



## Shoalhaven Managing Children Program (SCMP)

---

### 4. Active Play

Physical activity is essential for healthy development of mind and body. It's also fun!

There's a real danger today that children spend too much time sitting with a screen – TV, computer, tablet or smart phone – and miss out on the active play that helps develop not just their bodies but their minds as well.

All children like throwing and kicking a ball, running and chasing, bouncing and sliding, jumping and rolling. Boys also like rough and tumble tackling and wrestling.

Active play can be a great opportunity for quality time with parents, especially Dads. If a child plays with a Dad who is bigger stronger, wiser and kind, the Dad's strength protects his child but still makes it fun.

- The child can rough-house with Dad without risk of injury because Dad knows where to draw the line to keep it safe and calm down an over-excited child.
- Using his strength in a gentle way, Dad teaches the child how to have fun without hurting other people. These experiences teach the child where to draw the line too and exercise self-control in play.

Active play helps children gain a better sense of their bodies, other people and the world around. It helps them combine the hidden senses of touch, balance, and control of their bodies in movement to gain skill and coordination.

Rules for active play:

1. Make room for active play.  
Limit screen time to about an hour a day and make your child's bedroom a TV and computer free zone
2. Have safe places for active play.  
(e.g. If you buy a trampoline, look for one with a net around it so the children can't fall off and hurt themselves; if they are playing "jump on dad", do it on the floor or the grass, not a hard or sharp surface or where there are things that could get broken.)
3. Make rules for safe active play  
(e.g. Run outside on the grass, not inside the house; only one at a time on the trampoline)
4. Make time to play with your children. It only needs to be a few minutes at a time. Young children change activities quickly.  
Take a ball with you on picnics or trips to the park to play catching or chasing. Watch over them on the swings and slides to make sure they play safely.

5. If it's fun, it's ok. If it's not fun, it isn't.

While children are laughing and smiling, the play is safe. If someone is upset or crying, it's time to stop, calm down and comfort. This can be a time to teach children self-control by not being too rough, and how to make up by saying "sorry" after an accidental bump.

Here are some 'active play' activity ideas to have fun with your child, develop your child's skills, and provide loads of sensory input:

- Jump on a trampoline
- Jump from couch onto pillows, cushions
- Wall push ups – try to 'push the wall over' – hands flat on the wall and arms straight
- Wheelbarrow walking – hold your child at their ankles, knees or thighs depending on how much support they need
- Funny walks – bear walking – hands and feet on the floor, bottom up in the air, frog jumps, robot walking, crab walks – straight legs, walking from the hips, heavy marching
- Arm wrestles
- Kite flying
- Sack races
- Rough and tumble
- Gymnastics
- Totem tennis
- Frisbee
- Tug of war with ropes or stretchy bands
- Bumping down stairs on their bottom
- Push cars on floor positioned on hands and knees, crawling
- Throw balls or bean bags at targets, into a container
- Kick balls
- Push balls or cars up hills/ramps
- Throw rocks into a pond/river

You and your child can discover lots of others together.

To see more, go to:

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/rough\\_and\\_tumble\\_play.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/rough_and_tumble_play.html)