

Building Healthy Communities

Fitness



All Ages



Building Healthy Communities

Fitness Activities

Written by Tim Haft & Shana Brady from Punk Rope, Inc.

General guidelines

The activities on the following pages have been designed for incorporation into your regular BHC sessions, but these activities are also great for students to try with their classmates before school or during recess, and at home with their family members.

These activities are borrowed from the Punk Rope™ workout and program and are planned to be safe, fun, effective, quick to explain, inclusive, and intellectually, as well as, physically stimulating. They are suitable for most children in grades K–8, however when necessary, modifications have been indicated for each grade range (K–2, 3–5, 6–8).

1. **Participation should always be voluntary.** Children will usually let you know if they have any physical limitations or are uncomfortable with an activity, but if you are ever unsure, always err on the side of caution. Never force a child to play a game or engage in a particular activity if he or she is resistant.
2. While the activities are designed to dovetail with the general theme of each session, the key to using them successfully is to make them as enjoyable as possible. **The focus should be on fun.** If the children are laughing and smiling, then you're on the right track. More importantly, if you're laughing and smiling, then you're on the right track. Enthusiasm is contagious.
3. Many of the activities require that the class be divided into groups or teams. To ensure that the **students get to play with a variety of teammates**, have children count off to determine their groups or teams. For example, if you have a class of 20 students and want groups of 5, have the children count off 1–2–3–4. Put all the 1's, 2's, 3's, and 4's together. Voila, you have 4 groups of 5, then rotate.
4. Combined with the **recommended warm-up and stretch** (see descriptions), each physical activity session is designed to last about 15 minutes, but of course can continue longer if you desire. Once, however, the children show obvious signs of fatigue (e.g., heavy breathing, excessive sweating, lack of energy) it is best to stop the activity to allow for recovery.
5. Bear in mind that your students will probably range widely in terms of fitness level. **Try to make sure that all students have the opportunity to be successful**, particularly those who are the least fit. When possible, encourage the more fit/skilled students to serve as mentors and coaches for the less fit/skilled. Students should be reminded that nobody is judging them and that what is most important is whether they improve over time and not how they compare with others. Be careful not to progress too quickly if students are having difficulty mastering a skill or grasping a concept.

Safety precautions

Before initiating an activity, make sure that you have sufficient space so that the activity can be conducted safely. For example, rope jumping requires roughly 60 square feet of space per participant or a square that measures 8 feet by 8 feet. This is necessary to accommodate the length of rope as well as the fact that when children start jumping, they will typically migrate very quickly into their neighbor's space. If you do not have adequate space, consider having your students take turns.



In addition, make sure that the activity area is cleared of all obstacles such as notebooks, backpacks, desks, chairs, and the like. Be mindful of any objects or furniture on the perimeter of the activity area that could be hazardous.

For vigorous play, it is best for children to wear sneakers and comfortable clothes that are not too restrictive. Do not allow children to participate in fitness activities in bare feet.

WARMING UP

Prior to beginning a physical activity, have children engage in a 5-minute warm-up to prepare their bodies and minds for the more intense activity to follow.

Goals: By loosening up stiff joints, and by bringing blood, oxygen, and nutrients to the muscles, warming up can help lower the risk of injury and simultaneously improve athletic performance.

The Punk Rope warm-up consists of (see pictures)

