Active Playgrounds
A Guide for Primary Schools
# Introduction

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Introduction

Since almost a fifth of the junior school day and a quarter of the infant school day is scheduled as ‘breaktime’, it is essential that this time is used productively and that children are given the opportunity to fully experience and enjoy the benefits of this unique time to be active.

In a recent UK study, 93 minutes in the infant school day (24% of the school day) and 83 minutes in the junior school day (21% of the school day) were taken up by breaktimes (Blatchford and Sumpner, 1998).

Teachers questioned in this latest survey were all positive about the value of breaktimes, stating that they provide:

• a break from classroom activities
• a time to socialise
• a chance to let off steam
• a chance to be physically active

Why it is important to promote an active playground

Improved health

The Health Education Authority (HEA) (1998) recommends that children of primary school age should participate in physical activity of moderate intensity for one hour a day and that this activity can be carried out continuously or intermittently.

At least twice a week, some activities should help enhance and maintain muscular strength and flexibility, and bone health.

The playground may be the only opportunity that some children have to be physically active in a day, so breaktimes can play a crucial role in helping children to meet the recommended activity levels. It is therefore important that schools deliberately set out a whole-school policy which incorporates a number of action steps to ensure that playtimes are active.

Children need to be introduced to new ideas and a variety of different activities and games at school breaktimes to provide them with the stimulus and equipment to be physically active. By helping pupils to learn these games and develop their own ideas for play at breaktimes, they will be developing the necessary skills to enable them to also be active at home in their own time.

Development of appropriate moral and social behaviour

In many cases, breaktimes provide the only opportunity for children to have the freedom to totally be themselves and to truly ‘play’ with minimal adult supervision. A lack of play areas. Since 1981 over 5,000 playing fields have been sold (source: National Playing Fields Association) and the general parental concern about increased traffic and fears of abduction has led to many children simply not being given this freedom outside of school.

Several researchers have highlighted the importance of unsupervised play, pointing out that this freedom is vital in allowing children to work out their own rules of behaviour (Peter Wilson, director of Young Minds, a charity dealing with mental health issues in young
people, Michele Eliot of Kidscape and Diana Lamplugh of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust). They are concerned that without this freedom, children could become adults who lack the confidence to make decisions and who will find it hard to form relationships with peers because they have never had the opportunity to experience this as children.

Reducing bullying

Results from the National Survey of Schools (Blatchford, 1998) show that there is a general view amongst staff that children’s behaviour has worsened over the past five years, with one in four schools feeling that behaviour at breaktimes has deteriorated, with an increase in aggression and more difficult behaviour. The study concludes that children today tend not to be as constructive in play as they used to be, are more likely to be idle in the playground, and have forgotten many of the traditional games once regularly seen. This lack of purpose can quite often be the root of many bullying problems:

“Children with little to do during their playtime may resort to seeking adventure through various forms of illicit play – for example, fighting, teasing and annoying other children.”

Evans, 1989

A head teacher from a South London School has highlighted the benefits of introducing a playground activity such as skipping to his school “It occurred to us that children were bored. Once we gave them something exciting to do, the problems disappeared.”

TES2 – 28 March 1997

Since 75% of bullying in schools has been found to occur on the playground (Sharp & Smith, 1991) and one of the suggested causes is boredom or lack of stimulus, providing children with a variety of active opportunities could be the key in alleviating such behavioural problems.

Following is an outline of some steps that could be taken to encourage more activity at breaktimes with practical examples and tips. The age of pupils and the availability of resources will influence the best approach for each school.
Practical steps to help promote an active playground
Organise a ‘Playground Games’ card box

This could include:

• cards on which different examples of playground games are described

• cards produced by pupils which describe games they have developed themselves

Ideas to facilitate the use of playground games cards include:

• organising a competition each term for the best game developed by a pupil

• promoting games which require no teacher direction and no special equipment

• designating a certain breaktime each week for any games and/or activities which do require teacher supervision

• posting cards on windows facing outwards to allow more than one group at a time to use a card

There are commercial packs available (for full details see page 23) which provide ideas of games and activities that can be used to promote activity at breaktimes:

