



California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism

With recent concerns about youth detachment from outdoor activities, lack of physical exercise and increased health risks, the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism has adopted The California Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights. It is a fundamental list of experiences that every child in California would benefit from experiencing, before entering high school. As, studies document that children who do these things are healthier, do better in school, have better social skills and self-image, and lead more fulfilled lives.

The California Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights provides that every child should have the opportunity to:

- Discover California’s Past
- Splash in the water
- Play in a safe place
- Camp under the stars
- Explore nature
- Learn to swim
- Play on a team
- Follow a trail
- Catch a fish
- Celebrate their heritage.

MISSION

To encourage California’s children to participate in outdoor recreational activities and discover their heritage.

OBJECTIVE

That every child in California, by the completion of their 14th year, have the opportunity to experience each of the activities listed within the California Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights.

RESEARCH

A survey of published research provides the following substantiation of the benefits to children of the activities listed within the California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights:

DISCOVER CALIFORNIA'S PAST

Why is it good to know history?

- History provides identity to people and groups. (Sterns, 2004)
- Knowledge of history fosters good citizenship. (Sterns, 2004)

SPLASH IN THE WATER LEARN TO SWIM

Why is it good to play in the surf, lakes, streams, ponds and swimming pools?

- Swimming improves your all-round fitness. (Swimming, 2004)
- Swimming boosts your strength, stamina and suppleness. (Swimming, 2004)
- Swimming has all the cardiovascular benefits of running. (Swimming, 2004)
- Swimming works all the major muscle groups. (Swimming, 2004)
- Swimming is a demanding aerobic exercise that helps to keep your heart and lungs healthy. (Swimming, 2004)

Why is it good to go boating?

- Children between the ages of 6 and 19 who boat regularly receive many benefits including the following:

- Children are more likely to be actively involved in other recreational activities, including household projects and volunteer work. (Impulse, 2003)
- Children learn to be more outgoing and less shy or introverted. (Impulse, 2003)
- Children who boat lead more active and healthy lifestyles. (Impulse, 2003)
- Children develop their leadership qualities. (Impulse, 2003)
- Children develop a range of skills and positive attitudes. (Impulse, 2003)
- Children have more quality time with their parents year-round. (Impulse, 2003)

PLAY IN A SAFE PLACE

Why is it good to play?

- Habitual physical activity leads to a reduced resting heart rate and lower blood pressure levels. (Paffenbarger, et. al., 1991)
- Exercise holds the promise of decreasing the incidence or delaying the development of noninsulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. (Helmrich and Paffenbarger, 1992)
- Sustained physical activity leads to a decrease in fat body mass and increase in lean body mass, with resultant increased basal metabolism and a lower risk of obesity. (Bray, 1989; Siscovick, et. al., 1985)
- In childhood and adolescence, habitual physical activity, as opposed to a sedentary life style, leads to increased bone mass and bone strength. (Paffenbarger, et. al., 1991)
- Habitual physical activity increases muscle strength and improved structure and function of connective tissues. (Paffenbarger, et. al., 1991)
- Physical activity may prevent the complex condition leading to chronic back pain syndrome and the extensive debility associated with it. (Tipton, et. al., 1986)
- The role of physical activity in preventing various types of arthritis is uncertain; however, increased muscle strength, bone density, and connective tissue offer promise of a preventive effect. (Lane, et. al., 1986)

- Regular bouts of moderate physical activity reduce the symptoms of mild or moderate depression and anxiety neuroses by improving self-image, social skills, mental health, perhaps cognitive functions, and total well being. (Taylor, et. al., 1985)
- Regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of many adult health problems, including diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. (USDHHS, 1996)
- Participation in physical activity and recreation can provide positive benefits related to psychological health, physical health, familial interactions, peer influence, academic performance, community development and other lifestyle behaviors. (“Impact”, 2004)
- Children function better than usual after activities in green settings; and, the “greener” a child’s play area, the less severe his or her attention deficit symptoms. (Taylor, 2001)
- For girls, green spaces immediately outside the home can help them lead more effective, self-disciplined lives by increasing their concentration, inhibition of initial impulses, and increasing their ability to delay gratification. (Taylor et al., 2001)

CAMP UNDER THE STARS

Why is it good to go camping?