- **“Shaking out” the arms and legs**—focus on one limb at a time. First, relax the right arm and let it go limp; then vigorously shake it for 10 seconds. Next do the same with the left arm, the right leg, and finally the left leg.
- **Peddling the feet**—keep toes on the ground while alternately raising right and left heel. This helps to loosen up the ankles, knees, and hips.
- **Neck rotations**—look over the right shoulder and then the left shoulder. The movement should be slow and controlled.
- **Shoulder circles**—raise the shoulders up to the ears and around to the heels; then reverse the motion and circle the shoulders toward the toes.
- **Standing spinal twist**—take a slightly more than hip-width stance and extend arms in front of body, bring palms together, and slowly twist to one side while pivoting on the trail foot; now twist and pivot to the opposite side.
- **Side bending**—bring right arm directly over the top of head while leaning to the left side, separating ribs from hip. Do not allow hips to rotate. Feel a mild stretch through ribs and hip on the right side of the body. Now try the same movement, but switch sides.
- **Spinal extension and flexion** (e.g., wood chops)—take a wide stance and interlace fingers. Lean back and imagine holding an axe. When a mild stretch is felt in the abdomen, swing the imaginary axe forward and simultaneously bend knees. Keep knees and toes facing forward.
- **Knee to opposite elbow**—standing up, bring knee to opposite elbow at about waist height.
- **Tin soldiers**—stand upright and alternate slowly kicking each leg to the opposite palm at about waist height. Feel free to kick lower or higher according to flexibility.
- **Hip circles**—imagine a Hula Hoop on the waist. Start by circling hips in one direction; then reverse directions.
- **Lateral reaches**—take a very wide stance and alternate reaching just beyond each foot.
- **Easy jogging**—slowly jog in place landing very softly.
- **Jogging with high knees**—alternate bringing each knee explosively to waist height.
- **Butt kicks**—jog in place and simultaneously flick heel toward your butt by contracting hamstring.
- **Shadow jumping**—mimic rope jumping by gently hopping up and down on both feet while simultaneously turning the wrists forward. Try to keep legs together during jumps.

Warm-up movements



Shaking it out



Pedaling the feet



Neck rotations



Shoulder circles



Spinal twist



Side bending



Spinal extension



Spinal flexion



Knee to opposite elbow



Tin soldier



Hip circles



Lateral reach



Easy jogging



High knees



Butt kicks



Shadow jumping



STRETCHING

After activity, have students stretch for 3–5 minutes. Stretching will help students improve their flexibility, bring their muscles back to resting length, and relax. Have students hold each stretch for 20–30 seconds.

Punk Rope Stretching Protocol

- **Calf Stretch**—lean into a wall with one leg forward (with knee bent) and the other leg back (relatively straight). Keep toes and knees pointing straight ahead and rear heel flat on the ground. Imagine that oxygen is going directly into the rear calf. As the calf relaxes slide the rear foot even further back.
- **Standing Quad Stretch**—stand next to a wall for support. Pick up the outside ankle, not the foot, and bring the ankle toward butt. To accentuate the stretch, push forward with the hip of the leg being stretched.
- **Hip Flexor Stretch**—begin in a lunge position. Keep torso vertical. Lead knee should stay behind toes. Let rear hip sink toward the ground. It’s okay to use hands to maintain balance. To deepen the stretch, raise arms overhead toward the ceiling and arch the back slightly.
- **Standing Hamstring Stretch**—stand near a wall. Extend right leg and place right heel on the floor and the toes of right foot on the wall. Hinge at the waist and lean forward, but keep chest lifted. Bend left leg as though getting ready to sit down. Place palms lightly on left leg. Repeat on the opposite side.
- **Standing Cat & Camel**—this stretch focuses on the spine. Take a hip-width stance and place palms on knees. Look up, arch back, and inhale deeply. Now round back and exhale. Repeat these two moves three more times at a slow tempo.

Stretching movements



Runner's calf stretch



Standing quad



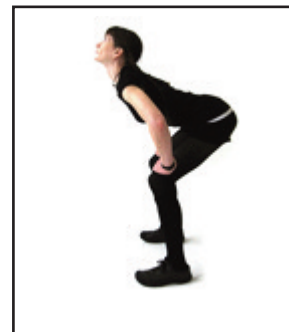
Hip flexor



Standing hamstring



Standing cat



Standing camel



Session 1: Kids United Will Never Be Divided

Learning Goals

- Students will learn how to work collectively to accomplish a single group fitness goal.
- Students will work on improving balance, coordination, and leg strength.

Space

- Safe space for at least 5 children in a circle with arms outstretched.

Caution

While this activity should be perfectly safe for most children, it is not recommended for anybody with ankle, knee, or hip discomfort, pain, or injury.

