



# Fitness Activities



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Ages: 8 to 9

## Key Idea

### General Fitness

## Description

Gather players into a group. Have a ball ready. “I want everybody to run in place at a slow pace. Now a bit faster. Now everyone stop.” Choose a player to demonstrate a bounce pass. “That was a good pass. Now I need all of you to pass the ball to each other and practice passing and catching.” Have kids pass two times each. Next, have them perform a leg stretch. “Those four activities we did are a part of basketball, but they also are ways to improve your fitness. Each activity helps to improve a different area of fitness. Running improves your cardiorespiratory fitness, passing helps your muscular strength and your muscular fitness, and stretching helps your *flexibility*. Throughout the season we’ll be learning more about fitness in our fitness circles.”

## Key Idea

### Safety

## Description

Gather players into a group. Choose one player to act out being injured (limping) and have a second player get a coach to report the injury. “What did you see happening?” Listen to their responses. “When you get injured, it will probably look like what was acted out. If it hurts, you should stop and let me know right away. Don’t pretend it doesn’t hurt. Most times injuries are not bad, but sometimes they can be serious. If you get hurt even a little, I need to come over and check your injury. If you see a player who looks hurt or in pain or if you saw her get injured, let me know. Telling me if you’re hurt helps me keep you safe during games and practices.”



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## Key Idea

### General Fitness

## Description

Gather players into a group. “Everyone think of a hill. Get a picture of a hill in your mind. Close your eyes and see it in your mind. You see it? Now pretend we’re all bicycling up that hill. We start at the bottom and slowly climb. We have to work harder and harder as we make it to the top. Then we gradually start pedaling back down the hill, which is not as hard as going up. That hill is the way your body will move every practice. We start slow with a warm-up. As you ride up the hill, this is how we move in the middle of practice. Toward the end of our practice, we gradually start to come back down the hill, slowing our bodies down. This is called the cool-down. A warm-up and cool-down are important parts of healthy fitness.”

## Key Idea

### Flexibility

## Description

Gather players into a circle sitting down with their legs stretched in front of them. “Think of stretching a rubber band as far as you can. What happens if you stretch the band too far?” Listen to their responses. “That’s right. It breaks. Muscles work in sort of the same way. Stretching your muscles too far can tear and injure them. But it’s important to stretch your muscles for them to be flexible. Everyone reach forward and try to touch your toes, but stretch only until you feel a slight pulling in your leg muscle—make sure it doesn’t hurt.” Tell them to hold the stretch for 10 counts without bouncing. “Stretching your muscles is important to keep them flexible, but you shouldn’t feel pain. The main basketball muscles to stretch are the front of your thighs (quadriceps), the back of your thighs (hamstrings), the back of your lower legs (calves), your shoulders (deltoids), and your arms (biceps, triceps).” Demonstrate stretching each muscle group.



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## Key Idea

### Healthy Habits

## Description

Gather players into a group. “Everyone run in place for 15 seconds. Ready? Go! . . . Now stop! Whenever we run and dribble during our practice, our body starts to get warm. When our bodies get really warm, what do you think happens to cool them off?” Wait for their responses. “Our bodies start to sweat. Sweat is the water that comes out of all the pores in your skin. Then the sweat evaporates into the air. Since your body sweats to cool off, what do you think we need to put back into our bodies?” Wait for someone to say “water.” “That’s right. Drinking enough water every day is an important healthy habit. You’ll need to drink more water if you’re running and playing a lot. I want to challenge all of you to drink one glass of water a day for every year of your age. How many is that? . . . Eight? Nine? I know you can drink that many glasses a day!”

## Key Idea

### Safety

## Description

Gather players into a group. “Pretend you’re a ‘player in a bubble.’ Walk around and work at not bumping into your teammates to make sure their bubbles don’t break.” Keep kids in a confined area. Time them for one minute. “Now we’ll do the same thing while jogging.” Time for 30 seconds. “It’s important not to run into other players—that is a foul, even if it’s an accident. It’s important to play as safely as you can. Thinking about the other players’ bubbles will help you stay in your own space during practices and games.”



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## Key Idea

**Cardiorespiratory fitness**

## Description

Gather the players into a circle. “Remember the hill we imagined we bicycled up a few practices ago? We start slow going up, then go faster toward the top and come slowly back down. Let’s start up that hill by running in place slowly, getting a little faster, faster, and now really fast. Now start to slow down. A little slower. Slower. And stop.” Run with players to model. “That was a short version of moving during our practice. We run faster to make our heart and lungs stronger; this is called cardiorespiratory fitness. We start slowly and then gradually slow down at the end of the practice to help our hearts pump blood and carry oxygen from our lungs to our muscles.”

