



Obstacle Course Details

My name is Earl Bedford and I am the Vice President of Business Development for the National Football League Alumni association in Tampa, Florida. We are spearheading a project with the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Youth Activity Initiative. The youth activity that we are proposing will be several 12 and under obstacle courses throughout the city of Tampa. This plan will combine balance and coordination skills to allow school aged children to navigate a simple obstacle course.

We would like to make sure that every obstacle course is an adventure because of the number of obstacles in the way and the “perilous dangers” children need to avoid (which we can make up and tell with great fanfare) as they go through the course. The more interesting and exciting the course, the more the children will love it!

Most young kids have a good notion of what obstacle courses are so, getting them to race through stationary gauntlets is fairly easy and, when it comes to tiring them out, incredibly effective. The perfect obstacle course should be challenging, silly, and easily deconstructed or reconstructed. But, most importantly, it should be safe.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

1. Overall physical fitness. Obstacle courses promote cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, muscular strength and endurance.
2. Gross motor development. Obstacle courses promote using the large muscles of the arms, legs and trunk.
3. Bilateral coordination. Obstacle courses promote using both sides of the body at the same time in unison as in jumping.
4. Perceptual motor development. Obstacle courses promote the ability to receive, interpret, and respond successfully to sensory information.
5. Social development. Obstacle courses promote acquisition of skills that enable children to react and interact with others as they mature and begin to understand the point of view of others.
6. Agility. Obstacle courses promote quick, easy, lively movements.
7. Coordination. Obstacle courses promote parts of the body moving smoothly together.

8. Sequencing. Obstacle courses promote the ability to arrange and follow a series of steps to be followed.

9. Eye-hand coordination. Obstacle courses promote eyes and hands working together smoothly to meet a challenge.

10. Eye-foot coordination. Obstacle courses promote eyes and feet working together smoothly to meet a challenge.

11. Spatial awareness. Obstacle courses promote coordinated movement in relationship to other objects in the environment.

12. Directionality. Obstacle courses promote the inner sense and knowledge of where things are in relation to the body.

13. Laterality. Obstacle courses promote the ability to understand the differences between right and left and being able to control the two sides of the body independently and together.

14. Balance. Obstacle courses promote being able to hold the position of the body through the interaction of muscles working together (maintaining body equilibrium) whether the body is stationary (static balance) or moving (dynamic balance).

15. Cooperation and teamwork. Obstacle courses can promote 2 or more people working and playing together rather than against one another, just for the fun of it.

16. Fun. Obstacle courses promote playful actions providing amusement and enjoyment.

17. Listening skills. Obstacle courses promote the ability to follow verbal directions.

18. Self-Esteem. Obstacle courses promote confidence and satisfaction or pride in oneself.

The individual stations can be anything and are only limited by space and imagination. We can add special challenges as kids figure out how to manage certain obstacles. It is also important to note that stations can reoccur in each running of an obstacle course. It is, for instance, a great idea to get kids to jump multiple times between activities that require more precise muscle control. This forces kids to engage different muscles and tires them out.

What We May Need:

- Things to jump over, onto, or from. Animated objects, hopscotch.
- Things to crawl under or through. Tires, rope, tunnel.
- Things to throw. Make a station where aim is important. Throwing is a skill young kids can develop. Have them bring their own football or baseball and throw through some tires.
- Things to balance on. Balance beams. Hopscotch on one leg. Jump from block to block.
- Monkey bars to strengthen upper body.
- Feet speed drills. Like running through tires

Wrap up:

Obstacle courses are a great way for kids to burn off excess energy. And if they ever get tired of the same old course, we can change the theme or turn it into a narrated adventure: Superhero tryouts, ninja training, find the hidden treasure. Younger kids will especially enjoy embarking on the course as a character on an expedition. In the end, not only is it satisfying to watch kids challenge themselves but also to watch them enjoy something we all built. My take on obstacle courses are they invite, they challenge, and they satisfy while always leaving children begging, “Can we do it again? Can we do it again?”

Disclaimer: Date and time subject to change due to COVID-19

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