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Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Benefits of Recess

by Amber Hodgson, M.A., CCC-SLP

Recess is the time in a school day that allows students to take a break from their academic work and take part in active, free play. Many elementary school students often describe recess as their "favorite time of day." Recess usually takes place outdoors in a specific area. If there is bad weather, recess could be in the classroom or the gymnasium. Recess provides physical activity which gives numerous benefits to students. Recess also helps to provide opportunities for social and emotional development.

Why Is Recess Important?

Recess is often the only time for students to participate in physical activity during a school day.



Recess also provides the opportunity for students to develop and improve social and emotional skills. Playing freely with peers allows students to develop skills for seeing things through another person's point of view.

Regular physical activity can provide the following benefits:



- Reduces the risk for obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases



- Assists in improved academic performance



- Helps children feel better about themselves
- Reduces the risk for depression and the effects of stress
- Helps children prepare to be productive, healthy members of society
- Improves overall quality of life

Recess also gives students a chance to gain:



- Cooperation, helping, and sharing skills
- Respect for rules
- Conflict-resolution skills



- Language skills for communicating with peers
- Turn-taking skills
- Problem-solving skills in real-life situations



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(cont.)

Finally, many students who have recess display an improvement in both their attention and their ability to stay on task during the school day. When students release energy during recess, they tend to be less fidgety and have better behavior while focusing on learning in their classrooms.



Making the Most of Recess

To gain the most benefits from recess, it is important for educators to ensure that recess is more than just unorganized, free time. To do this, schools should provide enough space and supplies. Facilities and materials that engage the students will likely increase their participation during recess. Different types of equipment that students can use include Frisbees®, jump ropes, badminton racquets and shuttlecocks, beanbags, kickballs, and Hula-Hoops®.

As well, regularly changing the recess activity choices lets the students have different play experiences and also maintains their interests. In addition, educators can offer organized choices for activities that the students *must* choose from. This guarantees that the students will engage in a physical activity and still allows them some freedom as they make their choices, which in turn sharpens their decision-making skills.

Overall, recess is a valuable part of the instructional school day as it offers numerous health benefits and learning experiences. Recess gives students a chance to enjoy physical activity which will hopefully make them physically active for a lifetime!

Related Handy Handouts®:

[650 – The Importance of Recess and Outdoor Play: Part 1](#)

[651 – The Importance of Recess and Outdoor Play: Part 2](#)

[379 – Whatever Happened to Unstructured Play?](#)

Resources:

Is it physical education or physical activity? *Shape America*.

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