Warm Up

Time: 5 minutes

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- Have students join hands and form a big circle, facing each other. Alternatively, you can break the class up into groups of anywhere from 5 to 10 students.
- Tell students to slowly walk back until their arms are almost fully extended. They should never let go of their neighbor's hand.
- Their feet should be about hip width apart so that they are stable.
- Next, instruct them to sit back into an imaginary chair while keeping their head and chest up. Remind them not to round their back. Are they able to maintain their balance?
- Now, have them stand up again and repeat the movement 6 more times to a tempo of down for 4 and up for 4. Ask them whether the movement is becoming easier with each repetition. Are they in sync?
- Next, instruct students to sit back even further so that their butt is almost on the floor. From that position, have students sit on the floor with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Their feet will need to be more than hip-width apart for them to return to standing.
- Now, here's the big challenge. Tell students to dig their heels into the ground while holding their neighbor's hand tightly and pulling their own elbows in towards their ribs. Simultaneously they will need to use all the muscles in their legs to return to standing.
- Give the group at least 5 attempts to see if they can successfully go from sitting to standing without breaking the "community chain" (e.g., losing their balance or letting go of a hand).

Cool Down

Time: 3–5 Minutes

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines



Session 2: Couch Potato Tag

Goals

- Students will learn the connection between individual health and societal health.
- Students will work on improving cardiovascular endurance, agility, speed, and quickness.

Space

- Safe space for running: gym or outdoor space

Warm Up

Time: 5 minutes

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- You'll want to play this game at least 3 times to demonstrate how a healthier society is usually able to more effectively prevent "couch potato-itis." In other words, when the society is comprised of a higher percentage of health-conscious individuals, it becomes easier for the entire society to maintain its health.
- In the first round, have the children count off 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc. Every 6th child will be a "health-conscious citizen." All the other children start off as couch potatoes who are not so interested in health. In the second round, have the children count off 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. Every 5th child will be a "health-conscious citizen." And in the third round have the children count off 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. Every 4th child will be a "health-conscious citizen." If you have a small group, you will need to adjust the numbers accordingly.
- Determine the boundaries of the playing area so that students don't run into walls or other obstacles. Consider using cones to reinforce the boundaries.
- Inform the students of the rules:
 - Students may ONLY skip. No running is allowed.
 - If a couch potato is tagged, she must freeze until touched by another couch potato, at which point she is free to begin skipping again.
 - When none of the couch potatoes are free to eat fries and chips, the game is over and the health-conscious citizens have won.
- Begin with the citizens on one side of the space and the couch potatoes on the other, and yell "go" to begin the game.
- Consider setting a time limit of 2 minutes per round.

Cool Down

Time: 3–5 Minutes

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines



Session 3: **Healthy, Healthy, Junk Food** (in the spirit of Duck, Duck, Goose)

Goals

- Students will share and reinforce their knowledge of healthy and unhealthy foods.
- Students will work on improving agility, speed, reaction time, and level changes.

Space

- Safe space for at least 6 children in a circle with arms outstretched

Warm Up

Time: 5 minutes

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- The game is identical to “Duck, Duck, Goose,” but use the names of foods as the verbal cues instead of “duck, duck, and goose.”
- Split the class into groups of 5 or 6. Small groups are more active.
- Inform the students of the rules:
 - One person in each group will start as the Nutrition Chief while the other group members will form a circle with an arm’s length between each student.
 - The students in the circle should be in “tabletop” position with knees bent, hips elevated to shoulder height, and palms on the floor.
 - The Nutrition Chief begins to walk around the circle tapping the shoulders of his classmates. With each tap the Chief must say the name of a food.
 - If the food named is healthy (e.g., pineapple) the student who was tapped remains in tabletop position.
 - If the food named is unhealthy (e.g., potato chips), the chase begins. The student who was tapped gets up and runs around the circle after the Nutrition Chief.
 - If the student tags the Chief before the Chief makes it to the spot vacated by the student, technically the Chief would “play” another round, however we prefer to keep rotating Chiefs so that a slower student doesn’t get stuck in the same role.
- Try to play the game until all the students have at least one chance to be the Nutrition Chief.
- If you have time for another round (or if you have students with wrist issues), try an alternative position for the students in the circle. One option is to have them lie on their backs with their legs up. Can you think of others? Also, consider experimenting with different gaits for the chase portion of the game. For example, try skipping, race walking, or crawling instead of running.