• Happy Heart’s Playground Pack developed by the HEA Happy Heart Project with help from the National Children’s Play and Recreation Unit

• The TOP Play and BT TOP Sport cards produced by the Youth Sport Trust and Sport England (formerly the English Sports Council)

• The Health Promoting Playground produced by Health Promotion Wales, The Sports Council for Wales and Play Wales

• Active Fun with Playground Markings produced by The University of Hull in conjunction with Magical Marking

Following are two examples of playground games, each applicable for a different age group. These examples are from the Happy Heart pack and have been included with the kind permission of Hull University and Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.
**Dog and Bone**

*Equipment:* one small object eg: a bean bag or small ball

*Organisation:*
- suitable for pupils aged 5 years and above
- to be played with 2 players

*Method:*
- each player chooses a ‘home’ area away from his or her partner
- the object should be placed on the ground midway between the two ‘home’ areas
- each player stands one step back from the object towards the direction of their ‘home’ area
- the players turn and stand sideways
- one of the players or a friend shouts ‘GO’ and both players try to grab the object and run to their ‘home’ area
- the player who does not get the object must chase the other and try to tag him or her
- if the chased player is caught before reaching his or her ‘home’ area the game is started again
- players should take it in turns to say ‘go’ or ask a friend to say it

**Detectives**

*Organisation:*
- suitable for pupils aged 8 years and above
- can be played with 4 or more players
- adult supervision is advised

*Method:*
- stand in a circle with one player in the middle who is the detective
- the detective closes his or her eyes while a leader is chosen from the players in the circle
- the leader then starts doing an action (eg: jumping on the spot, swinging arms) and the rest of the players copy
- the leader changes the action quite often and the others in the circle do the same
- the detective opens his or her eyes and tries to guess who is the leader
- when the detective has guessed the leader, a new detective and leader are chosen
- ideas for actions: hopping, skipping, clapping, sit down-stand up, running on the spot, feet apart-feet together, turning round
Provide a games equipment box

A games equipment box will encourage pupils to be active at breaktimes, especially if accompanied by appropriate cards providing games ideas.

Equipment:

• equipment provided would depend on the age of the pupils and the area available but could include balls, skipping ropes and bean bags (no equipment should be provided that could be dangerous when used without supervision)

• alternative equipment (eg: foam frisbees, velcro catch pads/gloves, hit and stick bat, skittles, foam balls, flip toss, koosh balls) could be purchased for the children to try out. Contact Sutcliffe Sport, Lynn Lane, Shendstone, Lichfield, Staffs WS14 0EE Tel: 01543 483222 for more details

• some equipment may require supervision eg: parachute games. This could be provided by lunch time supervisors if some initial training was given. Parachute Games (1996) by Todd Strong and Dale LeFevre is a book providing 60 different activities which can be carried out using a parachute. (For details see page 23)

• separate boxes containing board games eg: chess, draughts, snakes & ladders, ludo, dominoes, playing cards etc. could be gathered over time for each class to use during wet playtimes. Ask parents for board games no longer used or check out car boot sales. ESPO (Eastern Shire Purchasing Organisation) also sells such games

Organisation:

• for safety reasons a certain area of the playground may need to be designated for the use of this equipment in the playground

• pupil monitors could be nominated who are responsible for taking out and collecting the box (providing the box is not too heavy)

• a rota system may need to be introduced to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to use the equipment at some point (eg: certain classes on certain days are given first priority)
Provide appropriate playground markings

A range of appropriate playground markings can help promote physical activity and play in primary schools. Results of a recent study carried out by Liverpool University showed that the physical activity levels of a group of 5-7 year olds increased by approximately 20% after playground markings had been added. Children’s play was also found to be generally more focused and purposeful (Stratton, 1996).

