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Let's Go Play Outside! - 5 Unique Playgrounds around Singapore to Train Your Child's Fundamental Movement Skills

Brought to you in collaboration with the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC), to enable parents to nurture active and happy preschoolers. What's your child's favourite playground in Singapore? Over the recent years, we've seen many new and extraordinary playgrounds spring up across the island, and we love seeing parents bringing their children out for a day of climbing, swinging, crawling, and more at these locations!

But, did you know that playground play is MORE than just beneficial for getting your child off digital devices and encouraging them to bounce around to expend their energy? The many features and elements of playgrounds – from slides, rock walls and even simply just a sandy surface – can create fun and exciting opportunities for you to develop your little one's Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS). Developing these skills are absolutely crucial for your child's everyday life, whether in basic movements like walking, running and jumping, to both routine actions and recreational activities.

Read more on [Your Child's Active Start in Life: Importance of Physical Literacy](#)

Let's explore 5 unique playgrounds around Singapore together, and meet a few Active Parents who show us how we can use playground features to help develop our child's FMS, mainly their Locomotor, Stability & Object Control skills. We've got Ms Lin Yanyan, a lecturer at NIEC, on board as well to lend us some of her expertise on outdoor playground play!

Ms Lin specialises in the modules "Motor Skills Development" as well as "Field Practicum". Prior to joining NIEC, she worked in various preschool roles with local anchor operators and private preschool organisations, as well as being a youth worker in a special needs school in an international setting.

1. Tiong Bahru Park

Address: 1 Henderson Rd, Singapore 159561

How to get there: A 5-minute walk from Tiong Bahru MRT station

Open 24 hours

We met Active Parent Deon and her daughter Juan Qi at Tiong Bahru Park Playground. The Tilted Train is the centrepiece of this unique playground, along with features like mini rock-walls, tunnel slides, a toddler maze and even a flying fox!

Activity ideas to aid in your child's FMS development:

1. Climbing (Stability) – up the rock wall. Encourage your child to explore the different body movements through stretching to reach the grips on the wall, or hoisting themselves using the rope. **Safety pointer:** *Ensure child grips on firmly, parent to spot child - arms raised beneath the child, ready to support/cushion the fall.*

2. Balancing (Stability) – through the Tilted train. Crawling or walking through the tilted surface is a good way for your child to practise their stability skills! **Safety pointer:** *Remind child to be patient and wait their turn, and be willing to share the space with other children.*

💡 Tip: Social interaction is key! Encourage your child to **learn through interaction and observation of other (older) kids**. Ms Lin informed us that gross motor skills can be developed when the child engages in group games, and in such instances, your child would interact with others- either playing as teammates, or competing against them. They have to communicate with each other, allocate roles, discuss game play, all of which develop social skills!

2. Admiralty Park

Address: 31 Riverside Road, Singapore 730000

How to get there: 15 mins' walk from Woodlands MRT Station; By bus from Woodlands Bus Interchange.

Open 24 hours

Active Parent Harveen and her son AJ regularly enjoy coming to play at Admiralty Park Playground, and this comes as no surprise, as **this playground is famously acclaimed for having the most number of slides in Singapore – at a whopping total of 26 slides!** Aside from the variety of baby slides, long roller slides, tunnel slides, and even the country's widest slide offered at Admiralty Park, the playground also features several rope elements, mini-boulders and a whole Junior Play area for toddlers.

Activity ideas to aid in your child's FMS development:

1. Obstacle course (Locomotor, Stability) – Create an obstacle course and challenge your child to complete the various elements. Mummy Harveen challenged AJ to a game of “The Floor is Lava”, where he climbed down a vertical ladder, completed a series of rope courses, which finally led to the opening of a tunnel slide which AJ slid down in delight. **Safety pointers:** *For the climbing obstacles, remind child to stay focus and to be aware of where to place hands and feet as they move up/forwards. Ensure child holds on firmly with both hands when climbing.*

2. Balancing (Stability) – sliding down slides. What's a trip to the playground without several rounds of going “Wheeeee!” down a slide? Fun aside, sliding helps children practise their balancing skills too!

Motor development that occurs when sliding:

- Bending (to fit into the archway at the entrance of slides.)
- Squatting and sitting (to get into a seated position on the slides)
- Pushing off with arms
- Trunk support (maintain upright gait while sliding)
- Dynamic Balance (shifting of weight to maneuver down the slide)

 **Tip:** Get creative! Gamify playground elements and challenge your child to obstacle courses and mini races. Promoting healthy competition at the playground also encourages parents to be actively involved in your child's playtime. You can also modify the challenges and **grade the skill level** accordingly to your child's progress.

3. The Oval @ Seletar Aerospace Park

Address: 15 The Oval, Singapore 797874

How to get there: Most accessible by car or taxi; By bus from Punggol MRT

Open 24 hours

Seletar Aerospace Park is a popular brunch destination on the weekends, and that's where we met Active Parent Keith and his 5-year-old daughter Alena having fun at the aeroplane-themed playground at the centre of The Oval. **This unique playground caters to a wide age group, as one section has low structures meant for toddlers and pre-schoolers, while the other half is challenging and engaging for children in primary school, with a mixture of rope ladders, climbing frames and an Aeroplane structure.**

At the life-sized Aeroplane Ludo board game play area, we showed Daddy Keith and Alena how they could use this feature to create their own games, with objects you can easily bring from home too.

