

PHYSICAL LITERACY

10 Things YOU Need to Know...



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Physical Literacy
is the competence, confidence, and
motivation to be active for life.

Over the last 10 years, physical literacy has gained massive momentum as a concept across the education, sport and recreation sectors around the world.

Here are 10 facts that teachers, administrators, parents, instructors, students, researchers and practitioners need to know about physical literacy.

WHAT
YOU
NEED TO
KNOW

?

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#1

It has nothing to do with reading

Literacy throughout the ages has been linked to reading and writing, which is why it comes as no surprise that some people think that physical literacy means throwing a ball at a wall that has letters, to learn to spell a word.

The term literacy means that we have an understanding and ability to use a certain skill set to interact, communicate and thrive in society. Like reading skills let you communicate, live and interact with your world, so does physical literacy.

Similar to how learning the ABCs are the foundation of reading and writing, and learning to count 123 is the foundation of numeracy, fundamental movement skills are the foundations of physical literacy and active living.

Physical literacy competencies include fundamental movement skills such as walking, running, crawling, throwing, swimming, jumping, etc. as well as other skills such as strategy, communication, social, self-awareness and leadership.



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You cannot be physically illiterate

Physical literacy is not something that can be examined in isolation through the observation of a physical skill, measured through attitude scales, or self-rated confidence quizzes.

Rather, physical literacy is an overarching perspective on a person's physical competence, sense of confidence and self-motivation to choose to be active for life.

Although isolated physical competencies and personal attitudes can vary throughout the lifetime (e.g. your ability to throw a ball when you are 2 years old, 4 years old, 6 years old, 12 years old, 24 years old, 48 years old and 96 years old may vary), a person cannot be physically 'illiterate' because as soon as we are born, we are in a body.

We have a certain level of competence, confidence and motivation and those aspects will grow, flex, adapt, and morph over the life span.

You can have levels of abilities or ratings in each aspect, but you can never be physically illiterate.

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A background image showing a group of young children in a gymnasium, wearing white t-shirts and dark shorts, engaged in a physical activity. The image is slightly blurred, emphasizing movement. There are also some geometric shapes (a white circle, a blue rectangle, and a purple triangle) overlaid on the image.

#3

It's the core of physical education programs in schools across the world

Forget the days of dodgeball, fitness testing and waiting in lines for your turn to run through that basketball drill!

Departments of education across the world are updating their physical education curriculum to focus on physical literacy as a core element to student health and wellness.

Qualified teachers are helping students build fundamental movement skills in a positive and empowering space, so that they feel more confident and choose to be active throughout their lives.



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It has a lot to do with reading!

I know, sounds like I'm contradicting myself, right? Well the truth is I can't really say that physical literacy has nothing to do with reading - because research shows that students who are physically active achieve better reading, math and writing scores.

Movement exercise and physical activity has undeniably positive effects on the brain's ability to learn.

So, although physical literacy doesn't mean learning to read through physical activity, physical literacy does in fact have something to do with reading; in that it allows people to become better learners as their minds, bodies and spirits are in a more optimal state of learning when they are active and feel confident!



#5

It's not just for kids!

Many organizations, projects, research and initiatives focus on physical literacy for youth, so it may seem that this concept is for kids.

However, physical literacy isn't just for kids, it's for everybody. The focus for physical literacy practitioners is often on childhood, as this is a critical time for individuals to develop the fundamental movement skills, however everyone needs support on their physical literacy journey.

People of all ages and abilities must be given opportunities to develop and maintain the physical skills and personal attitudes towards physical activity needed to be active for life.



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It's a journey, not a destination

Physical literacy is not something that people 'achieve' and then maintain - it is a journey that each person experiences throughout their lifetime. There is no standard test to pass, or Olympic gold medal for physical literacy.

Rather, each person is on their own physical literacy journey - on a pathway of discovering their own abilities, socializing with others, connecting with their world, through movement and play experiences. These experiences help to build the mindsets, motivations and movement skills in each person, in their own unique way.

Each day, each person will face new scenarios that will support or challenge them to stay active, maintain a healthy body and mind, and feel confident and competent to participate in physical activity. The journey is on-going in finding ways to stay active for life, because of the physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual benefits physical activity brings to our lives as human beings.



#7

It has many dimensions

The simple definition of physical literacy captures the highlights and dimensions of lifelong healthy active living.

Other definitions of physical literacy offer more details on the aspects of competence, confidence and motivation, like the International Physical Literacy Association's definition: *Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence and physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.*

Or Mandigo et. al. who identify the various environments where one can discover and play with their skills as they explore their physical literacy journey. *Physical literacy is the ability to move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person.*



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It's not just about sports

Physical literacy is often linked or presented through the lens of the Long Term Athlete Development framework, however it is not only for athletes, Olympians or sports jocks.

From sledge hockey to hiking, tango to triathlons, kayaking to kick ball and everything in between, physical literacy encompasses all movement of the body for health, wellness and well-being.

If physical activity was a buffet, physical literacy would be the plate onto which you select your movement choices for life.

Regardless if you are a specialized athlete aiming for excellence in one sport, a weekend warrior who plays for fun, or a solo cyclist who rides for the joy of chasing sunrises, physical literacy teaches us the importance of including multi-disciplinary activities into our lives so that we can experience the benefits from the different ranges of movement, social contexts and personal connections that come from a variety of different activities.





#9

It's not the next “workout” craze or fad

Crossfit, TaeBo, Hip Hop Abs, Step Aerobics – physical literacy is not a specific workout, or fitness fad. It has nothing to do with being able to lift a certain amount of weight, or running at a certain speed.

It doesn't require you to take on training for a marathon or buy spandex unitards to join that local group exercise class.

Physical literacy is about people discovering the joy, social connections, stress release, mental resilience and other physical, mental, social and spiritual benefits that physical activity brings to your life.

And, any type of physical activity can be a part of your physical literacy journey.



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A background image showing a group of people, including a man and a woman, dancing in a park. The man is wearing a light blue shirt and brown pants, and the woman is wearing a white shirt and a dark skirt. They are both smiling and have their arms raised. The background is a lush green park with trees and flowers.

#10

**It helps you live a healthier,
happier and more fulfilling life!**

Loneliness is a bigger health risk than obesity or smoking 15 cigarettes a day. As our world continues to integrate with technology, more people are experiencing loneliness from a loss of human connection.

Our body is our vehicle for interacting with our world. Physical literacy fosters social connections between one another as we choose to join teams, explore nature, learn a new skill, challenge ourselves in training or simply play, together.

These connections build a sense of belonging, which is critical to our health and happiness as human beings.

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References & Resources

AFL: <https://activeforlife.com/physical-literacy/>

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PHE Canada: <https://phecanada.ca/activate/dance-education>

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SFL: <http://physicalliteracy.ca/physical-literacy/>

SHAPE America: <https://www.shapeamerica.org/events/physicalliteracy.aspx>

WHO Europe

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YMHC: <https://ymhc.ngo/ymh-stats/>

About PL3Y Education

PL3Y Education was founded in 2013, to provide school-based physical literacy programs for students, training workshops and classroom resources for teachers.

With a vision to inspire children around the world to be happier, healthier humans, Founder Melanie Levenberg has developed a powerful pedagogy on which each PL3Y Education program and workshop is based.

Using the "3 Rules of PLAY" *Be Positive. Be Fun. Be Yourself.*, PL3Y Education's unique philosophy allows every student the opportunity to experience a quality physical education program that also inspires mindfulness and positive mental health.

LEARN MORE

For information on PL3Y Education Programs, or to become a Region Operator, visit our website:

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