Following are examples of possible playground markings and associated games:

- Hopscotch and Search-a-round (pages 8-9) found in ‘The Health Promoting Playground’

- Circle Dodge Ball, Run the Gauntlet and Space Invaders (pages 10, 11 and 12) are taken from a booklet entitled ‘Active Fun with Playground Markings’. It has been produced by Hull University in conjunction with Magical Marking, Playground Marking Specialists and has been reproduced with their permission. Copies can be ordered from the Research Unit for PE, Sport & Health, University of Hull, Hull, HU6 7RX

Produced by Health Promotion Wales, The Sports Council for Wales and Play Wales and reproduced with their permission. For full details see page 23
Hopscotch

Technical specifications:
• squares 30cm x 30cm
• centre square 60cm x 60cm divided into four triangles
• number stencils 15cm x 15cm
• starting from centre square mark squares outwards on three sides
• paint edges in different colours (approx. 1 litre in total)
• for numbers use one can Rocal Easiline Spray
• all three hopscotch areas can be used at once
• individuals or teams could have a race against each other to see who/which team is first to complete the task or individuals can just focus on completing the task
• the first player(s) throws a small stone onto number one
• the player(s) moves along the grid placing one foot on single squares and both feet on the double squares until number 10 is reached, without stepping on the square holding the stone
• the player(s) turn round and return to the start in the same way, picking up the stone when s/he reaches it
• the stone is then thrown onto number 2 and the moves repeated
• play continues in the same way until the player(s) reach number 10 or misthrow the stone
• if the stone is misthrown and a player is just focusing on completing the task, another player should be given a turn
• when number 10 is reached the task is completed and it is the turn of the next player
Search-a-round

- Three small teams can play this at any one time, with each team having a designated hopscotch area.
- An additional pupil acts as ‘caller’.
- The caller should write a list of numbers from 1 to 10 and against each number write down a readily available item.
- Three baskets containing 10 different small items eg: bean bags, small balls, etc, could be placed a set distance away from each hopscotch area from which each item must be collected, with the caller noting these down in a particular order.
- Each team starts on the number 1 of their hopscotch area.
- The caller calls out the first item on the list which each team has to collect and place on number 1.
- Once the named item has been placed on the relevant number, a member of the team can ask the caller for the next item to be placed on number 2.
- This procedure is followed until each numbered square contains an item.
- The first team to collect all ten items is the winner.
Circle Dodge Ball

Players: 6+
Age range: 4-11 year olds

Playground Marking: any circular marking
eg: face, clock or marble ring

- The players are divided into two teams, ‘dodgers and attackers’.
- The dodgers stand inside the circle and the attackers stand on the outside edge of the circle at roughly equal distances from each other.
- The attackers are in possession of one sponge ball (more than one if you wish).
- The attackers try to score as many points as possible in a set time, by hitting the dodgers with the ball.
- The attackers stand still but the dodgers can move anywhere within the circle.
- The game begins when an attacker passes the ball to another attacker, who then tries to hit a dodger with a ball below the waist.
- A point is scored for every hit.

- Only one hit can be registered with one throw, ie: the ball rebounding off another dodger does not count.
- The ball usually rebounds out of the circle. If it does not, an attacker may go in and collect it. This is the only time an attacker is allowed in the circle.
- Play then continues when the attacker passes the ball to another attacker.
- The dodgers cannot leave the circle to avoid the ball.
- For every infringement of the rules, one point is deducted from the score of the offending team. In this way no player has to be eliminated from the game.
Run the Gauntlet

Players: 6+

Age range: 4-11 year olds

Playground marking: netball court

• The two end sections of the netball court are ‘safe’ areas and the central area becomes the ‘Gauntlet’.

• The game leader, who is known as the ‘Gladiator’, stands in the central area.

• All the other players stand in one of the safe areas.

• The players shout “Gladiator, may we run the gauntlet?” and the Gladiator replies, “not unless you’ve got the colour...”

• All players wearing clothing with the chosen colour may cross freely to the other side.

• The remaining players must then try to cross and the Gladiator should try to touch them.

• All players that are touched then join the middle and help the Gladiator.

• The game continues until one player remains. This last player then becomes the new Gladiator for the next game.

• Encourage the use of different conditions, for example, ‘has a birthday in June’, ‘has the letter S in the first name’, ‘has an older brother/sister’, etc.
**Space Invaders**

Players: 6+

Age range: 4-11 year olds

Playground marking: variety of shapes

- Players should move around the shapes in different ways, changing direction and altering pace.