Cool Down

Time: 3–5 Minutes

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines



Session 4: Learning the Ropes

Goals

- Students will learn about the benefits of rope jumping
- Students will be introduced to basic rope jumping technique.
- Students will coach each other.
- Students will work to improve coordination and cardiovascular endurance.

Materials

- Jump Ropes (1 per student)
- Optional: Colored tape to mark floor spaces
- Paper and pens to write best number of consecutive jumps

Space

Each student should have approximately an 8' x 8' space to jump in

Warm Up

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Time: 5 minutes

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- Divide class into pairs.
- Distribute ropes to students. The ropes are color-coded by length.

6-foot ropes	Jumpers up to 4'
7-foot ropes	Jumpers 4' 1" to 4' 7"
8 foot ropes	Jumpers 4' 8" to 5' 2"
9 foot ropes	Jumpers 5' 3" to 5' 9"
- To size the rope, have students step on the middle of the rope with one foot and pull the handles straight up toward the ceiling. The tops of the handles should be approximately level with shoulders. If the rope is too long, have students tie a knot below the handle to take up the slack. If the rope is too short, bring the student a longer rope.
- To set up spacing, tell students to fold their ropes in half and swing them gently in front, behind, and to the side. They should be half a rope's length from their neighbor. To ensure that students space themselves properly, you may want to use tape to make Xs on the floor about 8' apart.
- Have students place the rope on the ground in front of them. They will be tempted to pick it up and start jumping so you will need to be firm.
- Tell students to put both feet together and to start hopping gently. Their feet should barely leave the ground and they should make almost no noise when they land. Encourage them to turn their wrists as if they were holding the rope.

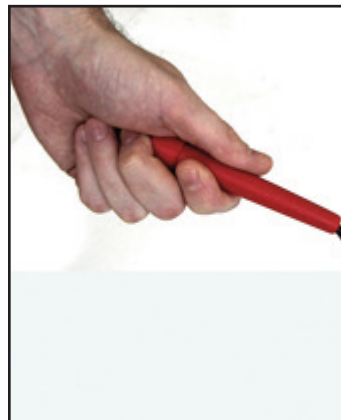
K–2: Have students stand behind their rope and jump over it and back. Remind them to keep their feet close together.

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- Tell students:
 - Pick up your rope with both handles in one hand. We're going to practice jumping while spinning the rope to one side. (see photos of windmill swing below)
 - Now grab one handle in each hand. Make sure your thumbs are on top of the handles. Hold the handles near the top. (see photo of grip below)
 - The rope should be behind your feet.
 - Keep your elbows close to your ribs, your knees slightly bent, and your hands below your hips. Look straight ahead, not down at your feet. (see photo of rope jumping posture below)
 - After everyone practices, only one person in each pair should be jumping at a time. Your partner will be your coach. He or she will count your jumps and give you feedback.
 - Now it's time to jump through the rope. Remember to turn the rope first and THEN jump. Don't jump too high. Listen to your feet. You should make very little noise. See how many jumps you can do in a row without missing. Write down your partner's best effort.
- Jumping guidelines:
 - K–2: partners should switch after 10 jumps
 - 3–5: partners should switch after 20 jumps
 - 6–8: partners should switch after 30 jumps
- Consider setting a time limit of 2 minutes per round.



Sizing your rope



Proper Grip



Windmill swing

Cool Down

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines

Time: 3–5 Minutes



Session 5: Personal Best Assessment (vertical jump)

Goals

- Students will learn how to perform their own quantitative fitness assessment.
- Students will work on improving leg power and strength.

Materials

- Colored Chalk
- Masking Tape
- Yardstick or measuring tape
- Step Stool or Step Ladder
- Paper and pencils/pens to write down highest jumps

Space

- 10 safe spaces for jumping alongside a wall. Each should be about 3 feet wide.

