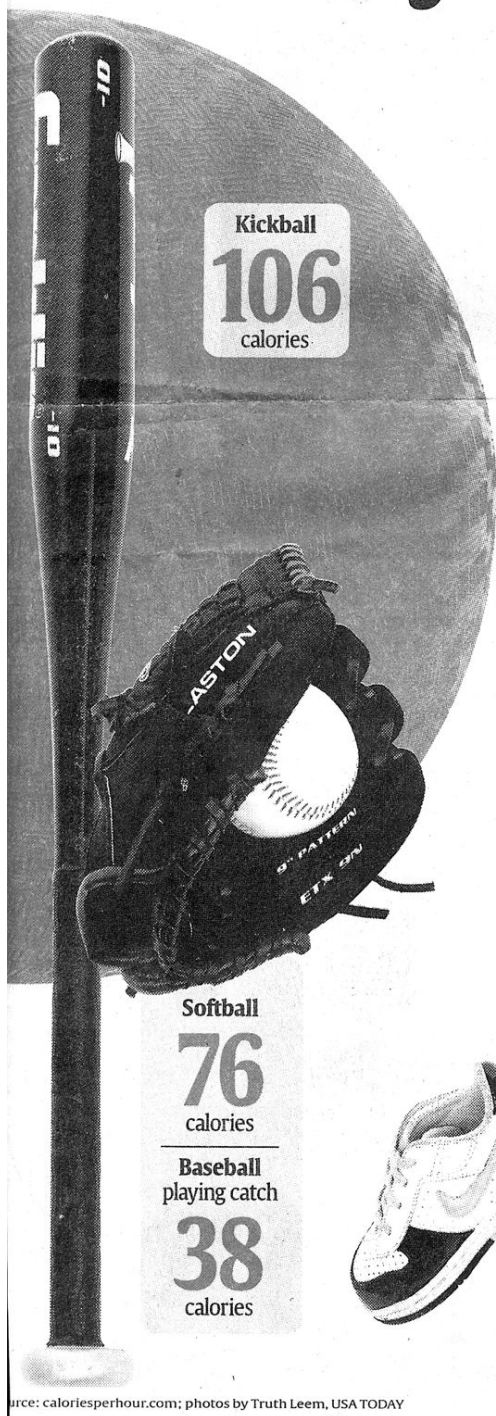


# Are your kids having a healthy summer?

## Feel the summer burn

Number of calories that a 100-pound person would burn doing various summer activities for 20 minutes:



Kickball  
**106**  
calories

Softball  
**76**  
calories

Baseball playing catch  
**38**  
calories

### In an age of cellphones, e-mail and video games, the past looks inviting

By Nanci Hellmich  
USA TODAY

**I**f you're looking for ways to get your children to move more this summer, show them the games you played as a kid, such as chasing lightning bugs, jumping rope, playing kickball, flying a kite or using a hula hoop. In this age of high-tech entertainment, call it retro play.

Parents should look to their past in tough economic times for inspiration when looking for activities for their children, says Carol Torgan, a health scientist with the American College of Sports Medicine. She suggests parents ask themselves: "What are some of my favorite memories of childhood?"

Chances are those activities involve tree-houses, water sprinklers, mud pies, bikes, Legos and forts made with blankets, she says. "Our generation's childhood memories involve playing endlessly, but this generation of kids may not be doing that."

"Will this generation have fond memories of the 'send' and @ keys?" Torgan asks. "Life is too short to spend checking your e-mails and text messages."

Besides being creative and inexpensive, many traditional childhood activities are great ways to strengthen kids' muscles, bones and heart, says Cheryl Richardson, the senior program manager of physical education for the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, a group of physical education and sports professionals. Richardson taught physical education for 12 years and is the mother of two children, ages 15 and 11.

