

**Module: Communication and Emergent Literacy:
Early Intervention Issues**

**Session 5: Interventions to Facilitate Emergent
Literacy**

Handout D: Facilitating Motor Skills in Outdoor Settings

Murphy, J.L. (2005). *Facilitating motor skills in outdoor settings*. Chapel Hill, NC: Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-CH.

The outdoors creates many natural learning opportunities for children to move and exercise. Because young children benefit from routines, visits to natural areas should be frequent and should include some of the same activities each time. For example, visit the same spots on every trip. Although it is important to plan activities ahead of time, children can usually create their own movement activities. Identify appropriate outdoor play areas ahead of time to ensure a healthy balance between safety and challenge. Include a small group of children and an orientation and mobility specialist, if possible. Orientation and mobility specialists can help children use sensory information to move safely, efficiently, and independently (e.g., use visual scanning to count the number of fallen branches or use organized tactile exploration to locate a special place) and become more aware of their bodies and the spaces they occupy (Anthony et al., 2002). They can also teach children to use human guide technique, upper and lower body protective techniques, and trailing to increase children's mobility in natural settings.

What to bring

- drinking water
- lunch
- bags or containers for collected items (e.g., recycled jelly jar)
- appropriate clothing for season and weather
- rain gear
- sitting pad (folded newspaper in a plastic bag)

Motor activities

The following are just a few of the many opportunities for motor development available outdoors that indirectly support literacy development in children with visual impairments:

- climbing and crawling on fallen trees
- climbing different types of trees
- balancing on tree limbs
- climbing hills and rolling or running back down

- creating various types of shelters: treehouses, tents, etc.
- fishing with a net in a pond or lake
- exploring puddles: jumping, splashing with hands and feet, throwing small rocks
- crawling and hiding in a pile of leaves
- building snowmen and snow shelters
- throwing snowballs
- sledding down hills
- breaking the ice in puddles
- making mud pies
- picking berries, flowers, nuts, etc.
- collecting, exploring, and comparing leaves, rocks, pine cones, etc.
- catching beetles and frogs
- adopting a tree—making representations of it, watering it, and measuring it
- locating hard/soft, wet/dry, and bumpy/smooth items
- picking up trash in “our area”
- using a bag to “collect” wind

Resources

Children and Nature

An organization that helps create opportunities for children to connect with nature
<http://www.globalcommunity.org/childrennature/index.html>

Tiny Treks

A parent-child outdoor program for young children
<http://www.tinytreks.com/>

Reference

Anthony, T.L., Bleier, H., Fazzi, D.L., Kish, D., & Pogrund, R.L. (2002). Mobility focus: Developing early skills for orientation and mobility. In R.L. Pogrund & D.L. Fazzi (Eds.), *Early focus: Working with young children who are blind or visually impaired and their families* (2nd ed., pp. 326-355). New York: AFB Press.