



Getting pre-teens more active

The most important thing for older kids of 9-12 years, is excitement – to even get them to want to go to the playground. They need to have ‘style-cool’, exciting equipment which moves fast and gets them screaming or to feel they are really high off the ground. They will go for challenge, height and excitement.

IN TERMS OF climbing frames, the latest equipment includes architectural, sculptural and skeletal modern pieces which look nothing like those of yesteryear. Made from steel and plastic they are, in effect, see-through. Children use them as they choose. How to play is not prescribed.

The trend towards exciting, dynamic, fast units covers every type of equipment. As well as moving parts on climbing frames, examples include new ideas for roundabouts and rotators and a new breed of swings, inspired by surfing, skating and snowboarding – for example, the stand-on swing called the Freeride with two twist handles. Similarly, the Rodeo Board, based on windsurfing moves, challenges riders from 12 years to adult.

Techno

The chip that burns fat is the computer chip. Built into a variety of techno-play equipment types are programs, lights, buzzers and buttons which challenge users and players to do more than ‘beat the clock’. Stretching for one button and dashing and jumping to another, the calorie burn is clear to see albeit apparently incidental. The challenge to the competitive streak instantly appeals to every age. This is, at last, using computer-age kit to help healthy play compared with sedentary activities such as screen-based social networking.

Public parks are now also seeing the arrival of outdoor fitness equipment – designed to be unsupervised – which may well have its origins in a gym as part of a workout circuit. Whether this is play or sport or exercise may remain undecided, but it seems set to become more common. It supports agenda objectives of more fitness through exercise for every age.

On-the-ball, multi-use games areas feature new ball-court with sound deadening rubber technology built in. Another development is the MUSA (multi-use sports area) specifically for teenage provision and especially to include girls. Made from stainless steel but toned down, it looks modern, fresh and cool. ■



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