



espnplayyourway.com

start-up guide second edition



Remember your inner child?

You know, the one that loved to run, jump and engage in all types of frolicking, high jinks and horseplay? Maybe even participated in the occasional shenanigan, antic or tomfoolery? Any chance you're still on speaking terms? Any of this ring a bell?

Well, let's hope so – we need that inner child now more than ever. Because, believe it or not, there are kids out there who are in danger of never even knowing theirs. Hard to imagine, right? But with physical education programs being cut from schools and obesity rates tripling over the last 20 years, the definition of “play” has changed significantly.

This is why DisneyHand and Team ESPN have joined forces to establish ESPN Play Your Way. To get kids active and inspire them to explore their imaginations before their inner child becomes inner.



What is ESPN Play Your Way?

Who created Red Rover? Who invented Marco Polo? What genius thought of tag? Quite frankly, the history of these games and many others is unknown to 99.9 percent of the people in this world. But one thing's for sure, it wasn't an adult.

ESPN Play Your Way is a youth initiative that empowers kids to do what they do best: be creative and have fun. It's not a camp that tells kids what games to play or how to play them, it's an outreach program that inspires them to be physically active by making up their own physically active games and writing their own rules. Because when you're a kid, anything can be a game.

The goal of ESPN Play Your Way is to create a club that gets kids active and takes on a life of its own – with just a little guidance from adults and some helpful hints from us. For example, we're happy to share activities that will help you stimulate creative ideas and suggestions about how everyday objects can be used as game props or equipment. Who knows what can be accomplished when you add a skateboard, a bouncy ball, a piece of chalk and a kid's imagination. Whatever it is, it will get the heart racing and the pulse beating 10 times faster than sitting around the house.



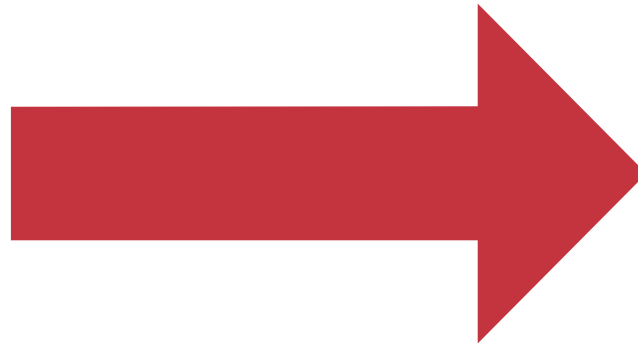
How do we get started?

It doesn't take much to get started. Here's what you'll need:

- > A place and a time to hold ESPN Play Your Way club meetings. In the beginning the meetings might last about an hour and be held once a week. After that, kids can meet as often as they like.
- > One adult guide for every 10-15 kids between the ages of 7-12.*
- > Traditional and non-traditional items for kids to use as equipment and props. Remember, the more creative, the better.
- > Paper or posterboard might be helpful for recording all the brainstorming ideas.
- > And, last but not least, you gotta get back in touch with that inner child.

* Recommendation: We've found that groups divided by age usually work better together. For example, 7-9 year olds separated from 10-12. It's only a few years, but they are worlds apart in terms of skill level and interest.

Any physical activity carries the associated risk of injury. ESPN and The Walt Disney Company are not responsible for any accident or injury associated with participation in the ESPN Play Your Way program. It is important that all supervisors use good judgment and contact appropriate emergency personnel promptly in the event of an emergency.



It's their club, but guidance is always appreciated.

- 1. Awareness** Make sure club members take charge of the club by making them active participants in every possible way – from naming the club to planning the award ceremony and the ESPN Play Your Way Play-Off.
- 2. Goals** Allow the kids to set both individual and club goals to which they can all contribute. Help them monitor and measure their progress. As necessary, assess, revise, reset ... and try again.
- 3. Feedback** Ask questions that help them refine their ideas. Compliment and encourage their efforts and creativity as much as possible.
- 4. Commitment** Sign-up sheets, pledge cards, online game submission – these public activities and exercises will help strengthen their commitment to the club and to their personal active-lifestyle goals.
- 5. Recognition** Completion certificates, award ceremonies, and other recommended events will give club members a strong sense of pride, so provide opportunities to celebrate individual and club accomplishments whenever possible.

Suggestion: It might be helpful to surround the kids with inspiring images and messages. Encourage them to create game posters, tracking sheets and brainstorm results, and put them around the room or space where they meet regularly. Their meeting space can then become the creative laboratory for the games they play both indoors and outdoors.