Warm Up

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Time: 5 minutes

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- Using masking tape, you may want to mark off about 10 safe jumping spaces along a wall. Each space should be about 3 feet wide.
- Have students choose a partner.
- Assign each pair a jumping space.
- Pass around pieces of colored chalk. Each student should take one piece of chalk, but make sure that partners do not take the same color.
- Inform students of the procedures:
 - One at a time, students will mark their standing reach. Have them take the piece of chalk and stand next to the wall with their feet flat. Students should reach as high as they can (while keeping their feet flat) and make a level mark on the wall with the chalk.
 - Next, one at a time, students will mark their standing jump. With chalk in hand, students should take one step away from the wall. Students will then jump as high as they can and make a chalk mark on the wall at the apex of their jump. Their partner should encourage and cheer for them and offer feedback.
 - Partners should take turns jumping and rest roughly 30 seconds between each jump.
- After each student has completed 5 jumps, collect the chalk.





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- The facilitator will measure each student's vertical leap by standing on a step stool and using a yardstick to determine the distance between each student's highest reach and their best jump. Students should be encouraged to write down this number.
- Encourage students to repeat this exercise at a later date at home or at a playground. Challenge them to jump even higher the next time. Explain that the stronger their legs the more likely they will be to jump higher. Jumping high is a useful skill for almost every sport, but is also useful in regular life. For example, you might need to jump high to get over a fence or to reach a piece of clothing that is caught on a branch.

Cool Down

Time: 3–5 Minutes

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines



Session 6: Circle Ball

Goals

- Students will learn a classic schoolyard game that can be played in a confined space
- Students will work on improving coordination, reaction time, and flexibility (especially the hamstrings and adductors)

Materials

- 1 small playground ball for each group of 6 to 8 students.

Space

- Space for 6–8 students to stand in a circle with their feet spread as wide as possible.

Warm Up

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Time: 5 minutes

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- Divide the class into groups of 6–8 students.
- Each group is given a small playground ball.
- Inform students of the rules:
 - Players stand in a circle with their feet spread as wide as possible.
 - The outer edge of each player’s foot should touch the outer edge of a neighbor’s foot.
 - The object of the game is to bat the ball with the hands through the legs of another player.
 - “Shots” must roll on the ground. Remind students not to hit the ball in the air as doing so could injure another player.
 - When a player “scores,” he or she retrieves the ball while the other players in the circle perform 3–5 repetitions of a particular exercise such as jumping jacks or push-ups.
 - If the ball rolls between the legs of 2 players it is NOT a goal. One of the 2 players should volunteer to retrieve it.
 - One player in each group is selected by his group to start the game.
- Each round should last approximately 2 minutes.
- Have students rotate from group to group so that they have the opportunity to play with everybody in the class.

Cool Down

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines

Time: 3–5 Minutes





Session 7: Animal Relay

Goals

- Students will practice locomotive skills by racing each other using various animal gaits.
- Students will improve arm, leg, and core strength as well as coordination.
- Students will learn the value of camaraderie and good sportsmanship.

Space

- Safe space for running: gym or outdoor space

Caution

While this activity should be perfectly safe for most children, the bear walk, alligator crawl, and crab walk are not recommended for students with wrist injuries.

Warm Up

Time: 5 minutes

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- Divide the class into teams of 3 to 4.
- Each team should line up single file along the width of the space (to maximize distance traveled). Make sure there is about 5' between each team to increase safety.
- Inform students of the rules and guidelines:
 - Have teams set the order of their lineup.
 - Tell students they will be racing through four different regions of the nation. In each region, they will pretend to be a different animal. They will start in California as a Black Bear, then gallop across Texas as a ranch horse, crawl through the Florida Everglades as an alligator, and finish up near our nation's capital, sliding into the Atlantic as a Maryland Blue Crab.
 - Bear walk—Bend forward at the hips, placing hands on the ground. Walk your hands forward until you resemble an inverted V with hips up to ceiling. Move right arm and right leg, then left arm and left leg, to propel your body forward. Keep your legs nearly straight.
 - Horse gallop—With your right foot in front and your left foot behind, move forward by alternately hopping with your right foot and then with your left. You can also try galloping with your left foot in front and your right foot behind.
 - Alligator crawl—Get in a pushup position on palms and toes with your back straight. Crawl forward with slightly bent arms. Do not bend your knees. Let the strength of your upper body bring your entire body forward.
 - Crab walk—Sit down with legs in front, knees bent, and feet flat on the floor. Raise your hips off the floor by extending your arms, supporting yourself with your feet and hands. Your fingers should point toward your heels. Travel facing forward, taking a step with each foot, then with each hand.