## Key Idea

**Cardiorespiratory fitness**

## Description

Gather players into a circle and give one child a ball to hold. “What does the heart pump to the whole body?” Listen to responses until someone says “blood.” “What does the blood carry to the muscles?” Listen until someone says “oxygen.” “We’re going to pretend that the ball is oxygen and that you’re big blood vessels or tubes that carry the blood. Pass the ball to the person next to you.” Each player should touch the ball until the ball completes the circle. “The oxygen in your blood starts at your heart and travels to your lungs, legs, arms, and brain.” Try assigning a part of the body to each player. “Playing basketball helps your heart and lungs get better at getting oxygen to your muscles—this is called cardiorespiratory fitness.”



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## Key Idea

### Muscular Strength and Endurance

## Description

Gather players into a group in their own space. “We’re going to move different directions in our own space. I will point to a direction and the whole group should jog slowly in that direction. When I put my hand up, everyone stop.” Point to directions of: forward, one side, the other side, and backward. “When you jog in different directions, you use different muscles. It’s important to improve your muscular strength and endurance in all your muscles in your body. We can do that by running, passing and dribbling the ball, and spreading out on the court.”

## Key Idea

### Training and Conditioning

## Description

Gather players into a circle. “Everyone run in place for 10 seconds. . . . Now stop. Now run in place for 20 seconds. . . . Stop. Next we’ll run for 30 seconds. . . . Stop. When you run, you’re improving your body’s physical conditioning in your heart, lungs, and muscles. Every time you play basketball a little bit longer and let your body get a little more tired, your body improves its physical conditioning. When your body has better conditioning, you can keep up with opponents and play longer without getting too tired.”



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## Key Idea

### Muscular Endurance

## Description

Gather players into a group. “Stand with your arms straight out from your sides. Give enough space so you don’t bump your neighbor. Circle your arms like this.” Demonstrate. “Keep going until you get very tired, then stop.” Wait until the last player stops. “Do your arms feel tired? That is called muscle fatigue. Muscles can keep moving and tightening only for so long before tiring out. The longer you can play before your muscles tire out, the more muscular endurance you have. You can improve your muscular endurance by playing basketball.”

## Key Idea

### Healthy Habits

## Description

Gather players into a group. “What are healthy habits?” Listen to their responses. “Why do you need to practice healthy habits?” Listen to their responses and encourage discussion of how healthy bodies and minds are important to sports. “Practice healthy habits every day to take care of your bodies—the same way you practice basketball to improve your skills and get to be better players. Keep the list of healthy habits in your mind.” Have a list of examples written on a piece of paper clipped to a clipboard, including brushing your teeth; no smoking, alcohol, or drugs; eating healthy foods; and getting plenty of sleep. “Check each item off when you have done that habit during the day.” Have a pen to actually check an item off the list. “Every day start your list over again. Doing all the habits daily keeps you healthy.”



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## Key Idea

### Training and Conditioning

## Description

Split children into two or three groups. Give each group a ball. Instruct them to make a circle, then dribble and pass to others in their group. Continue for one minute, then bring everyone together. “Let’s say that activity finished our practice. Now you’re finished with practice for the week. What could you do tomorrow to stay active and practice skills that are similar to or the same type of thing we do in practice?” Listen to their responses. Discuss running, dribbling, and other ball-handling skills. “Your body loses its conditioning when you stop using it! It’s important to stay active outside of basketball practices. This helps keep you fit for basketball.”

## Key Idea

### Healthy Habits

## Description

Gather the players into a group. “What kinds of food do you think are the best to eat when you play basketball?” Listen to their responses. Encourage discussion to talk about the difference between healthy foods and unhealthy foods. Healthy choices include fruits, vegetables, grains or cereals, lean meats, plant proteins, and nut butters. Discourage soda, high-sugar foods, fatty meats, chips, and fried foods. “Your body needs all types of food to be healthy. Let’s think of three healthy snacks you could eat that would give you energy to practice.” Listen to responses and encourage everyone to contribute. Vote on whether the foods they name are the best choice or not. “Eating healthy snacks that give you extra energy to play basketball is a healthy habit you should be practicing every day.”