



Nature Play Factoids

- In a study of 830 mothers, 70 % reported playing outdoors every day when they were young, compared with only 31% of their children
- 85% of these mothers identified their child's television viewing and computer game playing as the number one reason for the lack of outdoor play. 82% of them identified crime and safety concerns as factors that prevent their children from playing outdoors.
Source: *An Investigation of the Status of Outdoor Play*, Rhonda Clements, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, Vol. 5, Number 1, 2004
- Children living in the U.S. today spend, on average, 30 minutes of unstructured time outdoors each week.
- Children aged 3 to 12 spend 1% of their time outdoors, and 27% with electronic media
- Children aged 3 to 13 spent an average of 29 hours a week in school, eight more than in 1981
- The average amount of homework for America's youngest children has tripled since 1981
Source: *Changes in American Children's Time, 1981-1997*, Sandra Hofferth and John Sandberg, University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, 1999
- 29% of American two and three year-olds have a TV in their bedroom (even though the American Academy of Pediatrics advises against any TV watching at age two)
- Children aged 8 to 10 spend an average of 6 hours a day watching television, playing video games, using computers, and listening to audio media (and that's during the school year — no study has been done on vacation habits, but TV ratings show that kids watch more television during the summer.)
- A child is six times more likely to play a video game on a typical day than to ride a bike
Source: *Survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, cited in *USA Today*, July 12, 2005
- Preschoolers should get two hours of exercise daily (1 hour structured, 1 hour unstructured)
Source: *National Association for Sport and Physical Education*

- The average American two-year-old spends over four hours per day with television or computers
- More than 80% of children under age 2, and more than 60% of children aged 2 to 5, do not have access to daily outdoor play
- Unstructured outdoor activities declined by 50% compared to the previous generation
Source: **Playing for Keeps** (a nonprofit organization devoted to advancing constructive play)

- One-half of all North American and South American children will be overweight by 2010
Source: **International Association for the Study of Obesity**

- About 90% of the global consumption of the hyperactivity drug Ritalin is in the United States.
Source: **United Nations' International Narcotics Control Board, 1995 ANNUAL REPORT** (Feb. 28, 1996)

- Violent victimization of children has dropped by more than 38% since 1975
Source: **Duke University 2005 Child Well Being Index** (cited by R. Louv in *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*)

- Children who have frequent access to the outdoors "gain competence in moving through the larger world;" it also helps them to develop courage
Source: **National Association for the Education of Young Children**

- In one generation, the percentage of people who reported that the outdoors was the most influential environment of their childhood dropped from 96% to 46%.
Source: *The Landscapes of Childhood – The Reflection of Childhood's Environment in Adult Memories and in Children's Attitudes*, Rachel Sebba, in *Environment and Behavior*, Volume 23, No. 4, 1991

- "Neither childhood participation in environmental education nor childhood experiences in nature with other people had significant effects on adult environmental behaviors." (from a 1999 survey of approximately 2,000 adults age 18 - 90 living in urban areas throughout the U.S.)
Source: *Nature and the Life Course: Pathways from Childhood Nature Experiences*, Nancy M. Wells and Kristi S. Lekies, Cornell University, in *Children, Youth and Environments*, 2006

- "... participation with "wild" nature before age 11 is a particularly potent pathway toward shaping both environmental attitudes and behaviors in adulthood. When children become truly engaged with the natural world at a young age, the experience is likely to stay with them in a powerful way — shaping their subsequent environmental path." (from a 1999 survey of approximately 2,000 adults age 18 - 90 living in urban areas throughout the U.S.)

Source: *Nature and the Life Course: Pathways from Childhood Nature Experiences*, Nancy M. Wells and Kristi S. Lekies, Cornell University, in *Children, Youth and Environments*, 2006

- Childhood asthma has increased by 160% since 1980 (to 2006); adult asthma has increased by 75% during the same period

Source: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

- "Free and unstructured play is essential for helping children reach important social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones."

Source: *Clinical Report: The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds*, American Academy of Pediatrics, 2006

- "The average kindergartner has watched more than 5,000 hours of TV by age 5. That's more than enough hours to earn a college degree."

- "The more television children watch, the fewer fruits and vegetables they eat, according to the Harvard School of Public Health."

Source: *Experience Life magazine*, Sept. 2004

- "According to a study last year (2004) by Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY, (Rhonda Clements, author), 71 percent of mothers across the country reported that they played outdoors more often than indoors when they were young, while only 26 percent said their own kids do that today."

Source: *The Nature Conservancy* (in "*The Nature Conservancy Declares April 18 — the Sunday Before Earth Day — "Take Your Child to Nature Day"*, January 2005)