



Penn State Better Kid Care Distance Education Lesson

The Ups and Downs of Outdoor Play

Professional Development Code K7C1
Child Development Associate CDA 1

The Ups and Downs of Outdoor Play

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Assignments & Required Forms



Lesson Instructions

1. Watch the educational video.
2. Read the workbook.
 - Plan time each day to work on the lesson.
 - Set a goal to complete the lesson in about two weeks.
3. Complete all assignment pages and forms in ink. Save a copy of all completed work for your files in case there is a need to refer to your saved copy. We will not return incomplete lessons. You will be notified if lessons are incomplete.
4. We encourage the use of distance education lessons in staff meetings; however, all assignments need to be completed independently. Copied answers, “does not apply” answers, or incomplete assignments are considered not complete.
5. **To avoid delays in processing your registration for this professional development, be sure to go over the check list on the Registration Form, include all items, and mail to :**

Better Kid Care Program
The Pennsylvania State University
341 North Science Park Road - Suite 208
State College, PA 16803

Please note:

- Two professional development hours will be given for successful completion of this lesson.
- Completed assignments will be checked and returned to you with a certificate of completion.
- Penn State University Better Kid Care Distance Education provides:
 - Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
 - Keystone STARS professional development
 - PA Dept. of Public Welfare required hours
 - Act 48 hours for certified educators
 - Child Development Associate (CDA) credential hours
- Completed assignments must arrive at the Penn State Better Kid Care office for processing at least **6 weeks** before your certification or registration renewal due date.
- The video portion of this lesson was a previous satellite broadcast. Please be aware that some contact information may have changed.
- Discussion questions are included in most lessons. They can be used by a group of staff members in a child care center or group home. They can also be used in planning a family night to help spark discussion among families.
- If you are completing this as a Web-based lesson, please refer to the online instructions at <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/AngelUnits/GeneralDirections.html>

Keeping Kids Safe on the Playground

When you open the door to the outside, children rush out eager to climb, swing, and slide. Child care providers know how valuable outdoor play can be for children: It builds strong bodies and imaginative minds and makes happier and better behaved children. But the fun can end in tears or even with a serious accident. By learning how to supervise young children safely you can help prevent accidents. Experts believe that nearly 40 percent of all playground accidents might have been prevented if the children had been properly supervised.

Keeping Children Safe Starts with Understanding How They Behave

Young children are beginners at life. Toddlers and preschoolers think very differently than adults do. Instead of thinking things through ahead of time, they think while they are doing. Because they are active learners, thinking as they explore the world with their bodies, they do not always use what they have learned in new situations. Young children are often overconfident and will try things that are beyond their ability. Because of these limitations, all preschool children will do things that can lead to playground accidents. This means you must watch the children closely at all times when they are outside on the playground. Even running inside for just a second is not safe supervision.

Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe Outside

Crawling babies and toddlers are great explorers. They explore with their senses of touch and taste. This helps them to learn about their world. The grown-ups who care for them must find ways to keep touching and tasting a safe way to learn.

Because babies and toddlers put nearly everything in their mouths, they are at risk for choking or eating something unsafe. Many children naturally mouth objects right up to the age of three, and often children who don't regularly put things in their mouths will do so when they are tired or hungry.

Objects like acorns and gravel can become caught in a child's throat, causing choking. In fact, a young child can choke on any object that can fit inside a toilet paper roll. Adults need to give children things that are safe to mouth, remove choking hazards when possible, and supervise closely. When taking infants outside, use a blanket on the ground and provide toys that children can explore with their mouths safely.

Young children love playing in sand and water. Digging and splashing are great ways to learn, but the need for close supervision of water play is critical. Most adults don't realize that even buckets, puddles, or toys with less than two inches of water can be a serious hazard. One of the reasons for this is the large size of a toddler's head in relation to his or her body. When a toddler bends over to take and look into a bucket, he may not have body strength to lift himself free of the bucket if he falls over. Good supervision includes looking for areas of standing water. Puddles or buckets, toy dump trucks, or other toys can all collect water when left outside. Keep sand, dirt, or hay nearby to fill in puddles and dump water from all containers. Children should never be left for even a moment with a water hazard.