Club Meeting One: A great imagination makes its own rules.

A great imagination makes its own rules and so does a great club leader. As we said, we're not here to tell you how to run each ESPN Play Your Way meeting, just to offer some helpful hints for how to get it going. So...let's get it going.

First you'll probably want to introduce the idea of ESPN Play Your Way to the kids by letting them know what to expect for the next month: the kinds of activities they will be doing and how they will eventually be creating their own games with their own rules.

Make sure they know that you are there to help guide the first month of meetings, but that they are the ones who will be making all the decisions. It's their program. And their free time.

Activity #1: Warm up

Even shenanigans can cause injury or muscle strain, so we suggest coming up with some simple and fun ways to get the kids warmed up and in the mood. That means anything from speed walking relays to having them dance to slow or medium-paced music. Whatever they want – just get them moving. After the warm-up, ask the kids how they feel. Are their hearts beating faster? Have their pulses increased?

Activity #2: Remember it's ESPN Play Your Way, not Play My Way Or The Highway.

One way to get kids to realize that this is not a club run by adults is to ask them about the games they already play. This will get them excited about incorporating their ideas into the group, and establish the great value their imagination holds in ESPN Play Your Way.

Then, after hearing a few – do one. That's right, pick one of the games the kids mentioned and spend 20-25 minutes playing.

Does it qualify as an ESPN Play Your Way Game?

While everyone catches their breath and cools down, see if the game(s) they just played pass the ESPN Play Your Way test. Ask questions to get the discussion going, but let the kids decide if the game qualifies.

For example does it:

- > Speed up heart rate and breathing?
- > Increase strength and flexibility?
- > Use traditional sports equipment in a new way?
- > Seem easy to share with others?

And most importantly...

- > Is it fun to play?

How old is Red Rover?

It might be interesting to suggest that the kids talk to a parent, older family member or other adult about the games they played when they were kids. The next time the club meets, ask what they found out. Was their parents' generation more active? Why? What is different about the games they play now and the games their parents played? What has stayed the same? This might be a way break the ice at the next meeting.

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Club Meeting Two: Teaching new dogs old tricks.

As we mentioned, there are already plenty of creative games out there that have stood the test of time. How have they lasted so long? Start the day off with one and find out. Red Light-Green Light, Hopscotch, whatever.

Afterwards, discuss the parts of the game. What is the objective? What are the rules? What do you need to play? Why does this game work? Then add a new twist to it and see what happens.

This will get kids into the mindset that even the simplest games have rules and objectives, and using this language will help brainstorming sessions later.

Activity #1: Brainstorm

Who says thinking and moving don't go hand in hand? Well, frankly, no one does – we made it up to make a point.

The last thing we want kids to do is just sit around inactively brainstorming ideas for games. One suggestion to get the kids started might be to have them choose one or several categories to brainstorm – for example, “types of games,” “stuff to play with” or “dos and don'ts.”

“Dos and don'ts” are the elements that make each game unique. For example: “Don't stand still,” “Don't let the equipment hit the floor” or “Only one person can be behind the line at one time.”

One way to keep both the body and mind active is to toss a ball from one kid to another in a circle. Whenever a kid catches the ball he or she must call out something that

fits into the chosen category. For example, if the category is “stuff to play with,” a player who catches the ball might call out, “Chalk!” and then pass to another player who calls out, “Stopwatch!” If the category is “dos and don'ts” a person might shout, “Don't touch the lines on the court!” or “You only have five seconds to get rid of the ball!”

Repeat the game for each of the categories. Have someone write down the suggestions offered by the kids onto individual strips of paper to be used in the next activity.

Activity #2: Tag Redux

Divide the club members into teams to rewrite the rules to their favorite games.

Put the ideas that were written on strips of paper into three paper bags, one from each category mentioned above. Have a member of each team choose one or two strips from each of the bags – and then use those ideas to get them rewriting old-time favorites into new classics!

Activity #3: Don't stop now

To add another twist to the new games teams are playing, interrupt team members and have them choose one more idea from the “Dos and Don'ts” bag. Then, challenge the teams to figure out how to add the new elements to their games already in progress.



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Club Meeting Three: Play on.

Well, you made it to week three and now the kids are ready to create their own games! To spark their imaginations, hand out some fun prizes.

Activity #1: Life is a game. (Well, not really, but you get our point.)