- The game leader calls out a number and the players quickly form groups of the relevant number in the nearest shape to them.

- The players resume moving around the activity area in-between each instruction.

- The game leader can introduce different ways of moving around the shapes eg: skipping, walking and jogging.

- If your playground markings are different colours, colours can be used as an instruction, eg: “everyone in a red shape”.

- Once the players are familiar with quickly forming into groups of different numbers inside shapes, more instructions eg: “both hands in a shape” and “left feet in a shape” can be introduced.

- As players become more familiar with following various instructions, instructions can be combined eg: “5 hands in a yellow shape” and “8 feet in a green shape”.

- The game leader may want to shout “Space Invaders” at any given time and all the players must then quickly move from their shape to another shape.

**Safety and modification**

As well as considering safety factors such as whether the playground surface is slippery or not and safe numbers to play the games, the games may need some modification depending on the age range and ability of the pupils. For example, changing the pace of the game, extending or reducing the activity area, size of teams and length of time playing.
Encourage pupils to practise activities they have tried in lessons

Teachers could encourage pupils to spend time in their breaks practising some of the activities they have been introduced to in lessons. Some activities could be introduced within lessons which are specifically designed for pupils to be able to use them on the playground. For example, skipping, small ball skills, racket skills and team games. It is important, however, that any game or activity does not dominate the playground at the expense of other pupils. To prevent this from occurring:

- nominate a particular area for the playing of such games/activities
- establish certain times during which particular activities can or cannot be played (e.g., Thursdays are small ball games only; the former is preferable as it is unfortunate if pupils are prevented from participating in activity when they wish to do so)
Skipping activities

One example of an activity which could be introduced as part of any project on healthy living or health-related exercise is skipping. It is an ideal activity which may begin in a lesson and can be continued and/or extended on the playground. Skipping is also an activity which can develop leg strength, agility, balance and co-ordination and so aids skill development for many other areas of the PE National Curriculum.

The British Heart Foundation’s (BHF) Jump Rope For Heart programme offers schools free skipping resources valued at £100 and encourages pupils to take part in a fun and aerobic activity while raising funds for BHF and the school. For more details see page 23.

There are several safety considerations which must be taken into account when introducing pupils to skipping:

Safety considerations

- **Footwear** – pupils will need to wear supportive footwear. Pupils may need to be encouraged to wear trainers for playground skipping if their outdoor shoes are not considered to be safe.

- **Space** – pupils need to be made aware that they require adequate space all around them to be able to swing the rope without making contact with other ropes or skippers. A designated playground area is therefore advised and other non-skipping pupils should also be made aware of the dangers.

- **Clothing** – sensible, loose-fitting clothing which allows free movement of the legs and arms.

- **Weather conditions** – certain wet playground conditions or very hot lunchtimes may be considered unsafe.

- **Fluid intake** – this is particularly important in warm weather conditions to avoid dehydration and prevent the body from overheating. Children are not as efficient as adults in controlling body temperature.

- **Rope length** – for individual skipping, when pupils stand in the middle of the rope and pull the handles upwards, the rope handles should reach the armpits. They can be shortened by tying knots at each end just below the handles.

- **Inappropriate use of the ropes** – pupils need to be made fully aware of the possible dangers of not using the ropes appropriately and correctly. In some cases, adult supervision may be necessary.

Below are some examples of three areas which may be covered in a lesson and allow scope to be continued and/or extended on the playground:

Skipping skill practices

There are many different skipping skills, some that focus on footwork, armwork or both and which can be carried out alone, with a partner or in a group. Once a range of these basic skills (eg: double foot and alternate foot variations) have been mastered, there is tremendous scope for pupils to combine skills, adapt and create their own ideas. For more details on many of the various foot stunts and the possible combinations, refer to the British Heart Foundation Jump Rope For Heart Manual which is available by registering for the Jump Rope For Heart programme or to the books Skip to It (Susan Kalbfleisch) and Skip to Health (Susan Kalbfleisch, Jo Harris and Jill Elbourn). Details are included on page 23.

