

What to do with active children in winter weather

Active children present interesting challenges year-round, but especially so when the weather gets bad and they must stay indoors. This time of year, parents need to get creative to provide enough active play for young bodies that have a great need to move.

Parent educators Helen Neville and Diane Clark Johnson, authors of "Temperament Tools: Working with Your Child's Inborn Traits (Rev. Ed.)," say that active children are always on the go and in a hurry to get somewhere. This child goes places and does things — his energy pushes him up and out and sometimes into trouble. As one of our readers describes her son's early childhood, "He just never stopped moving. I didn't have to worry about providing active options

for him because he never slowed down. He did everything fast." Similarly, Adelaide, age 3, can disappear from her cul de sac and run into the wooded area across from her house in seconds while her mother turns her back to take grocery bags out of the car. The young, highly active child has more energy than skill or judgment, so safety is a significant concern.

Since children don't stop needing exercise during winter, we all need to think ahead about how they will stay occupied and get enough active play time. Here are a few suggestions.

- Indoor play areas are ideal for younger children. One mom we know left her formal dining room empty of furniture so her two young children, ages 2 and 4,

could use it as a play room. They have some large plastic toys there, a slide and a play car.

- Something to bounce on is helpful. You can buy an indoor mini-trampoline or just set out an old crib mattress for jumping. Rocking horses are also an option for bouncing.
- Soft mats can be used for somersaults or a little friendly wrestling.
- Let your child build an indoor fort. Let her drag out all the pillows, bedding, and couch cushions she likes. Be glad the kids are constructively engaged and tolerate the mess. Another option are the nylon, collapsible play huts. Make it special by only allowing them to use it when the weather is bad.

- Get kids outside even when the weather is bad. A few suggestions for playing outside in rain or snow:
 - Provide your child with rain gear and snow gear. If he is comfortable, he will play.
 - Watch for sun breaks. If it's been raining off and on, watch for a clear period and send the kids out — even if it's only for 15 minutes.
 - If you live near a school or park, take advantage of its covered play space. Children can play wall ball by themselves or four square if there



Parenting Tip



are enough players.

-If nothing else, a child can always run laps around your house.

-Outside play is always more fun with a friend. Arrange for a play-date and send them outside to play soccer in the rain, have a snowball fight, or just build a fort together.

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