Older toddlers enjoy running. They often run headlong and have trouble stopping and turning. They also do not understand the relationship between size and distance. A child will see another



child approaching on a tricycle, but not know how close the tricycle is to them or even that it is moving. Most children do not have the motor skills to get out of the way in time to prevent accidents, so crashes and falls are common. Show children safe places to run and ride, and keep them a good distance away from each other.

Keeping Preschoolers Safe Outside

From the ages of three to five, young children are improving their motor skills. Preschoolers run and climb very well, and most are adventurous. They like to test these newfound motor skills. Sometimes they do this by using the playground equipment in inappropriate ways, such as climbing on the outside of railings and trying to climb on the roof of the playground equipment. Children of this age may seem to understand the rules, but will not reliably be able to follow them. They may misunderstand directions and cannot follow more than two directions at a time.

Start by setting some clear rules about how to use the playground equipment, right from the start. Talking about these rules regularly is necessary to help preschoolers learn and remember the rules. Repeating yourself can feel boring, but it is really important because although they seem to understand the rules, they often forget them and need clear reminders. It may sometimes seem frustrating and hard to understand (“Why can’t they always follow the rules?”), but this is normal for children this age.

Being Ready

As soon as she looked outside Nicole thought, “Oh no, not another rainy day.” This was the third wet day in a row. Nicole, who has a group of three- and four-year-olds, knew that the kids would be wild and crazy if they had another day inside. Later that same morning, she could see that she had been right — the kids were getting worked up, and the last straw was when Nicky threw a box of crayons across the room and they rolled everywhere. After chasing the crayons around the room, Nicole looked up to see that even though the sky was gray it had stopped raining. She decided instantly to take everyone outside. It was a struggle to get them all into their rain gear, the boots, and the slickers. But after the struggle it felt so good to open the door and let everyone run off onto the playground. Suddenly, she heard Julia shout, and Nicole looked over to see her slip into a muddy puddle. Then Chris began crying as he slid down the slide, knocking his head and soaking his pants. Elizabeth came up and said, “I have to pee.” Nicole felt like crying herself as she dried the tears and took everyone back inside again.

Nicole had a great idea: Taking children outside can improve their behavior. But Nicole wasn’t prepared. Good supervision begins before the children are allowed on the playground. Follow these guidelines to preparing yourself, the children, and the area before you go outside:



Prepare the children and yourself

- Make going outside a part of your regular routine, and have an active alternative like dancing to music or an obstacle course available if the weather is not good enough for outdoor play.
- Keep extra clothes on hand, including hats and mittens.
- Give the children a snack before going outside.
- Change diapers or ask the children to use the bathroom before they go outside.
- Take a remote phone or cell phone if you have one available.
- Take a first aid kit with you for caring for small injuries without having to go back inside.
- Take towels to dry wet equipment.
- Take drinks and cups on hot days.
- Take toys and art supplies that you plan to use outdoors.

Prepare the area before you go outside

- Check the area for broken glass, tabs from soda cans, nails, and big sticks.
- Check equipment for vandalism and excessive wear and tear.
- Check the equipment for water, dump any standing water, and dry the playground equipment that is being used.
- Keep hay, sand, or potting soil around to fill in puddles.

No Time to Talk

Sometimes caregivers use the time that they are outdoors to talk with other adults. It feels good to have some time to relax and enjoy some adult conversation. But safe supervision means paying close attention to what the children are doing at all times. You can't safely supervise the children when you are sitting down or when you are not paying attention. Make sure you walk through the area often as children are playing on equipment. Be aware of blind spots that are hidden from your view, and make sure you check them regularly.

Because playground time is not your time to socialize with other adults, make other opportunities for yourself. Schedule some relaxing time with other adults daily. Take time for a talk on the phone with a friend while you are making dinner or doing another chore. Meeting your own needs can make you a better caregiver.

Teach the Rules

One of the best ways to keep children safe is to teach them the rules. But rules alone can't provide the children's safety. Children under age three do not understand rules very well, and older children cannot be relied upon to remember or heed them until after age seven. Rules are learned gradually through repetition. Children need you to teach them the rules and supervise them closely.

Each piece of playground equipment has special rules for safe use. Teach children the rules by stating them positively. Try saying, "Hold on with both hands" rather than "Don't fool around on the swings." Teach children the safe way to play on all the playground equipment.

