Let’s play

Playground ideas for primary schools that promote physical activity during recess and lunchtime
The Let’s play resource has been adapted from materials originally developed by the Central Coast Health Promotion Unit of the Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service. The original materials were gathered from fourteen Central Coast Primary Schools for the Central Coast Primary School PDHPE Network. They have been redeveloped into this resource to help support schools develop fun active playgrounds as part of the Live Life Well @ School initiative.

SHPN (CHA) 080101
ISBN 978 1 74187 248 4

June 2009
## Contents

1. **Program ideas** ............................................................................................................................. 2
   Enhancing play skills ....................................................................................................................... 2

2. **Environmental ideas** .................................................................................................................... 4
   Bridges and walls ............................................................................................................................ 4
   Line markings ................................................................................................................................... 6
   A couple of DIY equipment ideas ................................................................................................. 12

3. **Organisational ideas** .................................................................................................................. 13
   Sports shed borrowing schemes ................................................................................................... 13
   Split playground time ..................................................................................................................... 13
   Shared community facilities ........................................................................................................... 13

4. **Playground games** ..................................................................................................................... 14
   Picking who is ‘it’ in a game ......................................................................................................... 14
   Running games ............................................................................................................................. 15
   Ball games .................................................................................................................................... 19
   Hand ball games ........................................................................................................................... 26
   Skipping games (rhymes) .............................................................................................................. 27
   Elastics .......................................................................................................................................... 28

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This resource features ideas from the following schools:

- Blue Haven Primary School
- Erina Heights Primary School
- Gorokan Primary School
- Holy Cross Primary School, Kincumber
- Kanwal Primary School
- Kariong Primary School
- Lakes Anglican Grammar
- Narara Primary School
- Niagara Park Primary School
- Tacoma Primary School
- Tuggerawong Primary School
- Umina Primary School
- Wyoming Primary School
- Wyong Creek Primary School.
Program ideas

Enhancing play skills

Playground Activities That Create Happiness (PATCH)

_Umina Public School_

The PATCH program provides a caring and supportive environment where children can develop and practise their social skills and playground awareness.

PATCH runs during lunchtime and all activities are designed to promote play. Some children attend on a voluntary basis, while others are encouraged to participate by their teacher. In addition, some children are required to attend PATCH as a part of their playground behaviour intervention.

The aims of the PATCH program are to:

- Provide a caring and supportive environment
- Build self-confidence and self-efficacy
- Build social awareness and social skills
- Provide children with opportunities to practise their social skills through play
- Assist in the generalisation of skills
- Assist children to play successfully and appropriately in the wider playground.

Activities range from general playground games and craft, to specific social skills training. The PATCH program provides kids with skills and appropriate games that can be played in the wider playground at lunchtime or recess.

Teaching children to play

_Blue Haven Primary School_

Blue Haven Primary School was originally built to accommodate 350 students. After a few years the school population grew to 650, therefore new buildings were constructed and the playing space decreased. To solve the problem, the students were walked to a nearby council field at lunchtime.

Often children did not know what to play or how to organise themselves into games. Therefore, a University student comes to the school for two lunch breaks each week. The University student shows the children how to organise themselves to play, and how to play specific games.

Peer support program

_Let’s Play Games – Holy Cross Primary School, Kincumber_

Senior students were trained as Sport's Leaders and were taught a variety of playground games. During peer support, the leaders taught the games to the students.

There were a number of benefits of this program. Not only did the students have fun on the day, but best of all, they continued to play the games on their own during their free time. Many of the older students who were previously bored, began helping the younger children with their skipping chants and games of hopscotch.

