



Get set for adventure: Physical literacy and your teen

What's physical literacy?

When teens develop physical literacy they build the skills to learn, participate in and enjoy physical activity. Developing physical literacy help teens have the confidence and ability move their bodies to join in lots of different activities. Building these skills as they grow and mature can lead to lifelong enjoyment and benefit. It can also help with other valuable life skills like adapting to new situations or bouncing back after disappointment. Physical literacy includes 3 parts:

Emotional skills – *motivation and confidence*. This helps teens learn how to stick to healthy choices because they have the confidence to move more and know how

much it benefits them. They also know they can adapt when things don't go as they expected.

Physical skills – *physical competence*.

This helps teens develop the ability to move their body to get the result they intend—kick the ball to the target or land a cartwheel. They build on beginner skills they have already mastered to learn more difficult skills.

Mental skills – *knowledge and understanding*.

This helps teens know how to make healthy choices that benefit them and others. They believe in their ability to learn a new activity.

Healthy Teens

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Why is physical activity important?

In Canada, the [24-hour movement guidelines](#) recommend that youth get 60 minutes of heart pumping physical activity each day. These guidelines are based on research into the amount of physical activity that can improve and protect both physical and mental health. Teens who develop their physical literacy have the confidence and motivation to try new things while getting physical activity that helps them stay healthy.

How can I help teens develop their physical literacy skills?

Build up the foundation

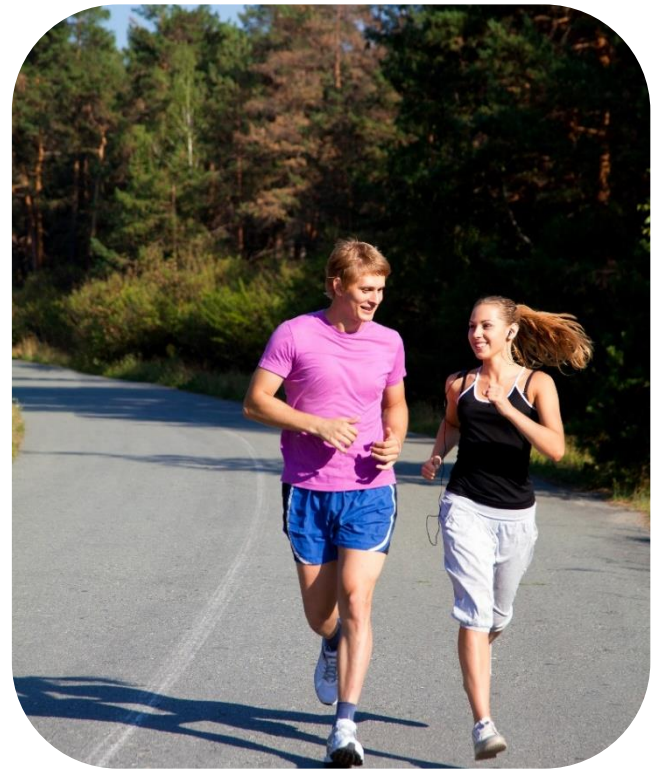
Just like teens build on learning the alphabet as children to learn advanced reading skills, they can deepen their physical literacy to learn more complex movements or more advanced games or sports.

If your teen knows how to:

- run, they can join in games like soccer, tag, or capture the flag during school noon hour.
- throw, they can play a game of sitting volleyball, dodgeball, or frisbee to make friends at a new school or in community.
- swim, they can feel confident to try out kayaking or canoeing with their peers during outdoor education class.

Variety is the key to success

It can be tempting to focus in on your teen's favourite activity, but variety is important. Specializing in one sport or activity too early can limit their potential and affect their long-term development. If your teen wants to



become better in one sport or activity, have them choose another sport or activity in the off season. Taking this approach also helps to prevent injuries, which is important so they can be active for life.

Keep it fun

Dropout rates for sports or activities are highest during the teen years. This is especially true for girls. Teens are more likely to stick with an activity they picked. Let them decide what activity to try but help them think through what kinds of activities they enjoy—those are the ones they are most likely to keep doing! This will keep them active and help them continue to develop their physical literacy. Social connections are important for teens so if there are opportunities for your teen to participate in activities with their friends, that's even better!

Try Different Places and Spaces

Developing physical literacy includes learning to how to move in a variety of environments. This can include:

- *on the ground*: playing games, dancing, wheeling
- *in the air*: diving, gymnastics, swinging
- *on the snow and ice*: sledding, skiing, sledge hockey
- *in and around water*: swimming, kayaking, canoeing

Moving in a variety of spaces and on different surfaces helps teens increase physical activity, it also helps develop basic life skills. For example, learning how to move on snow and ice is an important skill to learn in Canada and can help prevent falls and injuries during the winter.

Spending time outdoors, all year-round, is an excellent way for teens to develop physical literacy. Spending time in natural places can also support their mental health and overall well-being. Getting active outdoors with your teen is good for your whole family and can even contribute to better sleep for everyone. A good sleep results in more energy to spend being active!

Dressing for the weather is always important to make the experience enjoyable, no matter your age. For tips on dressing for the weather, see [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca):

- [Clothing Safety for Children](#)
- [Wear Proper Clothing to Prevent Cold Injury](#)

For more information on physical activity and physical literacy:

- [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Children and Youth \(5-17 years\)](#)
- [Tips for helping your teen - MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca)
- [Physical activity tips for youth \(12-17 years\) - Government of Canada](#)
- [Physical literacy - Sport for Life](#)
- [Developing Physical Literacy: A guide for parents of children ages 0 to 12 - Sport for Life](#)