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'Play-out' in the Park

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While you might want to think of this as a 'workout', I prefer calling it a 'play-out'. What's better than moving the body God gave ya outdoors during the season of fun in the sun!?

Our children do it all the time: **Play to stay fit**. They run and romp, they climb and chase, they twist and tumble. While we may not be quite as nimble as a six or ten year old, as long as we're alive I believe moving makes life more livable, literally. Without exercise, I would not be who I am today. Mostly, I make a habit of moving for the mood boosting effects. But, in many ways, [fitness tones my spiritual side](#) ^[1] all the while icing the (whole grain) cake with health benefits galore.

And when weather permits, '**fresh-air fitness**' feels all the better to me!

So don't let the children be the only ones playing in the park this year! Whether you run alongside them or you perform some on-purpose fitness moves at the park while they play, take full advantage of this sunny, stimulating season.

Oh, and I must make mention of possible social side effects of exercising outside: Yes, passersby may watch and wonder. Don't worry about that! It's probably only because they wish they were out there with you!

This spring and summer, YOU set the outdoor fitness standard with some great 'play-outs'!

For this 'play-out', I went to a park near home (my neighbors already know what to expect!). I'd say this is for exercise intermediates. But, just do what you can. For beginners, don't worry—even doing a few of these is better than sitting on a bench texting (...did I say that?!) while the kiddos run around. For more advanced exercisers, turn up the volume by tossing in some cardio intervals or more rapid reps.



Squat with Side Leg Lift



Squat with Side Leg Lift, Step 2



Wide Slide Pushup



Wide Slide Push up, Step 2



Lunge with Back Leg Elevated, Step 1



Lunge with Back Leg Elevated, Step 2



Upper Body Hover, Step 1



Upper Body Hover, Step 2



Jump Squat, Step 1



Jump Squat, Step 2



Assisted Slide Pull Up



Lunge Step Up, Step 1



Lunge Step Up, Step 2



Swing Crunch, Step 1



Swing Crunch, Step 2



Swing Plank

Warm-Up

Walk to or around the park to warm your major muscle groups and get your blood flowing. OR...you can do what I love and play a little soccer, 'red light/green light' or shadow tag with the kiddos. Once you're warm, complete each of the following exercises all in a row, once through...then if you have time and more energy, do it all over again! Don't worry so much about counting reps for this workout. The idea is simply to have some fun in the sun! Exercise doesn't always have to be an exact science. JUST MOVING IS WHAT MATTERS!

If some of these exercises are too challenging for you, just try the Step 1 (for example, instead of doing a pushup or hover, just hold your body in a plank position for a couple breaths).

Workout Set

Exercise	Description	Sets	Reps
Squat with Side Leg Lift	Stand with your left side next to a bench, step, or anything that you can step up onto. Put your left foot onto the step and focus on your left quad. Raise up and lift your right leg out to the side, focusing on the glute and hip muscles of the right leg. Slowly and in control, lower back down. Make sure you do another set on the other side.		
Wide Slide Push-up	Place your hands wide on the bottom of a slide (or bench). Stretch out so you are in a push-up position. With a strong core, lower your chest to the slide and then push yourself up to the starting position. As you push back up, focus on your chest muscles doing the work. Since you are putting your body on an angle, you are reducing the weight you will lift, making these push-ups fun and challenging.		
Lunge with Back Leg elevated	Stand facing away from a low step, such as a slide. Place your left foot on the slide behind you. Your right leg should be planted firmly on the ground. Keeping your head and chest up, lower your left knee to the ground. Bend your right knee to 90 degree and then raise back up. Do another set on the opposite side		
Upper Body Hover	Place your hands immediately below your shoulders on the bottom of a slide (step or bench). Fingertips forward, weight evenly distributed across your palms. Bend your elbows BACK (sliding elbows past your ribs) as you lower your chest towards the slide (even if you only bend your elbows a little bit--or if all you do is hold your weight with straight arms/soft elbows, you are doing something!)		
Jump Squat	Stand facing a step, curb, or bench. With feet parallel, use your arms and legs to jump up landing on the step in a soft knee squat. Start with a low step and slowly increase the height of the step. You'll be surprised how high you can jump!		
Assisted Slide Bar Pull Up	Find a bar at the park that is about chest height. Grip the bar underhand and walk your feet under the bar until your body is on an angle under the bar. Using your arms and back muscles, pull your chest up to the bar. Don't let your hips sag!		
Lunge Step Up (with glute squeeze)	Stand facing a step or curb. As you step up on the curb with your left leg, raise your right leg straight out behind you and squeeze your glutes.		

Exercise	Description	Sets	Reps
Swing Crunch	Balancing on a swing, straighten your legs out in front of you. Engage your abdominal muscles and slowly draw your knees into your chest.		
Swing Plank	Stand facing a swing. Place your elbows on the seat of the swing. Walk your feet out behind you until you are in a plank position. Doing a plank on an unstable swing will increase the muscles you are working and be a great challenge. Even if you only hold it for a short time, this is a great exercise.		

Cool Down

Walk more slowly around the park allowing your heart rate to decrease and breathing come back to normal. It's a good idea to do some stretching: A quad stretch (pulling your foot up and to the back with your knee pointing down and legs together), a hamstring stretch (pop one heel up on an elevated surface/step and pull your hips) and a nice chest opener (interlacing your fingers behind you and draw your hands away from your body if possible) are a few I might suggest.

Tip to Progress

Add some cardio intervals (high knees, sprints, hills or plyometric jumps) in between the above strength exercises...that'll work up a sweat for ya!

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Links

[1] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/articles/fitness-articles/my-personal-fitness-fix>