A physical skills club was also run at lunchtime with Year 6 Sport's Leaders supervising activities that were fun and helped develop the younger students fundamental movement skills.
Senior Sports Leaders organise lunchtime games at Holy Cross Primary School (top) and Wyoming Primary School (bottom).
SECTION 2

Environmental ideas

Bridges and walls

Wyong Creek Primary School

Target/ball wall – Narara Primary School

Wet weather physical activity area
– Wyong Creek Primary School

Ball wall – Umina Primary School

Bridge and tunnel – Niagara Park Primary School

Ball wall – Gorokan Primary School
A great wall for handball and paddle tennis – Gorokan Primary School

Playing ‘fumbles’ (a fun throwing and catching game for ball walls) – Tacoma Primary School

This ball wall is actually a creative use of a piece of concrete pre-fabricated for road building

Mowing a cricket pitch to define a playing space

There are many possible construction methods to create a solid ball wall

Ball wall – Tacoma Primary School
Line markings

Incorporating numeracy and literacy into play
- Erina Heights Primary School

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Line markings

Blue Haven Primary School – Coloured concrete

Movement Skills Circuit – Gorokan Primary School

Leap
Tip – If doing the markings yourself use gloss or satin enamel paint for better wear and tear.

Static balance

Left-right brain activity
Line markings

Standing jump

10 KNEE TUCKS

10 PIN JUMPS

10 STAR JUMPS
Left-right brain activity

Your school community might have some artistic parents who are willing to donate some time.

Kanwal Primary School – Wet Pour Rubber

Kanwal Primary School
A couple of unique DIY equipment ideas

Fixture for Totem Tennis pole – PVC pipe embedded in an ice-cream container of concrete.

The idea can also be used for hard surfaces.

Totem ball returners built from concrete and pvc pipe, ingenuity and parent assistance.
Organisational ideas

Sports shed borrowing scheme

Both Wyoming and Kariong Primary Schools have a sports equipment borrowing system that gives the students a large range of balls, bats, ropes, hoops, witches hats and cricket stumps. Children are rostered to hand out the equipment and register names on a borrowing sheet.

Split playground times

Many schools experience space shortages in the playground. This makes it difficult to give all children opportunities to participate in physical activity at recess and lunchtime. Schools often need to be creative to help alleviate this situation.

Kariong Primary School has created a split playground roster system. K-2 eat and play first. They go back into class and years 3–6 come out for their break.

This system effectively doubles the playing space for students.

Shared community facilities

Umina and Blue Haven Primary Schools have a relatively small amount of space for their children to play. To solve this problem in the short term, they take the primary children to a nearby council oval.

Narara Primary School

Narara Primary School ensures children have equal access to space and equipment in the playground. Each day different stage groups, and in some cases different genders, are rostered on to different areas of the playground with a variety of equipment. This means that one group of students can’t take the most favourable playing spaces in the school yard.

Rostering the students in stage groups ensures that there is a smaller range in the size of students playing in the same space.
Picking who is ‘it’ in a game

Teaching young children rhymes helps with phonemic awareness and counting. The choosing of ‘it’ is a game in its self.

All children put one foot into a circle and the leader points to each foot in time with the syllables.

**One, two, sky blue, all out except you.**

or

**Mickey Mouse built a house, how many nails did he use?** (pick a number, say 3)
**One, two, three, and you are not it** (repeat until one is left).

or

**Icka bicka soda cracker**
**Icka bicka boo;**
**Icka bicka soda cracker**
**Out goes Y-O-U.**
**Running games – SHEET 1**

**Shadow Tag**

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing Space:** Grassed area  
**Number of Players:** From 3 up

This is a tag game where children tag their opponent by stepping on their shadow.

**Corners**

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing Space:** Square of concrete with four corners or grassed area with four trees or landmarks.  
**Number of Players:** from 3 up

One person is ‘it’ and the rest of the people split into three teams and go into a space with four corners. Each team chooses a corner and the name of a famous person (or name they like) and the person who is ‘it’ is in the middle then shouts out one famous person’s name (or other name). This group of children run to the empty corner. Meanwhile the person who is ‘it’ tries to tip them. Whoever is tipped becomes ‘it’.