After you warm up, encourage the kids to find inspiration for games in their everyday lives. Chances are that what they come up with won't have anything to do with physical activity. But with the right twist, video games, TV shows, board games, hobbies and even household chores can become the basis for games. Based on this brainstorm, let the kids form their own teams and start making up their own games.

Activity #2: Start playing your way.

Once the teams are formed, ask them to identify the "real life" categories they've chosen. It might help to ask a few questions to jump-start things:

- > What elements can be taken from the show, game or activity and incorporated into a game?
- > What props or equipment do you need?
- > Where is the ideal place to play the game?

REMEMBER: you don't want the kids sitting around and pulling at the grass – keep them moving around and staying active. Encourage the kids to experiment with the game, even if on a small scale, as they figure out how to play.

Once they've figured out the basics of their game – let 'em at it! Have each team play until they feel like they've refined their game. This should take the rest of the meeting, so help out, watch over, but most importantly, enjoy!

Suggestion: It is important that children develop responsible habits regarding time spent on their daily and weekly activities, such as television viewing. So, just as you might exercise while watching your favorite television programs, suggest the kids do stretching or aerobic exercises while watching *their* favorite TV show.

One example of how to turn a video game into an ESPN Play Your Way Game.



Video Tag

Objective: Convert a video game into a physically active game.

Requirements: Basketball court or blacktop. Other option: use chalk to create your own course. Between 10 and 30 participants, depending on size of court.

Directions: Have all the kids stand on any line on the court. Select one person to play the role of the Tagger. The Tagger must run along the lines of the course to capture 4-6 flags located in the corners and along the sides of the court. Along the way, she or he must avoid making contact with the other players trying to tag her or him and prevent the Tagger from capturing the flags. The other players must also move along the lines of the court. They must walk swiftly (but they cannot run) and they must be in constant movement in a forward or backward direction.

Once the Tagger captures a flag, she or he must shout "Tag!" very loudly to alert everyone. At that point, the Tagger has 10 seconds to move along the lines chasing the other players. A player tagged by the Tagger must do 10 jumping jacks or something similar before re-entering the game. If the Tagger gets tagged, the game is over.

Turn it up a notch. To increase the excitement, consider the following:

- > Add upbeat music. When the flag is captured, turn the music off to alert all participants that the flag has been captured.
- > Award points to the Tagger for each member tagged and each flag captured.
- > Add an additional Tagger or a team of Taggers that start at opposite ends of the court.
- > Add additional flags.
- > Increase or decrease the length of time that participants can run once the "flag" is captured.
- > Give the Tagger a specially colored t-shirt or jersey so she or he stands out.

(Submitted by Vondrenna Martino, Bowie, Maryland.)



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Club Meeting Four: Play, rinse and repeat.

So, provided that your inner child has performed admirably, the kids have already come up with a lot of different games and had a lot of fun. Use this day to play and refine all the games they've created. At the end of the session, take a vote for the top three games to be included in a special final event the following week.

Activity #1: If you can play it, you can pass it on.

To get kids excited about the games they've created and establish a strong sense of team spirit, have a team explain its game to the other kids. Then try playing it and see if it holds up. Afterwards you can even ask the kids for feedback – reminding them to provide constructive comments.

Does the game play the way it is intended? Are the rules easy to understand? Are the objectives clear? Are people having fun? Are players active?

Keep playing. Pass it on.

The games these kids have created are not limited to ESPN Play Your Way meetings. In fact, quite the opposite. It might be a good idea to remind kids to pass on what they've created. Get their games out there and more importantly, get other kids out there playing them.

Other suggestions for passing on games:

- > Organize a contest: Non-club members can play and vote for the top games selected by club members. Use your organization's website to do a poll, or rely on old-fashioned voting ballots.
- > Use the web: Post games on your organization's website and visit ESPN Play Your Way on espnplayyourway.com to get and share ideas. Games can also be posted on other youth message boards.



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Club Meeting Five: If you play it, they will come.

Use this club meeting to showcase the kids' games by inviting other kids, parents and teachers to check out what they've created. Remember, the goal is to get everyone involved!

Activity #1: ESPN Play Your Way Play-Offs

You could organize an ESPN Play Your Way Play-Off that features the top games created by the kids. You could then feature these games during an afternoon of intramural-type events – where the emphasis is on “play,” not competition.

Activity #2: There is no “I” in Play Your Way, but there is a “You.”

