

7 tips to promote children's learning and physical development through the Olympics

Research carried out by Sport England suggested that four in five young people aren't doing the recommended 60 minutes of daily exercise.

The Olympics is a great opportunity to inspire young children and share the importance of exercise so that it becomes second nature for them.

Here are some of the benefits:

- Physical activity is good for the brain – both its development and functioning
- Academic performance is often improved when physical activity increases
- Exercise helps with mental health and has an immediate positive effect on the brain.



The following tips give ideas to help make the Olympics fun, encourage children to try new sports and get active:

- Introduce the children to the Olympic games by sharing what it is, where it is and all the different countries taking part. You could even have an Olympic countdown chart! Watch some of the opening events (even if it is not live) or hold your own opening ceremony with homemade flags, torches and music
- Have a look at all the different sports, talk about which ones the children have already tried and identify any they haven't heard of
- Go out into the garden or find a local park and play some of the games together including football, badminton, basketball, tennis and volleyball. You could also adapt some of the sports for the children such as:
 - Archery: draw some targets with chalk on the wall and let your children have a go at aiming with water guns
 - Hurdles: make some small steps for children to run and jump under or over
 - Cycling: set up a bike course for children to enjoy using a balance bike, tricycle, bicycle or scooter.

- Consider holding your own mini Olympics event. For example, you could build an obstacle/assault course to help increase the amount of gross motor skills used. These can be adapted to focus on specific areas where children may need a little bit more support:
 - Set up an assault course that involves throwing balls or beanbags into a bucket to help hand-eye coordination, which is a really important skill needed for writing
 - Have ladders or a slide to help children build up the muscles in their legs which is really important for helping them to pedal a bike
 - Assault courses are great for supporting children's strength, balance and coordination as they have to remember the way around the course, which also helps them with memory and following instructions.
- Talk about the medals they receive – gold, silver and bronze and encourage them to count how many each country has
- See if your child takes an interest in any particular sport and if there are any local clubs to support them further
- Celebrate the final ceremony together sharing new facts you have all learnt.