Ms Lin suggests using low-cost items, such as a balloon, and letting your child pass it around with others to keep it up in the air! Or crumpling up newspapers to create a fist-sized ball to toss around! These items can be easily disposed after use as well!

Activity ideas to aid in your child's FMS development:

1. Twisting (Stability) – How about a game of Twister? Daddy Keith became the spinning wheel for the day and decided the colour for Elena to put her hand or leg on. Let your child practise their twisting movements in this simple game and experiment and discover the limitations of their bodies while they twist and stretch it out. **Safety pointer:** *Remind your child to be careful when their hands/feet are placed on the ground – ensure it is not slippery, and no sharp nor dangerous objects around*

2. Hopping (Locomotor) – You could play Hopscotch here too! Bring a beanbag, soft toy or any non-fragile object that can be tossed, and let your child practise **Object Control** and **Underarm Throwing** skills even at the playground. **Safety pointer:** *Ensure the surface is not slippery, and that the area around is clear to avoid pushing or bumping into other kids in the play area*

💡Tip: **Provide parental assistance where necessary** during your child's play time. Balance creating a positive learning experience (intervention) & allowing the child to discover limits of their own bodies (restraint). Ms Lin assures us,

“Children develop and learn best when **they feel safe and valued!**”

4. Forest Ramble @ Jurong Lake Gardens

Address: 104 Yuan Ching Rd

How to get there: By bus from Lakeside MRT or Chinese Garden MRT

Open 8am - 10pm, Closed on Mondays except for Public Holidays

Our next location of interest is found in Jurong Lake Gardens, where the playground is called Forest Ramble – and rightly so! **Each section of the extensive play area is inspired by wildlife creatures’ habitats, including a beaver’s dam, a snake’s nest and sand crabs’ burrows.** We met our playground pair at the frog play area where Active Parent Zhen How and his 6-year old daughter Yu Qing, along with little Xin Yin, were having fun leaping and jumping from the trampolines as they mimicked the movements of froggies jumping from one lily pad to another.

Activity ideas to aid in your child's FMS development:

1. Jumping (Locomotor) – on the trampoline, and use the verbal cues provided below to allow your child to practise proper jumping techniques safely.

- Bend knees
- Swing arms
- Land on a Bicycle

Safety pointer: *Remind child to bend knees slightly when landing, in the position of sitting on a bicycle, to cushion impact*

2. Practise locomotor skills on different surfaces – at the sand play & water play areas, such as **walking, running, jumping, hopping, skipping** etc. Also, you could challenge your child to try out these movements on other types of surfaces too e.g. grass, trampoline etc., where safe. **Safety pointer:** *Even in shallow water, always have your eyes on the child and keep close proximity. Remind your child not to engage in dangerous play like pushing other children down.*

💡 Tip: Reap the full benefits of the outdoors! “When playing outside, there are elements of nature, such as dried leaves, soil, water puddles- all of which offer opportunities for sensory exploration,” adds Ms Lin. “Life cycles and habitats of animals (such as birds) can also be introduced. Your child also engages with the community, when making use of facilities such as the playgrounds near HDBs, as they get to interact with people in the neighbourhood.”

5. COMO Adventure Grove <NEW!>

Address: 5 Gallop Rd, Singapore 258960

How to get there: Most accessible by car or taxi; By bus from Botanic Gardens MRT

Open daily from 7am - 7pm

Finally, we met Active Parent Daryl and his 3-year-old son David at COMO Adventure Grove at the Gallop Extension of Botanic Gardens. **This brand new playground is really more of a “playgarden”, with its features and structures heavily inspired by natural elements like trees, roots, vines, and where the space is dotted with humongous saga seeds and an extra-large jackfruit.** Let's dive into this spectacular playgarden and play with Daddy Daryl and little David!
Activity ideas to aid in your child's FMS development:

1. Balancing (Stability) – climbing up and down the hilly slopes can get your child to practise their balancing skills on the narrow surface area. **Safety pointer:** *Slowly decrease the physical support you provide your child until they are more confident to traverse the slopes alone.*

2. Jumping (Locomotor) – Jumping from a height (mini-hills) can be really fun for your child, but potentially daunting as well. Here are some pointers to take note of which will help your child train their jumping skills effectively and safely:

- Start with the lower heights; only progress to slightly higher 'hills' when the child is comfortable.
- Never force the child if he/she does not want to jump down; Ms Lin suggests creating a pretend play scenario for your child, to encourage them to practise jumping. For instance, pretending they are rabbits, and using verbal cues like “How do rabbits move? Can you show me? Can you jump into the little rabbit home on the ground?”

 **Tip:** Be a big kid again! **Demonstrate** the movement, **participate** alongside your child and **have fun together** while praising and affirming their progress as you spend these precious moments together.

There are many unique playgrounds scattered all over the different neighbourhoods in Singapore too! The next time you're planning for a day out with your child, why not consider making a trip out of visiting one of these playgrounds? Different playgrounds offer different interactions and play experiences, but one thing remains constant – bonding time with your child. Consider joining in and playing alongside your child to understand how they think, learn and move.

Finally, Ms Lin leaves us with a famous Norwegian saying, “Det finnes ikke dårlig vær, bare dårlig klær!” which translates to “**There is no bad weather, only bad clothes!**” In Singapore, it’s often too hot and sunny, or too cold and rainy. But we should not let that stop us from allowing children to engage in outdoor play, so long as they are adequately dressed! 😊

Sources:

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