Teach children to use the swings safely:

- Sit in the center of the swing, never stand or kneel
- Hold on with both hands
- Stop the swing before getting off
- Walk way around the swing — not too close to the front or the back
- Have one person swing at one time
- Avoid swinging empty swings, and never twist swing chains
- Supervise closely any child who would like to push another child on a swing, and teach them to push gently.

Teach children to use the slide safely:

- Hold on with both hands as you go up the steps of the slide, taking one step at a time
- Never go up the sliding surface or the frame
- Keep at least one arm's length between children
- Slide down feet first, sitting up, one at a time
- Be sure no one is in front of the slide before sliding down
- Be patient, avoid pushing or shoving, and wait your turn
- Leave the bottom of the slide after you have taken your turn
- Never use a metal slide that has been in the sun

Teach children to use the climbing equipment safely:

- Use both hands and hold with a strong, firm grip
- Be careful climbing down, and watch out for those climbing up
- Stay well behind the person in front, and watch out for swinging feet
- Drop down safely, with the knees slightly bent, and land on both feet

Give Me a Little Space Please

Many accidents happen when children are too close to each other on playground equipment. You need to watch closely to keep the children spaced far enough apart. Limit the number of children on the equipment at any one time if necessary. It can help to have the children start at one side and move in the same direction. Support the children who are waiting by reassuring them that you will give them a turn. Put their feelings into words by saying, "It's hard to wait," or "My job is to keep everyone safe."

Safe supervision on the playground requires close attention from the adults. It is tempting when you are outside to simply sit down and relax and enjoy the outdoors, or use this time to talk with friends and neighbors. But accidents can and do happen when your attention is elsewhere. So try to make plans for visiting at another time. Knowing how children behave outside, along with teaching them the rules, will help you make the outdoors a safe and exciting place for the children to explore.



PARENTS COUNT

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS



KEEPING KIDS SAFE ON THE PLAYGROUND

Playgrounds can be the best free fun around, at least until tears or an accident happen. But many accidents could be prevented by careful, safe, adult supervision based on an understanding of child development.

Young children under the age of five are beginners at life – they think very differently from adults. Young children do not think ahead; instead, they think as they go. Nor do they apply what was learned in one situation to another situation, so often they are overconfident about their own abilities. This leads to accidents on the playground that would be avoided if the child was supervised closely by adults, and of course, not by other children.

Baby and Toddler Safety

Babies and toddlers are explorers: they learn about the world by crawling, touching, tasting.

This means even simple activities such as playing in water can be hazardous. A child can drown in as little as two inches of water in the bottom of a bucket or a puddle – so safe supervision means watching for water hazards, never leaving a child alone with water even for a moment, and also being within touch distance of a child near water at all times.

Crawling babies and toddlers learn about the world by putting items into their mouths: acorns, gravel, marbles, toys, sticks. Safe supervision from choking means watching what children put into their mouths, and being aware that children also often mouth objects more when tired or hungry. An easy test for objects small enough for a child to choke on – items for you to remove - is to see if it fits through a toilet paper roll.

Older toddlers love to run, but have trouble turning and stopping, which puts them at risk for collisions and falling. Children also do not understand the relationship between size and distance, or that when they see a car or bike or another running child, that vehicle or child might also be moving. Safe supervision means finding places where a child can run or ride without collisions.

Preschooler Safety

Preschoolers from three to five years can run and climb well. Safe supervision at this age means watching that children use playground equipment correctly, setting clear rules from the beginning, and repeating those rules constantly as clear reminders.

Going to the Playground

Spend a few minutes planning your playground trip to make it more enjoyable. Take a first aid kit, water, wipes, extra clothes, diapers, snacks, and drinks. Old towels work for drying wet playground equipment. A few simple toys and art supplies can come in handy, too. Ask children to use the toilet, and change diapers before leaving home, so you can enjoy the playground together.

Check the playground when you first arrive. Look for broken glass, small items children might mouth, nails, or sticks. Check for vandalism, excessive wear and tear, and standing water where a child might drown. Dry equipment with towels, fill in puddles with dirt if possible, dump water that is on equipment, or don't use that piece of equipment at all.