- The leadoff “animal” for each team will start with the bear walk. Upon completing her leg, the 2nd person will attempt the bear walk and so on. The horse gallop will be next, followed by the alligator crawl, and finally the crab walk.
- The relay continues until the facilitator yells stop, or until the music stops if a song is being used to time the relay.
- Yell “go” to start the relay.
- Remind students to move in a straight line and to be careful of their neighbors.
- Keep the relay to roughly 2 minutes in length.
- If you choose to play multiple rounds, consider changing the teams, the order of the animal gaits, the type of animal gaits, or all of the above.
- Consider setting a time limit of 2 minutes per round.

Cool Down

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines

Time: 3–5 Minutes



Session 8: Seeing, Squatting, and Doing Push-ups Eye to Eye

Goals

- Students will learn to work cooperatively to achieve a fitness goal
- Students will focus on each other's eyes, not each other's bodies.
- Students will work on improving balance, flexibility, coordination, and upper body strength

Materials

- 1 playground ball per pair of students

Space

- Space for 2 lines of 10 students

Warm Up

Time: 5 minutes

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- Divide the class in half and be prepared to participate if the numbers aren't even.
- Arrange the students in two lines facing each other. Designate one group as Team 1 and the other as Team 2.
- Inform students of the rules:
 - Partners place a playground ball between their foreheads.
 - Partners squat down slowly while continuing to look straight ahead.
 - At the low point of their descent partners get into a push-up position (supported by palms and toes with back straight).
 - Partners perform 1 push-up before returning to standing. The ball should remain between their foreheads the entire time.
 - After each round, the students in Team 1 maintain their position while the students in Team 2 rotate.
- Allow about 20 seconds per round.
- Continue the exercise through one complete rotation.

Cool Down

Time: 3–5 Minutes

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines



Session 9: Public Service Poetry Slam Relay

Goals

- Students will work cooperatively to create a poem with a positive message about making healthy choices
- Students will work to improve their anaerobic capacity and speed

Materials

- 1 index card per relay team
- 1 pen, pencil, or crayon per relay team

Space

- Safe space for running: gym or outdoor space

Warm Up

Refer to WARMING UP Section in General Guidelines

Time: 5 minutes

Work Out

Estimated Time: 7–10 minutes

- Divide the class into teams of 3 to 4. Make sure there is about 5' between each team for safety.
- Provide each team with 1 index card and 1 pen, pencil, or crayon
- Inform students of the rules and guidelines:
 - Have teams pick a group leader and set the order of their lineup behind the starting line.
 - Have each group leader put their team's index card and writing implement in the middle of the activity area.
 - Each teammate will run first to the end of the activity area, touch the ground, and then run back to the middle where they will work on their team's poem by writing no more than 3 words on the index card. For example they might write, "run, walk, crawl," or "nuts for nuts." They will then run back to the starting point and tag their teammate who is on deck.
 - The relay continues until the facilitator yells stop or until the music stops, if a song is being used to time the relay.
- Yell "go" to start the relay. Remind students to move in a straight line and to be careful of their neighbors.
- Keep the relay to roughly 2 minutes in length. At the end of the relay have each team share its poem with the entire class.
- If you choose to play multiple rounds, consider changing the teams, the writing implement, the number of words that students may write per leg, or all of the above.

Cool Down

Refer to STRETCHING Section in General Guidelines

Time: 3–5 Minutes