- Camping has a positive influence on self-image in relatively short periods of time across all age groups, but particularly among younger campers. (Marsh, 1999)
- Children at camp show significant gains in their locus of control and general self-efficacy and this is expected to have some type of carry-over into life beyond the camp setting. (Sekine, 1994)
- Many activities of camp lead to youth feeling better about themselves if they are offered as opportunities for young people to both assert their independence and learn cooperative teamwork. (Chenery, 1991)
- In resident one-week and outdoor school programs across the country, youth with and without disabilities made significant growth in their outdoor skills and personal development. (Brannan et al., 1997)
- Self-reliance, or independence, was a predominant outcome of youth camping. (Brannan et al., 1997)

- Youth with disabilities gained independence, while youth without disabilities improved their social interaction and gained a greater appreciation of people who were different than themselves. (Brannan et al., 1997)
- Campers felt healthier when they were at camp because they ate better, exercised more, were outside in the fresh air, slept better, and enjoyed the pace of life. (Dworken, 1999)
- Campers with disabilities benefit by enhanced self-concept and esteem, personal growth, increased leisure skills, increased social adjustment, enhanced body image and positive behavior changes. (Robb et al., 1987)

EXPLORE NATURE

Why is it good to explore nature?

- Outdoor adventure programs can obtain notable outcomes and have particularly strong, lasting effects. These positive affects occur in the dimensions of academic performance, leadership, self-concept, personality development, interpersonal skills and adventuresomeness. (Hattie et al., 1997)
- Just viewing nature reduces physiological stress response, increases levels of interest and attention, and decreases feelings of fear and anger or aggression. (Kaplan et al., 1989)
- Children who have gone through wilderness survival training showed decreased chances of dropping out of school. (Moses, 1968)
- Children with experience in the wilderness had increased GPAs. (Moses et al., 1970)
- Children who have gone through wilderness survival training have more realistic perceptions of self. (Yenser, 1972)
- Children who have gone through wilderness survival training show reduced signs of racial conflict. (Potts, 1974)
- Children who have gone through wilderness survival training had reduced occurrences of deviant behavior. (Gaston et al., 1978)
- Children who have gone through wilderness survival training show improved self-concept. (Clifford, 1967)

- Authors have identified early-life outdoor experience—whether alone or with others—as the most important factor found in their research in developing environmental concern. (Sward, 1999)

PLAY ON A TEAM

Why is it good to play on a team?

- Organization can also allow for a fair process in choosing teams, matching competitors, and enforcing rules specifically targeted at younger athletes can reduce injuries. (“Organized”, 2001)
- Regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of many adult health problems, including diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. (“Organized”, 2001)
- Organized Sports . . . can be a viable means to increase activity levels in children and, hopefully, lead to the adoption of active lifestyles as adults. (“Organized”, 2001)
- Reasonable goals for children and preadolescents participating in organized sports include acquisition of basic motor skills, increasing physical activity levels, learning social skills necessary to work as a team, learning good sportsmanship, and having fun. (“Organized”, 2001)
- Organized sports for children and preadolescents provide an opportunity for increased physical activity and an opportunity to learn sports and team skills in an environment where risks of participation can potentially be controlled. (“Organized”, 2001)
- Girls who play sports have higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression than girls who do not play sports. (Edwards, 1995)
- Girls who play sports have a more positive body image and experience higher states of psychological well being than girls and women who do not play sports. (Edwards, 1995)
- Girls who play sports learn about teamwork, goal-setting, the experience of success, the pursuit of excellence in performance, how to deal with failures, and other positive behaviors -- all of which are important skills for the workplace and life. (Edwards, 1995)

- Students who play at least one sport are 40% less likely to be regular smokers and 50% less likely to be heavy smokers. Regular and heavy smoking decreases substantially with an increase in the number of sports played. (Escobedo et al., 1993)

FOLLOW A TRAIL

Why is it good to walk, bike and hike?

- 13% of children are overweight. (American, 1994)
- There is no better way to lose weight than walking. (American, 1994)
- The results of walking will be more permanent and pleasurable than any diet or weight loss scheme. (American, 1994)
- Walking lowers high blood pressure. (Bove, 1998)
- Walking decreases anxiety. (Bricklin et al., 1992)
- 90% of adults who describe themselves as active started their activity between the ages of 5 and 18. (Harris, 2003)
- 89% of children enjoy the feeling of accomplishment after participating in an outdoor activity. (Harris, 2003)
- 83% of children said that getting into a natural setting allows them to escape the pressures of everyday life. (Harris, 2003)
- 67% of children said that participating in outdoor activities strengthens their family's relationship with one another. (Harris, 2003)
- 73% of children said that participating in outdoor activities allows them to connect with themselves. 76% of children enjoy activities that are physically challenging. (Harris, 2003)

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