

Blanket Toss

ELEMENTARY - CURRICULAR 2024

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- Grades 5-8 only.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).

Cultural Context:

- The traditional purpose of the Inuit Blanket Toss was to send a community member (a scout) high enough up into the air in order to be able to look out over the Arctic landscape and spot animals (for example, walrus, whales, caribou, seal) for the community to hunt. The blanket toss has now become a part of events such as the Arctic Games.
- The Inuit Blanket Toss sends the scout quite high into the air. This is accomplished by having the scout stand in the middle of the blanket to begin. Those around the blanket hold it between waist and shoulder height, pulled taut. When the scout in the middle is ready, those around the outside of the blanket pull it out, even tighter and in unison, causing the scout to lift into the air off of the blanket. Once tossed, the scout remains upright in the air, and returns to the blanket in a standing position.
- The intent for this activity at a school level is to give students a sense of the process and to experience a traditional skill. For safety reasons, the scout will be in a sitting position and tossed no higher than head height of the participating students.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe for use (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters). Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the Teacher.
- The equipment must be appropriate for the size, weight, and age and for the skill and ability level of the students.
- The Inuit blanket must be commercially made for this purpose.

Refer to the [**First Aid**](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Appropriate clothing and footwear must be worn. Scarves must be tucked in or removed.
- Exposed hanging jewelry is not permitted.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the Teacher.
- The activity must be conducted outdoors over ground cover that will cushion/absorb a potential fall (for example, deep snow or wood chips).
- Holes, hazards (for example, glass, rocks, sprinkler heads, sewer grates), and severely uneven surfaces must be identified. The conditions must be made safe or the activity must be modified or moved to a safe location. Hazards which cannot be removed must be brought to the attention of the participating students. The Teacher must notify the Principal/Designate of unsafe field conditions.

- Walls, stages, equipment, trees, and posts must not be used as turning points, finish lines, end zones, or boundaries. Establish a clearly delineated boundary line away from the hazards, using visual markers (for example, lines, pylons), to prevent contact/collision.
- When running takes place off school site for a warm up:
 - Teachers must do a safety check 'walk through' in order to identify potential problems prior to initial use of route or course.
 - Teachers must outline to the students the route or course (for example, notice of areas to approach with caution) before the start of the run.
 - Teachers must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), Teachers must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:
 - environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression:
 1. Practice athletic stance (knees bent, back straight, feet staggered) for the toss and catch while tightening and releasing the blanket. The objective of this stance is to be able to absorb the weight of the person on the blanket as they land.
 2. Practice tossing an item to master the athletic stance and commands to be used before allowing a student on the blanket (for example, backpack, medicine ball, sand bag, or similar item)
 3. Practice keeping the blanket in the proper position when the item lands after the toss. Students must demonstrate the ability to keep the item in the middle and from getting too close to the ground upon landing.
 4. Use this practice to assess the focus of the group and the need to redistribute group members around the blanket. The activity must not proceed from a practice item to a person until the teacher is satisfied the group is physically and mentally prepared for the appropriate actions, commands, and safety procedures.

5. Begin with a lighter person so the students can adjust to the proper manoeuvres with the weight of a person.
 6. The student on the blanket is to be tossed to a controlled height, only. Students must be able to select a toss height and level of challenge that matches their comfort level.
- A proper warm-up and cool-down must be included.
 - While moving, students must not be required to close their eyes or be blind-folded.
 - Emphasize controlled movement when requiring students to walk or run backwards. Backward-running races are not permitted.
 - Methods to minimize the risk must be communicated to, and demonstrated for students.
 - Students must be provided with a demonstration of the blanket toss prior to beginning the activity.
 - Prior to conducting the activity, establish rules and procedures (for example, commands, progression of steps).
 - Establish the commands to be used when beginning a toss, and for letting the student gently to the ground after landing (for example, "Toss on three. Ready? One, two, three!", "Gently lower the student.").
 - Students must be spaced evenly and balanced according to strength and ability around the perimeter of the blanket.
 - When being tossed, the student on the blanket must sit with legs crossed or in front of them or lie on their backs with their feet squeezed together and their arms across their chest. Students may not stand to be tossed. No somersaults or inversions.
 - There must be a sufficient number of participants around the outside of the blanket to support the weight of the person on the blanket.
 - Students may choose to opt out of the blanket toss, to remain around the outside of the circle to help conduct the toss, act as a spotter, or to sit on the blanket and be lifted, but not be tossed.
 - Only one student may be on the blanket at a time. Instructors may decide on how many tosses each student gets depending on the time available and energy level of the group.

- Teachers must explain the importance of trust and maintaining focus on the person in the middle. If students' focus on rules and procedures deteriorates, the activity must cease.
- Blanket must be lowered to the ground for each student to climb on. Students around the perimeter then raise the blanket, lifting with their legs to protect their backs. Those around the perimeter of the blanket must pull it tight when they lift each person to ensure the person in the middle is lifted off the ground and will not hit the ground when they land.
- The teacher must check in with the group between each toss to ensure everyone is still feeling strong and comfortable. If anyone is experiencing any pain (back, hands, knees), they must be given the option to stand out.
- Give appropriate feedback in order to improve the skills and safety of the group. Re-emphasize rules as appropriate. Draw attention to good tosses, and correct unsafe behaviours.
- When a student displays hesitation (verbally or non-verbally) with participating, the Teacher must determine the reason(s) for doubt. If the Teacher believes that a potential hesitancy during the skill could put the student at risk, the student must be directed toward a more basic skill, or be permitted to select a role within the activity at their comfort level, including the choice to not participate.
- Prior to participation, the Teacher must reference and apply their school board's policy on equity and inclusion as it affects student participation and makes appropriate accommodations/modifications to provide a safe learning environment. Consult the Intent subsection within the [About section](#).
- Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.

- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- Direct Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- Direct Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., equipment setup and take down, warm-ups/cool downs, application of the skills and games).
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.
- Follow the school's first aid emergency response (consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#)).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lock downs must be followed and communicated to students.

Definitions

- **In-charge Person:**

- Some activities refer to an “In-Charge” person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as “In-Charge” related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an “In-Charge” person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.
- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.

- The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.
- An activity may be under Direct Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the set up and take down of equipment; .
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
 - When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.
- **In-the-Area Supervision:**
 - The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - **Provisos:**
 - The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.

- An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:
 - Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
 - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
 - Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
 - When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
 - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.

- **On-Site Supervision:**

- The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider's facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - **Provisos:**
 - Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.

- An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;
 - When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
 - When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

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