### Cover story

Please see COVER STORY next page ▶

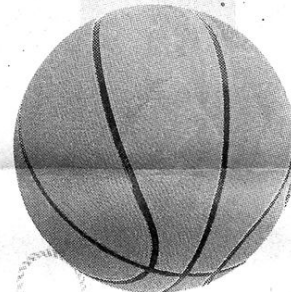


Running  
5 mph  
**121**  
calories

Walking  
3 mph  
**50**  
calories

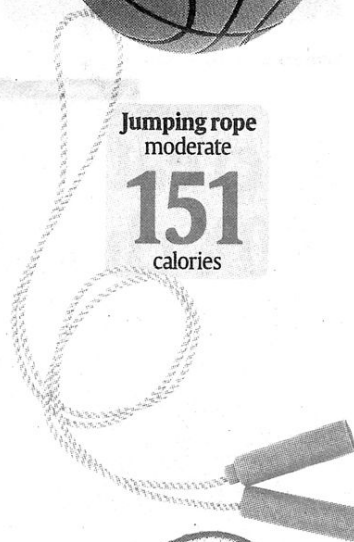
Basketball shooting hoops

**68**  
calories



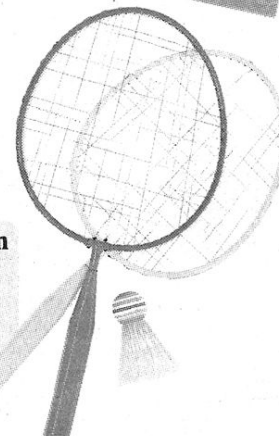
Jumping rope moderate

**151**  
calories



Badminton

**68**  
calories



# For creative play, 'a good toy is 90% child and 10% toy'

Continued from 1D

For some children reared in the Internet age, a hula hoop and hopscotch are "brand-new activities that will provide them with a sense of novelty this summer," Richardson says.

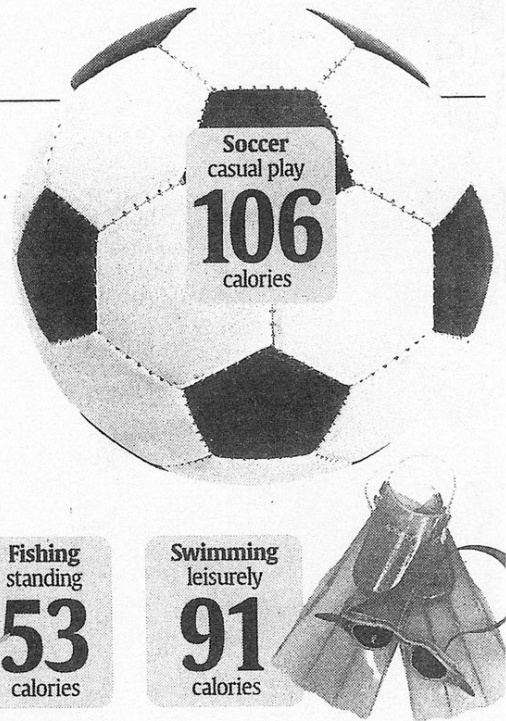
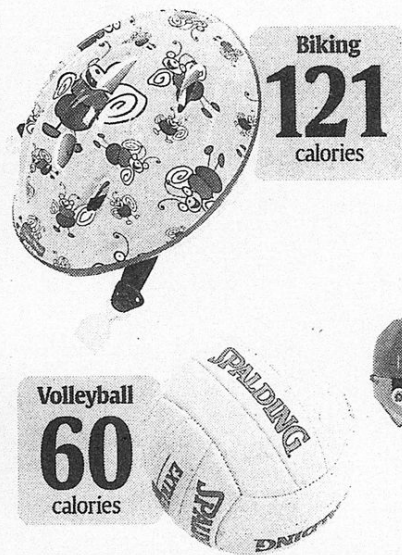
## Cover story

The government's physical activity guidelines recommend that children and adolescents do an hour or more of moderate-intensity to vigorous aerobic physical activity each day. Many exercise experts believe children today are too sedentary, which is contributing to the excess weight in one-third of children in the USA.

"I worry that millions of kids are going to spend most of the summer in front of a screen," says Russell Pate, a children's exercise researcher at the University of South Carolina. High-tech games such as *Wii Fit* and *Dance Dance Revolution* can help children move more, but kids still need to do high-energy activities that have been around for years.

"We are not going to turn the clock back to 1950 or 1960, but I applaud parents for encouraging their kids to sample activities that were more common a generation ago," Pate says. If kids are

Number of calories a 100-pound person would burn doing various summer activities for 20 minutes (continued from 1D):



Source: caloriesperhour.com; photos by Truth Leem, USA TODAY

## Corrections & Clarifications

USA TODAY is committed to accuracy. To reach us, contact Standards Editor Brent Jones at 800-872-7073 or e-mail [accuracy@usatoday.com](mailto:accuracy@usatoday.com). Please indicate whether you're responding to content online or in the newspaper.