Teach Children to Play Safely

Rules are safeguards to be used with safe adult supervision. Children under age three do not understand rules, and children up to age seven cannot be relied on to remember or to apply rules, no matter how often the rules are repeated.

Challenge children to learn rules by stating them positively. Instead of "Don't fool around on the swing", say "Hold on with both hands." Teach safe ways to use the equipment:

Swings:

- Sit in the center of the swing, never stand or kneel.
- Hold on with both hands.
- Stop the swing before getting off.
- Walk far around the swing, not too close to the front or back.
- One person on a swing at a time.
- Avoid swinging empty swings or twisting swing chains.
- Teach how to push another child gently, and always supervise this activity.

Slides:

- Hold on with both hands, go up one step at a time.
- Never go up the slide surface or the frame.
- Slide feet first, sitting up, one person at a time.
- Wait for anyone at the bottom to be out of the way.
- Get out of the way when you arrive at the bottom.
- Avoid hot metal slides that have been in the sun.

Climbing equipment:

- Use both hands.
- Watch for other climbers.
- Watch for swinging feet.
- Land on both feet when you get off.

Safe supervision means adults watch carefully to ensure that children are far enough apart when climbing, swinging, sliding, running, or riding.

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Supported and produced with funds from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, a joint office of the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare and the Penn State Cooperative Extension Better Kid Care Program.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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Discussion Questions

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why is outdoor play important for children?
2. What outdoor injuries are the most common for the children in your child care? How can you prevent these injuries?
3. In what ways can you improve your play area? Discuss some of the problems you might face and how you would solve those problems-in making these improvements.
4. What rules have you developed for your outside play area? Share and discuss.
5. What can you take with you so you will be prepared when you take the children outside?
6. How do you make sure that you and the children are well dressed for the weather?
7. What do you think is essential to good supervision?
8. What are parents' concerns about outdoor play? What can we do to respond to these concerns?
9. How do you plan for outside play?
10. What is the most important thing you plan to do now that you have watched this video?

Parent Discussion Questions:

1. Why is outdoor play important for children?
2. What injuries have your children had outdoors? How could you prevent these injuries?
3. Where do your children play outside? How could you make these outdoor spaces safer?
4. What rules have you developed for outside play? Share and discuss.
5. What can you take with you so you will be prepared when you take your children outside?
6. How do you make sure that you and the children are well dressed for the weather?
7. What do you think is essential to good supervision?
8. What are your concerns about outdoor play in child care? How would you like child care providers to respond to these concerns?
9. What type of fun activities have you done outside with your children?
10. What is the most important thing you plan to do now that you have watched this video?



Assignments

Name
Address
City/State/ZIP
County
Phone Number

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1. Do a safety check on your outside play area. Review the workbook information and what you have learned from the video. Is your play equipment safe from hazards? (Look for protrusions, entrapment hazards, and safe use zones.) Describe what you looked for and why.

2. What safety issues must be considered when taking infants and toddlers outside?

When taking preschoolers outside? _____



Assignments (continued)

Name

3. Since falls are the most common type of playground accident, it is critical to keep your playground surface in good condition. What surface are you using? Is your surface in good repair or kept to the recommended depth? If not, what will you do to solve the problem?

4. What are you looking for during a daily safety check? List below two problems you check for daily.

1.

2.

5. What are two ways that you use to make sure that the children are supervised carefully?

1.

2.

6. What three safety rules are you using to keep children safe when they are outside playing?

1.

2.

3.



Tell Us More About You...

Since we can't meet face to face, we are interested in knowing more about you. This information is very helpful to the early education specialists who review your assignments. Please return this sheet with your assignment pages.

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- I provide child care in my own home
- I provide child care in someone else's home
- I work in a child care center
- I'm thinking about becoming a child care professional
- Other, please describe

2. How long have you been a child care professional? _____

3. What are the ages of the children in your care? Check all that apply.

- Birth to 12 months
- 13-24 months
- 25-36 months
- 3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9 years and over
- Special needs

4. Please feel free to tell us a little about yourself and/or the work you do with children.

5. Other comments (please use the back of this page if necessary).

**Thank you for taking the time to help us make a connection to you
and for being part of our program!**



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Supported and produced with funds from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, a joint office of the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare and the Penn State Cooperative Extension Better Kid Care Program.

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