

OUTDOOR PLAY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

by:

ADRIAN CHRISTOPHER M. MIGUEL

Teacher I, Mariveles National High School - Poblacion

As society becomes increasingly dominated by screens, a trend has emerged, underscored in the report by the Association of Play Industries, "A Movement for Movement." This report revealed a relationship between screen time and the decline of outdoor play among children. Moreover, there has been a 50% rise in children's discretionary screen time (DST) in less than a decade (Child in the City, 2019). Furthermore, nearly one-fifth of the effects of screen time on cognitive skills is correlated to diminished outdoor play. This concludes that increasing outdoor playtime could potentially reduce the adverse impacts of screen time by almost 20% (News- Medical, 2023).

Additionally, the report reveals that socialization skills in 4-year-olds are positively correlated with the amount of time spent playing outside at 2 years and 8 months of age, highlighting the multifaceted impact of outdoor play on a child's holistic development.

Play, as a natural and compelling activity, is a cornerstone for the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children. It provides the optimal conditions for children to thrive and learn, fostering skills that are crucial for their overall development. Through play, children can experiment, solve problems, think creatively, and cooperate with others, gaining deeper insights into themselves and the world around them (Bento & Dias, 2017).

Cognitive development, a key facet of a child's growth, encompasses various abilities such as thinking, reasoning, memory, problem-solving, and language development. The environment in

which a child grows plays a pivotal role in shaping these cognitive skills. Unstructured outdoor play offers children opportunities to make decisions, collaborate, and develop essential cognitive abilities. This includes learning to focus on multiple aspects simultaneously and developing the capacity to think in both concrete and hypothetical ways (Kristina, 2022).

Beyond the conventional advantages of engaging in physical activity, outdoor play plays a crucial role in fostering intellectual development. It provides children with opportunities to investigate, uncover, and enhance their problem-solving abilities and creativity. As per the API Report's suggestion, encouraging outdoor play can be viewed as a strategic measure to mitigate the negative impacts of prolonged screen time on various skills.

In essence, outdoor play is not just a recreational activity; it is a fundamental building block for the cognitive architecture of a child's mind. As we navigate the digital age, preserving and promoting the opportunities for unstructured outdoor play becomes imperative for ensuring the well-rounded development of our future generations. It is a call to action to prioritize the playground over the screen, recognizing the profound impact outdoor play can have on unleashing the cognitive potential of our children.

References:

Child in the City. (2019, February 28). Study finds children's screen time has replaced outdoor play. Child in the City. <https://www.childinthecity.org/2019/02/28/study-finds-childrens-screen-time-has-replaced-outdoor-play/?gdpr=accept>

News-Medical. (2023, January 23). Outdoor play reduces some of the negative effects of screen time for young children. News-

Medical.net. <https://www.news->

[medical.net/news/20230123/Outdoor-play-reduces-some-of-the-negative-effects-of-](https://www.news-medical.net/news/20230123/Outdoor-play-reduces-some-of-the-negative-effects-of-screen-time-for-young-children.aspx)

[screen-time-for-young-children.aspx](https://www.news-medical.net/news/20230123/Outdoor-play-reduces-some-of-the-negative-effects-of-screen-time-for-young-children.aspx)

Bento, G., & Dias, G. (2017). The importance of outdoor play for young children's healthy development. *Porto Biomedical Journal*, 2(5), 157-160.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pbj.2017.03.003>

Kristina. (2022, March 30). Cognitive Development Through Play for Children | LTC.

LTC. <https://littletikescommercial.com/blog/play-and-cognitive-development/?lang=can#:~:text=Outdoor%20play%20and%20physical%20exercise,a%20role%20in%20cognitive%20development.>