

# Outdoor Environments Module

## Risky Play

### Risky Play Spectrum

1. Mark an 'X' on the spectrum below with your comfort level with risky play BEFORE the discussion.
2. AFTER the discussion on risky play, mark with an 'O' your comfort level.



Very Uncomfortable

Very Comfortable

### Risky Play Brainstorm

Risky play is thrilling, exciting play that:

- Encourages children to push themselves by running faster, climbing higher, and jumping higher.
- Allows children to explore their physical limits and comfort levels.

Risky play teaches life skills such as:

- Using construction tools like hammers and saws and kitchen utensils like knives.
- Navigating ice, snow, water, hills, ditches and other natural elements.

Risky play is also seen as necessary to enhance resilience – children are able to test themselves and learn to face adversity successfully.

*"A catch-22: Our desire to see that no harm comes to our kids is causing harm to our kids."*  
-Stephen Marche, Maclean's (2018)

*What are other examples of risky play?*



## Outdoor Spaces that Develop Physical Literacy

### Fixed equipment versus loose parts



## Engaged Supervision Role Play

Take 5 minutes to prepare for, and role play one of the scenarios below. Use an additional 5 minutes to debrief what you experienced, learned, and what you would do differently yourself.

**Scenario 1:** You are working with an assistant supervising the outdoor playground where the preschoolers under your combined supervision are playing. You are busy attending to a child, when a minor incident occurs between two other children on the opposite side of the playground, near your assistant. Unfortunately, your assistant is unaware of this as they are unengaged. What do you do?

**Scenario 2:** At your childcare centre, you are supported by two other staff, and the three of you are responsible for children 2 to 5 years old. Today is “Forest Friday” and you have taken the group to a park to explore the trails. One of your coworkers is very comfortable with risky play, and is encouraging activities like climbing trees and digging in the mud, but you do have some safety concerns for how this is all playing out. Your other co-worker is self-described as “not an outdoors person,” and is on the periphery, with a few children, all of whom are not very engaged. You are left to manage the majority of the children. How do you all work together to resolve this situation?

### Creating outdoor environments that develop physical literacy:

Brainstorm in the box below how to improve opportunities for developing physical literacy in your existing outdoor environment. Consider objects that promote curiosity, exploration, and motivate children to move.

*E.g. Bring in loose parts such as logs, rocks, sand, mounds of snow, E.g. add water ponds or streams; use frozen puddles, natural hills, or piles of snow*



## Designing an Outdoor Environment

What kinds of questions should we ask before we design an outdoor environment? As an example, these questions have been drawn from Ontario's curriculum document, *How Does Learning Happen?* (p. 38).

1. If we see all children as curious, competent, and capable of complex thinking, how will this be reflected in the environment?
2. How could greater complexity and challenge be integrated into the environment?
3. How do you know when children are fully engaged? Based on your observations of individual children, when are they most engaged?
4. Consider how the environment and experiences that you provide for children engage them. What draws them in?
5. What areas of the environment do not attract children? Why might this be? What changes might be needed?
6. What barriers exist that may limit some children's ability to engage in active exploration, play, and inquiry? What adaptations and changes might be made to ensure the inclusion and participation of every child?



## My Stimulating Outdoor Environment

Small group activity: Design a stimulating outdoor space.

With your group, discuss:

- I. Type of indoor space
- II. Ages of children
- III. Materials and equipment available
- IV. Consider reflective questions from “How Does Learning Happen?” on previous page





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# CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

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DATE:

Presented to:

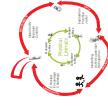
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## Physical Literacy for Early Childhood Educators - Outdoor Environments Module



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Early Years Physical Literacy



**Sport for Life**