For any skill practices, pupils should aim to:

- develop good skipping technique

- keep the bounces low, knees slightly bent and heels in frequent contact with the ground (in order to minimise the impact)

- keep the elbows in at waist level, close to the sides of the body and perform small circular turning actions with the lower arms while keeping the wrists firm

- practise new skills without a rope first
Skipping games

The following games are examples adapted from the British Heart Foundation Jump Rope For Heart Programme (for full details see page 23) and can be introduced to pupils in a single lesson. Pupils can then be encouraged to continue playing these games or adapting them during playtimes. All the games involve a long rope (14ft), which will require two turners. Try to ensure that pupils are aware of the need to change the turners regularly.

Under the Moon

• Turners turn the rope towards the skipper.

• Skipper stands close to one of the turners.

• As the rope passes in front of the skipper and brushes the floor, rotating up and away from her or him, the skipper runs under the ‘moon’.

• The skipper then continues running around the turners in a figure of eight to run ‘under the moon’ again.

• Encourage skippers to enter and exit the rope on a diagonal.

• Skippers run through the rope and exit close to the other turner.

Over the Stars

• Turners turn the rope away from the skipper.

• As the rope clips the floor and starts moving towards the skipper, the skipper jumps ‘over the stars’.

Under the Moon and Over the Stars

• Skippers combine the above by running ‘under the moon’ and run to the side of the other turner to then ‘jump over the stars’.

• Skippers can continue with this figure of eight pattern, entering and exiting the rope from both sides.
Follow the Leader

• A leader can enter the rope, perform a move and exit.

• Four or five pupils can follow the chosen leader by taking it in turns to enter the rope and repeat the leader’s move.

Criss Cross

• The skippers are split into two groups of three or four pupils.

• Group A stands by one turner, group B stands by the other turner on the same side.

• The groups enter the ropes alternately in a criss-cross fashion.

• The first skipper in group A jumps the rope, exits on the diagonal and runs round to join group B.

• Immediately he or she exits the rope, the first skipper of group B enters the rope.

• He or she jumps the rope once, exits on the diagonal and runs to join group A.

• The skippers from each group take it in turns to jump the rope and run round in a figure of eight to join the other group.

• A simpler version would be to allow the skipper to jump the rope three or four times before they exit the rope. Decreasing the number of jumps in the rope therefore makes the game more difficult.

Creating skipping routines

Setting a class the task of devising and performing a routine in a future lesson can be a challenging and guaranteed way of ensuring that older children will have to work collaboratively at a task in their own time. The playground will give them an ideal opportunity to get together and practise their task.

When setting the task in the lesson there are several points to consider:

• encourage pupils to practise their moves/combinations without a rope first and on their own

• pupils can then practise the routine in time with a partner and then in small groups

• the complexity of the routine should be determined by the age and skipping ability of the pupils

• simple, well-executed routines are far better than more complicated ones with many mistakes
Introduce pupils to traditional playground games

Many pupils have simply forgotten the art of play and many of the once popular playground games and rhymes seem to have been totally lost or forgotten. Introducing pupils to playground games can provide the stimulus needed to make them popular once again and in time passed on to future generations. Many LEAs have devised their own playground ideas booklets and it may be useful to get in touch with your own to discover what they have to offer. For example, Essex County Council Learning Services has devised its own booklet of playground games which is available from Essex County Council Learning Services, Library & Publications, PO Box 47, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1LD. It has kindly given permission to print a few examples of games which it has gathered from various sources including dinner ladies, parents, teachers and pupils at various locations in the county.

Chasing games

Poison

- The chaser begins by holding out his/her hands. Arms can also be crossed if desired.
- Each player takes hold of a finger and stretches as far as possible away from the chaser, ready to run.
- The chaser says, ‘I went to a shop and bought a bottle of vinegar’ (or any other substance).
- The players remain holding onto the chaser’s fingers.
- If the chaser says, ‘I went to the shop and I bought a bottle of POISON’, players need to run away from the chaser, who will be trying to catch one of the players.
- Once a player has been caught, he or she becomes the chaser.

What’s the Time Wolfie?