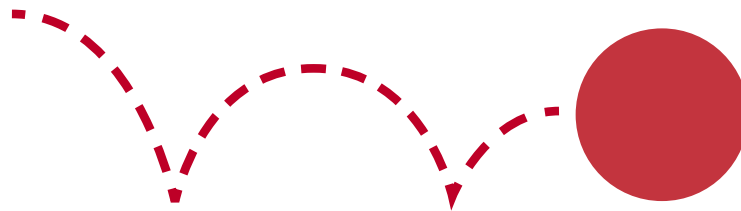
Let's be honest, everyone likes to be recognized and appreciated for his or her contributions. One way to do this would be to organize an awards ceremony that celebrates everything the kids have put into the program. Maybe even give out awards for all categories of games – from

the most creative, to the most active, to the award for the most outlandish game.

Awards are a great way to recruit new club members and keep the club going. They are also an opportunity to spotlight the kids who have put themselves – both body and mind – into the program.

Optional Event Ideas:

- > Play-a-thon – Designate a 6- or 12-hour period where games are played nonstop. Of course, duration of activity should be appropriate to the individual. Kids can keep track of the games that they play and even earn points for every new one tried, and maybe bonus points for games they create individually or as a team.
- > ESPN Play Your Way Lock-in – Host a day-long or overnight lock-in and incorporate the activities from the start-up guide into the program. Remember, to a kid, anything can be a game.



Keep the ball rolling.

Congratulations! Your inner child has rescued many others from the terrible fate of becoming inner!

Thanks to you, ESPN Play Your Way meetings will now take on a life of their own and hopefully continue way beyond the first month of scheduled activities. Club or no club. It's easy to transform everyday places at home, community centers or parks into places to play. Now all they need is stuff to play with!

ESPN Play Your Way gear

Unexpected and found objects are perfect for ESPN Play Your Way gear. Here are some items for starters – kids are sure to have their own favorites.

- > Tires
- > Water
- > Buckets
- > Bandanas
- > Balloons
- > Chalk
- > Cones
- > Beanbags
- > Boxes
- > Traditional sports equipment – bats, balls, skates, bases and safety equipment

How ESPN Play Your Way gear can be used:

- > Bandanas can serve as flags or uniforms.
- > Chalk can mark boundaries, goals and lines.

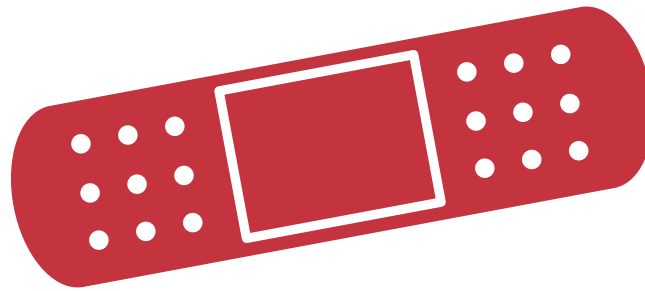
- > Buckets, well, that's pretty obvious.
- > Plastic gallon containers filled with water can be used as weights in an outdoor water relay race.
- > Tires can be used in obstacle courses and as targets for tossing games.

Our last suggestion. We promise.

An obstacle course: inside or outdoors, you can challenge the kids to create an obstacle course that provides a challenging platform for coming up with new games.

For example:

- > On a rainy day, set up an indoor obstacle course using chairs as obstacles and big plastic cups for cones.
- > Outdoor obstacle courses can be created using everyday items, too. For example, use a garden hose to set up a waterfall that kids have to climb over or under – without getting wet.
- > Don't have a lot of props? Create a course that relies simply on exercise and a timer. Place signs around the room indicating different stations in the course where a kid would be required to do a physical activity, like dancing in place, sit-ups or push-ups, for a set amount of time.



Safety comes first. Even when it's mentioned last.

When playing indoors please consider the following for safety:

- > In order to have a large enough space for all the aforementioned tomfoolery, do your best to clear away all furniture in the room.
- > Avoid or cover all sharp corners that may potentially ruin someone's day.
- > Wear sneakers at all times. Preferably on the correct feet.

When playing outdoors...

- > Avoid playing games in the dark. We do recognize, however, that when playing Marco Polo, someone must always be in the dark. This does not count.
- > Keep kids playing on blacktops and grassy areas and stay away from high-traffic areas like streets, parking lots or airport tarmacs.

And lastly...

- > Stay protected on sunny days by wearing SPF 15 sunblock or a full-body scuba suit.

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