?
- What can I do to build trust with my audience? Do I provide consistent, positive, and trustworthy messaging and communication? Am I being transparent about what activity(ies) we are engaging in? Do I let participants know what they are signing up for when I ask for volunteers?
- How does my activity allow for participants to work, play, or support each other?
- What opportunities do I provide for co-creation and/or co-leading activities with participants? Do I listen to and incorporate suggestions from community into my programming and communication?
- How do I encourage participants to find movement that works for them, or encourage movement that meets other life goals and interests? Do I allow options for adaptations and provide choices? Do I remind participants to listen to their bodies and take breaks when necessary?
- What culturally relevant messages or activities for movement do I provide for my audience? How do I
 learn about what is culturally appropriate and of interest to my community? Have I considered the unique
 strengths, challenges, traumas, and histories that impact my community or audience's relationship to
 physical activity?

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).

See more suggestions for physical activity language and message creation in the Language of Health.

Describing Movement

When describing movement, using common language while maintaining anatomical accuracy is essential. Terms such as left, right, front, back, forward, backward, up and down should be standard when explaining direction. When identifying body parts, using terms like arm, leg, core, chest, and back are appropriate, though more specific anatomical terms can enhance accuracy, particularly with adolescent and adult populations. For example, "Step to the side with your right foot, then bend at the knees for a squat. You should feel your legs working," a more precise description would be, "Step to the side with the right foot, then bend the knees to lower into a squat position. This movement activates the glutes, quadriceps, hamstrings, and abdominal muscles at various phases." Demonstrating muscle groups on oneself or using a chart can further reinforce learning. While anatomical terminology is not mandatory, it increases body awareness, aids in learning proper movement patterns, and helps participants recognize correct or incorrect movement execution.

For bilingual settings, naming movements or muscle groups in both languages fosters accessibility and enhances learning. When working with a translator for a physical activity event, providing a list of key terminology in advance ensures accurate translation of muscles, bones, and anatomical features. Engaging participants by asking if they know the name of bones, muscle groups, or joints can further support learning and participation.

Audience

An important component of facilitation is understanding the audience—their interests, abilities, and cultural or regional influences. This knowledge helps create engaging and educational physical activity events. Site partners can serve as valuable resources for learning about the needs of the populations being served. Community engagement techniques such as consulting, involving, and collaborating with community members help ensure activities are relevant and impactful. Co-creating events with the community also supports sustainable social networks, ongoing physical activity opportunities, and long-term PSE interventions.

Once community preferences and interests are identified, experiences can be tailored to different audiences. Younger groups, such as ECE and elementary school children, benefit from an energetic approach, callback techniques, and interactive games. With adolescents and older participants, a balance of playfulness and education is effective, incorporating scientific explanations when appropriate. While games may still be enjoyed, less monitoring and guidance are typically needed due to greater independence. For individuals with physical or developmental disabilities, modifications should always be available to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

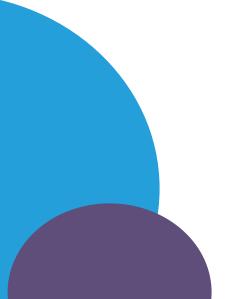
Movement and Adaptations

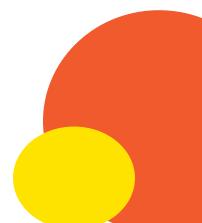
This section contains resources facilitators may find helpful for describing movements and considering adaptations for all abilities.

<u>Exercise Library</u>: This resource is a great tool to use when exploring new movements, or learning the correct way to perform each exercise. Ace has exercise listed by body parts, and levels from beginner to advance.

Modifying Exercises: Simple ways to modify exercises with or without equipment.

<u>Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America</u>: Shape America has an explore Physical Activity page that has a variety of topics that can assist with further knowledge and professional development. Topics include, "Understanding Physical Activity", Early Childhood Resources, Adapted Physical Activity, and much more.





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