**Couple Tag**

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing space:** Grassed area  
**Number of Players:** From 3 up

Two children are chosen to be it. These two children chase as a couple, holding hands. If either of the ‘its’ tag another child, they become free and the player who is touched becomes one of the chasing couple.
Running games – SHEET 2

Buzz Off

**Equipment:** Four or more poles/trees/markers/corners of a square  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

One person is ‘it’ and the rest of the players hold on to a pole. The players on the poles run to a different pole and say BUZZ OFF and the person who is on the pole runs to a different pole and so it goes on. Meanwhile the person who is ‘it’ tries to tip someone who is running to a different pole. When you get tipped you are ‘it’.

Chuckie Chuckie

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area, corners of a square  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

Four people stand in each corner of the square and the fifth person is ‘it’ and stands in the middle of the square. He/she shouts ‘Chuckie, Chuckie’ and every one runs to a different corner.

The person who is ‘it’ also tries to get in a corner.  
The person without a corner is now ‘it’.  
The ‘it’ person now stands in the middle and shouts ‘Chuckie, Chuckie’.

Corner Corner (‘Ko na Ko na’ – Pakistani)

**Variation on Chuckie Chuckie**

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area, Corners of a square  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

Mark off four corners of a square in a play area. One player will stand in the middle and be the person that is ‘it’. The other 2–4 players will each stand in different corners. The object is for the corner players to communicate with the other players so they can switch positions without being tagged by the player in the middle. If a player is tagged by ‘it’, that player is the new middle player.
Running games – SHEET 3

Stuck in the Mud

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

In this version of Tag, one person is ‘it’. When they tag someone, they ‘freeze’ in place. They cannot move and must stand with their feet apart. The only way they can become unfrozen is if a person crawls under their legs. Play continues until all the players are frozen. Then the last person to be frozen is ‘it’ for the next game.

Water Under the Bridge

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

This game is played in the same way as ‘Stuck in the Mud’, however the children run in pairs and when they are caught they make a bridge by joining both hands together and holding them up. Two children are ‘it’ and they hold hands as they run. If they drop hands when they are tagging a pair of players then that pair is free. If the children who are being chased let go of their hands, then they have to make a bridge. They can be freed when another pair of children goes under their bridge.

20–20

**Equipment:** Can, bin, or designated home base.  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area, corners of a square (boundaries defined)  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

One child closes his/her eyes and counts to 40 while others hide (hence the name 20–20). This child stands at the ‘can’ while counting. After s/he catches a person, the catcher brings that person back to the ‘can’, where they have to wait. However, another child who is not caught can ‘free’ the children at the ‘can’ by touching them while saying ‘20–20, I free all’. The child who ‘frees all’ (when all but himself/herself are caught) will be the catcher for the next game.
Running games – SHEET 4

Bulldog

**Equipment:** Nil
**Playing Space:** Grassed area
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

One person is ‘it’. All others line up at one end of the yard. When they call ‘Bulldog’ everyone runs to the other side of the yard. Anyone caught helps the bulldog until everyone is caught. The first person to be caught is the next bulldog.

Frost and Thaw

**Equipment:** Nil
**Playing Space:** Grassed area
**Number of Players:** from 3 up (the more the better)

One child is Frost and the other is Thaw. Frost tries to tag as many of the other players as possible. Once tagged, the children freeze on the spot. Thaw can melt these players by tagging them. The children then join in the game again.
Ball games – SHEET 1

Spud

**Equipment:** Nil  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area, corners of a square  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

All players form a circle and count off (they must remember their number).  
One player is chosen to be ‘it’ and is given a playground ball.  
‘It’ throws the ball high up into the air and calls out another player’s number.  
Everybody runs away except for the player with that number.  
S/he must run to the ball. When s/he gets the ball, s/he calls, ‘Spud!’ very loudly.  
Everybody must freeze when they hear, ‘Spud!’  
Then, the player with the ball can take two big steps towards any player 
and tags the player with the ball.  
The ball can leave the players hand but must only touch the target’s body below the knees.  
If the target is tagged by the ball, s/he becomes ‘it.’  
If not, the player who called ‘Spud!’ is ‘it.’

