

Sports and Recreation



Sports for Life

Involvement with sports can benefit you mentally as well as physically. Sports activity not only can strengthen muscles and improve your cardiovascular system, but can also reduce stress and improve your mood! So it's up to you to make time for sports in your busy life!

Each interest project contains activities which are organized into four different categories: **Skill Builders, Technology, Service Projects, and Career Exploration.** By doing these activities, you will gain insights about yourself—your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes. You will have a range of new experiences, and you will develop valuable skills and expertise in specific areas. *To earn an interest project award, you must complete at least seven activities as follows: two Skill Builders activities; one Technology activity; one service project activity; one Career Exploration activity; Two activities from any category that you choose.*

Skill Builders

NOTE: You must complete activity #1 as a prerequisite for the other Skill Builder activities.

1. Before you start any sport you should gently stretch and strengthen the muscles you will be using. Talk to your gym teacher, coach, athletic trainer, dance teacher, or other professional for guidance to find out what stretches and exercises are appropriate for your sport.
2. A good pair of running shoes, a nice day, and a route are all you need to start walking, jogging, or running. Your physical education teacher or coach, an athlete, or a family member can help you to learn the proper techniques. Start out covering an easy distance. As your stamina improves, increase the distance. Keep safety in mind when planning your course. Avoid areas near heavy traffic or across rough or uneven surfaces. At the end of your run you don't want to find yourself far from home as well as tired, out of breath, and thirsty, so end your course right where you started. Remember to stretch your muscles before you've begun and after you're finished. Begin your regimen with a three-day-a-week frequency. Rest on the other days to allow muscles to recuperate and adjust to their new workout. If you are running or jogging and you feel stress in your knees, shins, or back, slow down to a walk.

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3. Weight lifting and body conditioning can strengthen muscles and improve performance. You need loose, comfortable clothing, a pair of supportive sneakers, and a set of weights. Identify four or five muscle groups you want to tone and develop. Learn how to stretch and strengthen each muscle group, and how to do two exercises for each muscle. Increase your difficulty level through repetitions before increasing the weights. To ensure that you get the most from your workout, ask a knowledgeable friend to watch your form.
4. Investigate at least two types of martial arts: for example, tae kwon do, karate, yoga, judo, tai chi. Learn some basic moves or take a class in the sport you have chosen. Observe how mental attitude influences your physical performance. Demonstrate some of the exercises you've learned to the girls in your troop or group, or to others.

Technology

1. Sportswear now features reflective fabrics, so that an oncoming driver or athlete can more easily see you. Look at a variety of reflective sportswear. Evaluate the effectiveness of reflective wear. Are the reflective portions placed in easily visible areas? Improve upon or design your own reflective sportswear and equipment.
2. Many sports have protective gear. Learn about the materials and design used in the protective gear for your sport. How have they changed over the years? How might they change in the future?
3. As technology improves, more and more people who were once excluded from sports because of a disability or an injury can now play. Find out about two different adaptive/therapeutic devices, such as knee braces, orthotics, inhalers, and prosthetics. How do they compensate for a disability? Talk with a sports physician, a physical therapist, a sports association member, a supplier/manufacturer of the devices, or a salesperson for information.
4. While some sports have been played for many years, in some cases the quality of the equipment has improved. Runners used to wear plain tennis shoes, not the sophisticated footwear you see today. Learn about the equipment for the sport(s) you are most interested in. Learn how to maintain and repair your sports equipment.

Service Projects

1. Create a listing of local sports facilities accessible to people with disabilities, both as participants and spectators. Provide copies to your local chamber of commerce and to the facilities mentioned in the listing.
2. Volunteer to assist an athletic trainer or recreational therapist.
3. Become an assistant coach for a season on a local girls' track and field team.

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Career Exploration

1. Sports medicine involves a wide variety of professionals: for example, orthopedic surgeons, chiropractors, physical therapists, psychologists, athletic trainers, medical supply manufacturers, and medical technicians. Investigate one of these careers. Interview a professional in the field of sports medicine. If possible, observe her at work. Make a record of your experience or write an article for your school paper,
2. Contact your local sports facilities and schools to find athletic trainers whom you can observe at work. Ask them about their qualifications and special areas of interest, such as aerobics or weight training.
3. Find out what colleges offer sports programs in areas of interest to you. See if they offer scholarships for athletes in those sports. Compile a listing of these colleges for future reference.
4. Offer younger girls information about a sports career. For example, put together a photo essay or create a video.

And Beyond

Register for a 5K run or walk. A mini-marathon, or a biathlon or triathlon. Make sure you are ready, physically, to complete. Keep in shape with these related interest projects:

On the Playing Field
On the Court
Water Sports
Smooth Sailing
Paddle, Pole, and Roll
High Adventure
Outdoor Survival
Women's Health

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