

Active Indoor Recess

Overview

Are your students restless from being cooped up inside due to rain or cold? Active indoor recess is a great way to get physically moving, regardless of space or equipment constraints. Support students in getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day by implementing a fun and engaging indoor recess program.



Take Action

Try some of these strategies to get your students moving during indoor recess:

- Don't wait to plan for indoor recess until the weather goes south. Talk with school administrators, teachers, recess providers and parents at the beginning of the school year to create a plan for active indoor recess.
- Review your school schedule to assess available space. Is the gym available for any portion of recess? What about the cafeteria or auditorium? Is there an empty classroom? Is there a spacious hallway where students could run relays or jump rope?
- Does your school lack space for indoor recess? Partner with local gyms, YMCAs and fitness studios within a short walking distance of your school to see if space is available for students to use one or two days per week. Or, ask if they have an instructor who would be willing to donate time to visit the school once per month for a special fitness class during recess.

- Create classroom indoor recess carts. Include mobile materials such as jump ropes, soft balls, manipulatives, movement dice, and yoga mats and cards so teachers have easy access to equipment.
- Recruit older student leaders to lead indoor recess activities. Student leaders can serve as great role models for their peers and younger students to be physically active.
- Organize a year-round walking club. Walking is an activity that is easy and accessible to most students, staff and parents. Host an extra walking club day during indoor recess for students to track more steps.

Social Emotional Health Highlights

Activities such as these help students explore...

Self-Management: Incorporating active indoor recess during the winter months allows children to wiggle, jump, or dance out any excess energy that has built up from being inside. Active indoor recess also provides opportunities for children to come up with their own ideas on how to get active and better manage feelings and emotions. Allowing students to have autonomy in their movement develops creativity and self-confidence.

Relationship Skills: Because active indoor recess may take place in a more confined area, the opportunities for team and partner activities are endless! Make the most out of an active indoor recess by planning partner and team activities in order to help children understand the strength in teamwork and communication.

Social Awareness: Recess provides free time that allows children to use their imaginations and engage in meaningful ways with friends through unstructured play. Unstructured play helps students develop empathy and see different perspectives for others' ideas.

Tips



Get student input - What would they like to do during indoor



Establish indoor recess structures

recess? Perhaps host a student and staff survey to gain insight and integrate trending activities and games.



Provide on-going support and learning opportunities for teachers to find new, safe and age-appropriate ways to keep students active while indoors.



Recruit a local fitness instructor or a parent with a fitness

background to host fitness classes during recess.



Connect with a local college or university to have student volunteers lead activities during recess - these volunteers serve as great role models, too.



and routines, and practice them consistently to ensure students are safe and not disturbing other classes.

Coordinate with your school's physical education teacher to

offer games and other activities safe for a classroom setting.



Ask parent volunteers to compile indoor recess carts or bags for student use throughout the year.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

Additional Resources

[Recess for Learning Tip Sheet - English](#)

[Recess for Learning Tip Sheet - Spanish](#)

[Physical activity videos \(Go Noodle\)](#)

[Indoor recess games \(Peaceful Playgrounds\)](#)

[Training & playbook for indoor recess \(Playworks\)](#)

[Recess Plan Template \(SHAPE America\)](#)

Related Activities

Active Outdoor Recess

Elementary schools should incorporate a minimum of 20 minutes per day of recess for all grades and 30 minutes for primary grades. The benefits of recess also extend to secondary grades, too!

Fitness Circuit Course

Fitness courses consist of setting up several stations with different activities for students to rotate through in short periods of time (usually one or two minutes).

Classroom Physical Activity Breaks

Physical activity doesn't have to be in a recess or PE setting to be effective.

Fitness Classes

Fitness classes are a great option for non-competitive physical activity while also appealing to varying levels, abilities and interests.

