

PlayWELL: INDOOR RECESS GUIDE

Students and staff can go outside across the range of much Chicago weather with appropriate clothing. Recess should be held outside whenever possible. Plan ahead and communicate with families to assure students come prepared to be outdoors for recess. When weather forces recess indoors, **remember that indoor recess does not mean that students can't be active.** Establishing a policy on when recess will be held indoors due to inclement weather will make the expectations clear to all in the building. However, **holding recess indoors should be a backup plan and should not be the norm for a school.** Keep these elements a part of your indoor recess plans:

- Whenever possible, indoor recess should happen in a gymnasium or other large area where students can have the space necessary for active play- schools are encouraged to get creative with their indoor space.
- The gym can be [mapped](#) in the same way as the playground; with areas for large group, small group and quiet activities. A diagram of the area should be distributed ahead of time to all recess supervisors, so that when there is indoor recess staff and students know what to expect.
- If large areas are unavailable, consider [setting up the classroom](#) in a manner that enables easy movement for an indoor activity break. Check out the resource list at the bottom of this guide for game ideas and fitness videos.
- Consider arrangements that facilitate viewing videos that lead students in physical activity routines, such as [GoNoodle](#) videos, or kids-focused aerobic routines. The Resources Section of this document provides a sampling of these.
- Ensure students are aware that playground expectations and rules apply to the indoor recess location.

Indoor Recess...

IS	IS NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active play with creative use of space • Active games in the gymnasium, hallway, multi-purpose room or classroom • Students participating in fitness videos (including dance and yoga) in a classroom or auditorium • Relay races in a hallway • Walking laps around a gym, multi-purpose room or auditorium • FUN! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Education • Without rules or behavior expectations • Only structured activities, games, or fitness • Sitting and watching videos/movies • Sitting and reading • Sitting and playing board games • Sitting and doing homework • Making kids sit out as punishment • Using physical activity as punishment

Creative Space Solution Options:

- Gymnasiums, hallways, multi-purpose rooms, classrooms and the library can be used for indoor recess if these spaces are available during recess time.
- Auditorium stages can be used for dance activities or group games.
- Seats in the auditorium can be used for games such as Keep the Ball Afloat/Don't Let the Ball Hit the Ground, where students work together to ensure that a balloon or a beach ball stays in the air, without touching the ground, for as long as possible. Everytime the balloon or beach ball drops students have to do an active move together (like 15 jumping jacks).
- Students can also stand in front of the seats (preferably every other, if space allows) and follow along to fitness or dance videos.
- The open corners of the auditorium, classroom, hallway or multi-purpose room can be used for Healthy Corners, which includes four physical activity stations that students rotate through for a short duration of time (e.g., three to five minutes at each station). The recess supervisor can play music and when the music plays students should participate in the activity at each station and when the music stops, students should rotate to the next station.

Indoor Recess Resources:

Fitness Videos:

- [Adventure2Learning*](#) (K-8)
- [Cosmic Kids](#) (K-2)
- [GoNoodle*](#) (PK-12)
- [Move to Learn](#) (PK-12)
- [PBS Kids in Motion](#) (K-5)
- [The Learning Station](#) (K-2)
- [Fitbound*](#)

Game Ideas:

- [Playworks Game Library](#)
- [OpenPE Active Classroom Ideas](#)
- [Moving Minutes Guide](#)
- [Peaceful Playgrounds 10 Rainy and Snow Day Activities for Indoor Recess](#)
- [Fuel Up to Play 60 Indoor Activities](#)
- [Active Academics](#)
- [K-5 Energizers](#)

*Free, but requires login

CPS Recess Weather Guidelines

Ideally, recess should take place outdoors on school grounds as weather, space and safety permit. Outdoor recess allows children to get fresh air, provides an opportunity for children to engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity and gives students more activity options than most indoor spaces. Outdoor recess is an important part of a child's school day and schools are highly encouraged to provide students with the opportunity to play outside whenever possible. Use the following guidelines provided by the district to determine whether recess is held indoors or outdoors each day:

Cold Weather Guidelines:

Weather:	Recess Held:
Above 32 °F with or without wind chill	Outdoors
15 F to 32 °F with or without wind chill	Principal Discretion
Below 15 °F with or without wind chill	Indoors

Schools should exercise the following precautionary measures if holding recess outdoors:

Precipitation: snow and icy conditions should be evaluated for student safety and attire

Student preparedness: students should have appropriate outdoor attire to stay warm and dry during recess

Playground safety: the playground equipment and surface (i.e., icy conditions) should be evaluated to determine whether students can safely play outdoors

***"With or without wind chill" means how cold it feels, whether it is caused by wind chill or not. For example, if the straight temperature reading is 10 degrees or if it's 20 degrees with a wind chill of 10 degrees, recess should be held indoors.

Warm Weather Guidelines

Weather:	Recess Held:
Heat index of 90 °F or below	Outdoors
Heat index between 91 °F and 94 °F	Principal discretion
Heat index above 95 °F	Indoors in a cool location

Schools should exercise the following precautionary measures if holding recess outdoors:

Activity level: students should participate in only light to moderate physical activity

Student preparedness: students should wear appropriate attire during warm weather. It is recommended that students wear sunscreen when outdoors.

Playground equipment: the playground equipment and surfaces should be checked prior to recess. Supervisors should ensure that students do not play on equipment that is extremely hot to the touch.

