



## **Waldorf Academy Toronto: The Importance Of Outside Play**

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The Waldorf Academy recently published an article discussing the importance of outside play for developing children. The article can be found at <https://waldorfacademy.org/why-free-play-outside-is-important/>.

“Do you remember going to play outside as a child with your neighbourhood friends?” asks the alternative school based in Toronto. “Running around until the streetlights came on, with no real structure to it? one day it was a game of “tag” in the park, the next you were drawing hopscotch and tic-tac-toe all over the sidewalk with chalk.” These experiences, according to Waldorf Academy, are incredibly important. “Here at Waldorf Academy, we believe free play outside is important for kids growth and development.”

Free play, as Waldorf’s article defines it, is unstructured free play time that isn’t led or organised by an adult teacher, parent, or caregiver. “It’s allowing kids to be kids,” explains Waldorf. Unstructured free play time gives children the freedom to explore without any boundaries being imposed on them by adults. Any sort of activity, as long as it is not led or directed by an adult can be considered free play, be it a board game or even an activity involving screens. Outdoor free play is especially important, however, as it helps children develop their creative and problem solving abilities. Through these activities, children can learn to overcome

challenges and work together as a team.

Outdoor free play, away from digital devices or screens, forces children to use their imagination and be creative. Mundane outdoor objects like shells, sticks, and pinecones can become toys in a child's imagination. "Allowing children to play without limitations or adult-imposed expectations about what they should or shouldn't be doing gives their imagination a chance to expand, and teaches children to stick with challenges they face, and not to give up," maintains the academy. "This develops their problem-solving ability, which is undoubtedly one of the most useful skills in one's career, and life in general."

Aside from the positive effects on the imagination, outdoor play has positive health effects. A Japanese study found that taking in the atmosphere found in an outdoor location like a forest can have positive health effects. Exposure to fresh air can boost the immune system and the digestive system while also having positive effects on blood pressure and heart rate. Play time in an environment that encourages them to use their imagination while simultaneously providing a multitude of positive health effects has an observable effect on the development of children.

Waldorf states that outdoor free play helps children remain "present". "Making discoveries on one's own leads to far greater learning and understanding of the world than can be gained from reading a book or listening to a lecture," says the academy. "Being in nature gives children the opportunity to truly discover this natural beauty on their own. For children who have excess energy to burn off, starting the day outdoors with free play can help give them a channel through which they can express this energy in a positive, constructive fashion. Later on, when they finally get to their indoor lessons later in the day, they'll be more settled and focused."

The academy has years of experience in educating young people, and has created a good reputation for itself over the years with dozens of testimonials from former students praising the school and describing why the school worked so well for them. "I spent 12 amazing years at the best place in the world to grow up, and I'll always be able to come back and say hello to the place that has been my second home my whole life so far," says a former student.

A parent, pleased with the teaching methods used at the academy states, "In grade three, math really kicks in, though I bet most parents cannot follow along to the hopping, skipping, times table repeating song" again, an example of the sheer genius of combining play, movement, coordination, repetition, all leading to mathematical concepts and comprehension."

More information regarding the academy and the other informative articles it authored can be found at their website and on their social media platforms. Those interested may also contact Jennifer Deathe of Waldorf Academy Toronto to learn more about the school and students.

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## **Waldorf Academy**

*Waldorf Academy is an elementary private school in Toronto Ontario with over 30 years of experience educating young minds from Pre-K to Grade 8.*

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