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Donkey

**Equipment:** 1 tennis ball  
**Playing Space:** Grassed area with defined boundaries  
**Number of Players:** from 3 up (the more the better)

All the players stand around randomly on a grassed area.  
The starting thrower hurls the ball high into the air and calls out another players name.  
The named player has to catch the ball as everyone else runs.  
If the player catches the ball on the full, they are entitled to throw the ball up again 
and call another player’s name. The next person to either catch or gather up the ball calls ‘freeze’.  
All the other players have to stop where they are. The ball holder then calls the name of a player 
who is the new target eg Christopher. Christopher has 11 letters so this entitles the ball holder to 
take 11 steps towards Christopher (who is frozen on the spot) and then tag him with the ball.  
If the ball holder can reach Christopher and tag him, Christopher is given the letter ‘D’.  
The game continues until one player has all the letters of the word ‘donkey’.  
(The person who gets the letter is the next thrower).
**Tag Ball**

**Equipment:** 1 tennis ball  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

Two teams assemble in a confined area (boundaries are defined). Players pass the ball to other players on their team but no one holding the ball may move more than one step. The aim is for the player holding the ball to tag player on the opposing team. When the ball is dropped or someone on the opposing team is tagged, the opposing team is given the ball.

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**Home Ball**

**Equipment:** 1 tennis ball  
**Playing Space:** Hopscotch markings on a hard surface  
**Number of Players:** from 2 up

The first player rolls the ball into each square (from 1–8) in turn but must retrieve it before it rolls out. When a mistake is made the player moves to the end of the line. (i.e: if the ball doesn’t land in the square or it is not retrieved before it leaves the square).

If the player is able to complete the roll and retrieve the sequence 8 times, then they move up to the next level.

- Lob throw – one bounce – catch  
- Foot pass – retrieve – catch

The first player to complete the sequence is home.
Ball games – SHEET 3

Protect the bin/tree

Equipment: 1 tennis ball and a bin or bin substitute (witches hat)
Playing Space: Hard surface or grassed area, corners of a square
Number of Players: From 5 up

Equipment: 1 medium playball, 1 bin.

Children play in an open space and form a circle around the bin (or target). One player is designated as the protector of the bin and is allowed to touch the ball with the feet or body but not the hands.

Students may retrieve the ball from inside the circle area but have to go back to the perimeter of the circle to kick.

After each successful hit of the target, the guard is rotated (the person who hits the target guards the bin next).

Tower Ball (variation on ‘protect the bin’)

Equipment: One ball and a bin
Playing Space: Hard surface or grassed area
Number of Players: From 5 up

A ‘tower’ (bin, box or wicket) is placed in the centre of a circle formed by the players. One player is in the centre to defend the tower. The outside players pass the ball around to try to catch the guard on the wrong side of the tower. The outside player who hits the tower replaces the centre defender. The defender can use any part of the body to defend the tower.
Around the Wall

**Equipment:** 1 paddle bat per player, 1 tennis ball  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area, corners of a square  
**Number of Players:** From 6 up

The children can use two large concrete squares adjoining each other to play this game. Groups line up at each end of the court in single file behind the base line, facing each other. The first student drop-hits the ball to the first student behind the opposite line, who returns the ball to the next student in line at the other end. After hitting the ball, students move to their right around the outside of the court.

No one is eliminated in the game when mistakes are made. A variation to the game is to use 2 paddle bats and the child drops the bat after they have hit the ball.