A website address was incorrect in a story Tuesday about Joe Amacchia, author of a book on blue-collar jobs. His site is [bluecollarandproudfit.com](http://bluecollarandproudfit.com).

outside, they are much more likely to be active, he says.

James Sallis, director of the Active Living Research Program at San Diego State University, agrees. Many children enjoy exploring nature, and being active outdoors comes naturally, he says. They can go on a scavenger hunt to collect sticks, rocks or leaves, which will help them learn about nature, too.

Or give them a few simple toys, such as balls and jump ropes, and let them create their own games. You can give them a couple of big cardboard boxes and they might turn them into a house, a sled or a *Flintstones*-style foot-powered car, Sallis says.

When they are outside, the sky is the limit for the types of games they can create, says Susan Linn,

a psychologist at Harvard's Judge Baker Children's Center and author of *The Case for Make Believe: Saving Play in a Commercialized World*. "There's a myriad of jump rope games, endless versions of ball games, tag, hide-and-seek and all kinds of make-believe. They can dig rivers in dirt, crawl among rocks, explore new spaces and build outdoor hideaways."

For safety reasons, some children can't play outside as much as others. Parents whose kids have to spend a lot of time indoors should consider turning a room or portion of a room into an indoor playground with Nerf balls, beach balls and jump ropes, Sallis says. "The less structured the toys, the more the room for imagination."

They also can have hours of fun

with a card table, chairs and some blankets. They may create their own den. "They're not going to just sit inside," he says. "They are going to run around and rearrange things and bring things in and out. It's a destination center for other things they want to do."

It's amazing what children can learn through play, Torgan says. "They learn about their bodies through movement. Jumping up and falling down provides lessons in gravity. Throwing balls and other things help improve eye-hand coordination."

"Just horsing around with other kids helps them learn a sense of fairness, cooperation and social awareness," she says. "Play helps sculpt our brains. It creates valuable skills that are valuable in the workplace later in life."

## Exercise can be good old fun

Cheryl Richardson of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education suggests these retro-play ideas:

- ▶ **Draw a hopscotch game or a maze with chalk on the driveway or sidewalk.** This helps children increase the muscle strength in their upper body when they are on their hands and knees doing the drawing, and they'll get an aerobic workout when they play the game they have designed.
- ▶ **Build a sand castle.** This builds kids' upper-body and core strength when they are on their hands and knees digging.
- ▶ **Hula hoop.** It's great for fine muscle development, Richardson says. Besides whirling it around their waists, kids also can use the hoop as a jump rope, twirl it over their heads, or put it on the ground and jump in and out of it.
- ▶ **Jump rope.** This is a great aerobic and strengthening workout, she says. "Jumping rope is something I recommend for kids, especially for pre-pubescent girls, because it helps improve bone density, which is critically important as they age."
- ▶ **Go fly a kite.** People typically run with the kite with their hands over their head, raising their heart rate and getting their body to work harder, Richardson says. "The more the wind is blowing, the harder your arms have to work."
- ▶ **Play makeshift volleyball.** Tie a jump rope between two trees and hit a beach ball back and forth. For younger kids, use a balloon, because it moves slower and is easier for them to return, she says. Or use this setup to play badminton.
- ▶ **Explore playgrounds.** Activities such as climbing and crawling are strength-builders, she says. "A lot of people don't recognize the fitness value of playgrounds."

But none of this creative retro play can happen unless parents limit screen time, Linn says.

Kids today are spending more than 40 hours a week engaged with electronic media including TV, Internet, cellphones, MP3 players and DVDs, she says.

The problem with too much screen time is that it cuts into children's creative play, which is the foundation of learning, creativity and constructive problem solving, Linn says. "The licensed and electronic toys that are marketed so much on TV encourage children to follow set scripts and reduce their input to pushing buttons."

It seems as if the toys end up having more fun than the child, she says. "Children rely on these toys to be entertained rather

than actively using the toy to entertain themselves. A good toy is 90% child and 10% toy."

Some experts are looking for ways to merge the electronic media of today with play traditions of the past, Torgan says. For instance, kids might take their cellphones or digital cameras on a nature hike and take photographs of what they see.

But, she says, there are times you just want kids to turn off their phones, pick up a stick, study an ant hill or climb a tree.

These kinds of traditional activities are "not just child's play. They are for everyone," Torgan says.

Even adults can increase fitness, expand their imagination and relieve stress with retro play, she says. "You never outgrow it."