- The chaser in this game is Wolfie, who walks around the playground while the other players follow as close as they dare.
- The players call out, ‘What’s the time Wolfie?’
- Without turning round, Wolfie can reply with any time he or she chooses.
- At any chosen time Wolfie can shout ‘Dinnertime!’ at which point the chase is on to try to catch one of the players.
- If one of the players is caught before he or she reaches the pre-selected ‘home’, which is a safe area, he or she becomes Wolfie.

Stuck in the Mud

- A player who is caught by being touched by the chaser in this game must stand still with arms outstretched.
- A player can only be released to join back in with the game once another player has run underneath one of the outstretched arms.
- The chaser’s role is therefore not simply to capture all the players, but also to guard the captured players so that it becomes more difficult for them to be released.
- The mechanism for releasing a player can be varied eg: crawling under the legs of the immobilised person.

Catching games

These games have the potential to be more aggressive than chasing games and so supervision may be necessary in some instances. Restricting the numbers of children playing in one game is not ideal, but may be necessary to avoid large numbers of children all running across the playground at the same time. For the same reason, it may be necessary to allocate a certain area of the playground for the playing of such games, so that they do not impede other children’s play or dominate the whole playground.
Prison Wall
- Two parallel lines are drawn across the middle of a designated area about a metre apart and this is known as the ‘Prison Wall’.
- One player (or two) stands between the lines and may not go beyond them.
- The other players have to run across the wall without being touched.
- If they are touched, they must join the catchers on the wall.

Farmer, Farmer, May We Cross Your Golden River?
- One pupil is named as the farmer and stands in the middle of a designated area on the playground while the others stand about 10 metres away.
- The players call out, ‘Farmer, farmer, may we cross your golden river?’
- The farmer replies, choosing a colour, ‘You may not cross my river unless you are wearing BLUE’.
- The players who are visibly wearing this colour (even if it is only part of a garment) can cross the river in safety.
- Those players who are not wearing the colour have to run across the gap without being caught by the farmer.
- If a player is caught, he or she can either sit out or help the farmer.
- The last person to be caught then becomes the farmer.

Seeking games

Hide and Seek
- One pupil is the seeker and needs to count to a pre-selected number such as 40 while the other players hide.
- The seeker must then find all the players.
- Once players have been found they can then join in helping the seeker to find the remaining players.

40 / 40
- Similar to Hide and Seek except that the seeker has a base to which the players must return from their hiding places without being seen by the seeker.
- The seeker’s role is to spot the players and touch the base, stating ‘40/40 I see ---’ before that person reaches the base.

The Hunted
- In this game all the players seek one person. Everyone hides their eyes and counts to a particular number while one person goes off to hide, aiming to find an especially difficult place.
- The person who is hiding is able to change hiding place throughout the duration of the game, although care must be taken not to be seen, as being seen means being caught.

Racing games

Odds and Evens
- One player, the game leader, stands on one side of the designated playing area and the other players stand in a line about 10 metres away.
- The game leader calls out either ‘Odd’ or ‘Even’ and a number.
- If description and number agree, for example ‘Odd seven’, the players run across to the game leader and back again.
- The last person back to the line is out.
- If description and number do not agree, for example ‘even seven’, players must stand still and if they do run forward, they are out.
May I?

• One player, the game leader, stands on one side of a designated playing area while the others line up and face him/her about 10 metres away.

• The object of the game is for the other players to be the first player to touch the game leader.

• The players can only move forwards one at a time according to the instructions received individually from the game leader eg: ‘Katie, take one giant step and three baby steps’.

• Players can only advance if they have requested permission from the game leader by asking ‘May I?’ If they forget or move before permission has been granted, they return to the starting line.

• Pupils quite often like to make up their own movements, a few examples may include; large strides, bunny hops, pigeon steps, double-footed jumps (feet together) etc.

Peep Behind the Curtain

• The game leader stands about 20 metres away from the other players with his/her back to them.

• The players then try to sneak up to the game leader and touch his/her back without being seen.

• The game leader can turn round as many times as he/she wants, to try to spot anyone moving as the players must freeze when this happens.

• If the game leader spots a player moving any part of his or her body, he or she is sent back to the start.

• The player who touches the game leader first takes his or her position in the next game.

Guessing games

Queenie

• One person is the game leader and is known as ‘Queenie’.