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French Cricket

**Equipment:** 1 tennis ball or small soft ball  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface or grassed area  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

In free spacing, players throw the ball underarm to try to strike the batter below the knees. The player who strikes the batter’s legs below the knee or who catches the ball on the full after it has been hit becomes the next batter. Rules can be adjusted, for example the batter cannot move the position of their feet; or the batter can move after they strike the ball until the fielder picks the ball up.
End Ball

**Equipment**: Nil

**Playing Space**: Hard surface or grassed area, corners of a square

**Number of Players**: From 5 up

This game is played like netball but the court area has no internal line markings. There is a space at each end of the court for a team member to stand. Each team starts in their half of the court. On ‘go’ one team passes the ball amongst their team with the aim of getting the ball down to the person at their goal end. Players are not allowed to move when in possession of the ball. Possession changes when the ball is intercepted or when a team scores.

Four Corners

**Equipment**: Soccer ball

**Playing Space**: Hard surface or grassed area, corners of a square

**Number of Players**: 5

This is a game for 5 players. The game is played on a square of concrete and you need one soccer ball to play. Four of the players stand at the corners of the square. The outside players kick the ball to the other players along the outside lines of the grid. The ball cannot be kicked diagonally across the grid.

The outside players can move along the lines of the grid but cannot receive the ball unless they are on a corner. The player in the middle tries to intercept the ball with their foot. If they are successful, they take the position of the player that last kicked the ball.
Ball wall games – SHEET 1

Fumbles

**Equipment:** Tennis ball  
**Playing Space:** Ball wall beside a hard court area  
**Number of Players:** 4 up (the more the better)

The player who begins the games tosses the ball lightly against the wall and catches it three times in a row. On the fourth toss the ball is thrown hard against the wall. If the ball is caught on the full the thrower is out. If the catcher fumbles the ball, they have to run to the wall and touch it before another player can pick up the ball and throw it against the wall. If the fumbler doesn’t beat the ball to the wall he/she is out. If there is a line on the wall and the ball is thrown below the line then that is counted as a fumble. After play has started you can’t catch your own ball. The game continues until only one player is left. That player starts the next game.

Rebound Splitz

**Equipment:** 1 medium sized ball  
**Playing Space:** Hard surface next to a blank brick wall  
**Number of Players:** From 5 up

Each player takes turns throwing the ball against the wall and has to straddle the first bounce on the rebound. Starting 1 metre from the wall, each successful ‘throw and straddle’ allows the player to move one step back for their next turn. Players learn to vary the height and power of the throw to position the bounce point.

Burpee

**Equipment:** 1 tennis ball, 1 paddle bat  
**Playing Space:** Ball wall beside a hard court area  
**Number of Players:** from 4 up (you need two teams to play this game)

Each team has a pitcher and possibly one or more fielders. The playing field is composed of a wall and the area in front of it. A strike zone is drawn on a wall (it can be an existing target of some description). The pitcher pitches a tennis ball from a set distance depending on the age of the players. If the batter swings and misses it is a strike. If the ball hits the wall within the box, it is a strike. Three strikes are out; four balls is a walk. A fair or foul area is defined at the beginning of the game. A ball must travel a minimum distance in the air to be declared a fair ball. Increasing distances of carry in the air are used to decide whether a hit is a single, double, triple or home run. The team with the most runs at the end of the game wins.
Head Catch

**Equipment:** Soccer ball or soft volleyball  
**Playing Space:** Hard court surface beside a ball wall  
**Number of Players:** from 3 up (the more the better)

The players line up against a wall. A chosen player goes to the front of the line with a ball. He or she either shouts ‘Head’ or ‘Catch!’ while throwing the ball. Whatever the person calls, the first person has to do just the opposite; if the thrower calls ‘Head!’, the first person has to catch the ball, and if the thrower calls ‘Catch!’ the first person has to head the ball. If the first person either misses the ball or does the wrong thing, he/she is out and the play continues. But if the person does the right thing, he/she is still in, and the play still continues. Whoever is in last wins.

