

Plan for Outdoor Play

Think Ahead

Children enjoy outdoor activities in any weather!

Daily outdoor play is essential for children's development, encouraging physical activity, and enhancing motor skills. It sparks curiosity, supports exploration, and deepens their connection with nature. Time spent outside also promotes overall well-being, helping to prevent obesity and reduce the risk of nearsightedness.

- **Stay informed** about weather conditions and public service announcements that warn of potential health or safety risks for children, including temperatures, poor air quality, active precipitation, and severe storms. Use local news sources, a weather radio, the National Weather Service, or weather apps such as Alert Iowa, Smart911, EPA Sunwise UV, or AirNow for current alerts.
- **Be prepared** to adapt and have an indoor plan for active physical play when outdoor activities aren't possible. It's crucial for children to engage in vigorous physical play daily!
- **Check** with your program's policies on weather and outdoor play.



GET READY

Ensure children have a great outdoor experience by preparing well. Communicate with parents about the significance of outdoor play and the need for appropriate clothing. Adjust your schedule to go outdoors at cooler times of the day during the summer or before predicted rainfall. Plan for structured or adult-led physical activities and games that promote movement for children.

TRANSITION

To ease transition to the outdoor play area, provide easily accessible materials for children to use while waiting for others to get ready. Simple activities, such as music, puzzles, books, and magnetic boards, can keep children engaged as staff assist with dressing. Encourage older children to dress themselves or help dress younger children.

SUPERVISE

Staff should position themselves in the outdoor play area to ensure all children are visible and younger children are within reach. This setup allows for effective monitoring of children's health and safety. Watch for signs of children becoming too hot or too cold, as infants and toddlers cannot communicate their discomfort. Children aged four and under are particularly susceptible to extreme temperatures.



Use the QR code for more information on frequently used weather terms (i.e., heat advisory, extreme cold warning). <https://go.iastate.edu/SSU0AR>

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