• Queenie is given a ball and stands with his/her back to the other players who stand in a straight line.

• Queenie throws the ball over his/her head and the other players scramble for it.

• The players then stand in a row with their hands behind their backs so that Queenie does not know who has the ball.

• The players then ask, ‘Queenie, Queenie, who’s got the ball?’

• Queenie turns round and guesses who has the ball.

• Queenie can then ask the named person to turn around in the hope that the ball is seen.

• All the players pretend they have the ball.

• The named person can be asked to stretch out or jump in the air.

• Queenie must then guess and if incorrect stays as Queenie until guessing correctly.

Pop Stars/Film Stars

• One person is the game leader and stands on one side of a designated area, while the other players stand facing the game leader about 20 metres away.

• The game leader calls out the initials of a film or pop star.

• As soon as players think they know who the initials stand for, they race to the front and back again and shout out the name.

• If a he player is correct with the guess, he or she becomes the game leader and will call out the initials in the next game.
**Activity challenges**

Pupils could be encouraged to practise particular games skills eg: bat and ball skills, dribbling and goal shooting in the available time at breaktimes. They could also be encouraged to keep a record of personal scores or challenges achieved. Challenges can not only provide a focus for pupils to work towards, but also encourage independence and confidence as pupils generally see improved scores.

Important factors to consider when setting challenges include:

- setting realistic challenges
- emphasising effort and commitment rather than talent and ability
- specifying a particular skill and making available the necessary equipment for a particular week. This would give pupils a chance to focus on a particular skill (eg: small bat and balls) and could be set as the challenge for the week eg: how many times in one minute can you bounce a small ball up in the air?
- designating a particular area of the playground where these challenges could be practised and/or specifying a particular year group for a certain day would ensure that these activities do not monopolise the playground

Following are a few examples of skipping challenges adapted from the Jump Rope For Heart Manual (see page 23 for more details). Some of the challenges involve completing tasks in a set period of time. The emphasis could, however, be placed on successfully completing tasks and concentrating on technique. Many of the skipping challenge ideas listed on the following page are transferable across to many other activities eg: asking pupils whether they can perform a skill while travelling.

**Skipping challenges**

i. **Skill-based challenges**

- Can you travel while you skip?
- Can you skip turning the rope backwards?
- How many two-footed jumps can you perform?
- Can you perform the cross-over (crossing your arms in front of the body) while skipping?

ii. **Low impact (rope-swinging activities)**

- Can you swing the rope to the left and then to the right?
- Can you circle the rope horizontally low to the ground and step over it as it approaches each leg?
- Can you swing the rope to the side then open it out to jump over it?
- Can you circle the rope above your head while performing any stepping actions?

iii. **Endurance challenges (as fitness and skill levels improve, the length of time given for these activities can be gradually increased)**

- How many consecutive skips (without tripping) can you perform forwards?
- Can you skip for one minute without a rest?
- How many consecutive skips can you perform with a partner?
- How many consecutive skips can you and some friends do in a long rope?
iv. Speed challenges

• How many skips can you do in 15 seconds skipping forwards?

• How many skips can you perform in 15 seconds skipping backwards?

• How many skips can you perform with a partner in 30 seconds?

• Skipping as fast as you can, how many jumps can you perform before a ‘miss’ occurs?

v. Creative challenges

• How many different ways can you keep the rope moving without jumping over it?

• Can you find three different ways of skipping with a partner using one rope?

• Can you devise a routine with your partner, showing changes in speed?

• In a group, can you devise a short routine where all the skips are synchronised?
Focus on active playtimes on specific days

Specific days could be allocated to deliberately focus on the need to be more active. Over time, this process will reinforce pupil interest and stimulate further participation.

These suggestions need to be formulated into action steps which a whole staff can agree to and deliberately put into operation.

Encouraging activity at breaks and lunchtimes may need some preliminary setting up but the effort will be well worth the rewards. Some supervision may be needed at lunchtimes and lunchtime supervisors are in an ideal position to do this. The latter may need some initial training to help familiarise them with the activity cards, for example; such training is available for those schools who introduce TOP Play or BT TOP Sport. See page 23 for more details.
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