**Variation:** Everyone lines up against a wall with their hands behind their backs. The chosen thrower either throws the ball or fakes throwing it. If the thrower throws the ball, the catcher must catch it. If the catcher misses, he is out. If the thrower fakes the throw, the catcher is not allowed to jerk, move, or make any move that shows that he thought the ball was thrown. If he does, he is out. Whoever is in last wins.

Hand Ball (against a ball wall)

**Equipment:** 1 tennis ball  
**Playing Space:** Hard court area beside a ball wall  
**Number of Players:** from 3 up (The more the better)

This game is played with the same rules for handball except the ball can be hit off the ball wall from the front squares closest to the wall.
Hand ball games  – SHEET 1

King Ball (traditional handball)

**Equipment:** 1 Tennis Ball  
**Playing Space:** Hard court area with either line markings or concrete markings  
**Number of Players:** from 5 up

One player stands in each square. Player 4 (king) stands outside square 4 then serves the ball underarm to a player in any other square. The player in that square has to hit the ball to a player in another square. If that player doesn’t hit the ball he/she is out and goes to the end off the line. Everyone else moves up one place.

Players inside the squares move anti-clockwise around the squares when a player has moved to the end of the line. The new player always begins in square 1.

**General rules**

- On the line around the perimeter is in.
- On the line between the squares is replay.
- A player is out if they touch the ball before it bounces in their square.
- The ball has to be played with an open hand.

Hand Ball (simple)

**Equipment:** 1 large playball  
**Playing space:** Handball court  
**Number of players:** 4 or more

Four square is played on concrete which has a square painted on it. The square is sub-divided into 4 equal squares. A player stands in each square and a large ball is used. The ball is bounced like ping-pong without the bats. The player who serves, bounces the ball in their square and then bounces it into another player’s square. The object is to prevent the ball bouncing twice in your own square before you are able to return it.

**General rules**

- It is possible to hit the ball before it strikes the ground.
- The ball can’t be caught with the hands or held at any time, except when serving.
- It can go in any square. If a player misses a return, lets the ball bounce twice or hits the ball out of bounds, they are out and another player joins the game to take their place.
Miss Mary Mac

Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack
All dressed in black, black, black
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons
All down her back, back, back
She asked her mother, mother, mother
For fifty cents, cents, cents
To see the elephant, elephant, elephant
Jump the fence, fence fence
They jumped so high, high, high
They touched the sky, sky, sky
And didn’t come back, back, back
Till the fourth of July, July, July

Or, add to the end the following lines:
He jumped so high, high, high
He touched the sky, sky, sky
And he never came back, back, back
Till the fourth of July, July, July!

Queen Bee

A mix of jump rope, tag, and follow the leader Queen bee follow me. See if you can catch me (anything the Queen bee does, the worker bee must copy while trying to catch up with and tag the Queen bee). The Queen bee may leave and enter the rope as he/she wishes. With more than two people, you may have more than one Queen and one worker, but the worker always follows only one Queen).
Elastics

Elastics is a great weight bearing and aerobic game.

England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales

**Equipment:** One 2–3 metre length of elastic tied at the ends to make a circle

**Playing Space:** Any hard surface or grassed area

**Number of players:** At least 3

Two people stand inside the loop of elastic with their feet apart to make the rope into a taut rectangle.

The third person has to jump in and out of the skipping rope saying ‘England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, inside outside puppy dog tails.’

There is a set way to land on each word of the rhyme.

Imagine the 2 long sides of the rectangle as side A and side B.

The person jumping lands with one foot either side of side A on the first word of the rhyme. On the second word of the rhyme they land with one foot either side of side B and so on.

On ‘tails’, the person who is jumping in and out of the elastics has to land with one foot on side A and the other on side B. .... When all three people have had a go at jumping you move the elastics higher up your legs to make it more difficult and everyone gets another go.