**Topic: Elementary age kids should spend more time outside.**

**PRO**

**1 Pro Contentions** (2nd and 3rd Pro Speakers defend these arguments)

**My partner and I affirm the resolution: Elementary age kids should spend more time outside.**

**Contention 1: Being outside keeps kids healthy physically and mentally.**

**World is Bad: Currently kids are inactive and suffer mental and physical issues.**

* In an article by the Child Mind Institute, it says that the average American kid spends less than 10 minutes a day outside. Instead, kids spend 7 hours a day in front of a screen (Danielle Cohen, Freelance Journalist, www.childmind.org).
  + The outside time is usually because of school needs. So, the kids spend little time outside over the summer nowadays.
* A Sanford Health study showed that children who spent most of their time indoors have less interest in physical activities with others (Dr. Danae Lund, Specialist in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health, June 2018, www. news.sanfordhealth.org).
  + Kids inability to participate in physical activities can be a side effect of too much time indoors.

**Topic Solves: Being active or simply in nature increases kids’ health.**

* Claire McCarthy states that it is important for people to spend time outdoors to get natural vitamin D. Not only is it important, but it is vital in the case of young children (Claire McCarthy, Senior Faculty Editor for Harvard Health Publishing, October 2022, www.health.harvard.edu).
  + Vitamin D helps with bone growth, better sleep, a nicer mood, and boosting human immune systems.
* It is also good for kids to get a lot of exercise. Exercise makes kids happier and helps in physical growth.
  + Young kids get exercise simply by playing outdoors. While kids could go to the gym with their parents, it is costly!
  + Researchers found that kids who played outside had improved moods, better attention span, and less anxieties compared to kids who spent a lot of time indoors.
  + Exercise increases the focus in kids. Kids with ADHD spending out in nature and active is proven to decrease their problems.
  + Playing outside is shown to lower feelings of stress.
* From the previous Sanford Health study, it is shown that children who are outside on a regular basis have better vision and other senses compared to kids who are indoors regularly.
  + Kids who played outside had heightened sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste. Children staying indoors using electronic devices only had their sight and hearing increased.

**Impact: Spending more time outside means helping kids’ health.**

* The health of kids all over the world is important. Being a healthy kid leads to being a healthy adult.
* Having a more developed outside life and overall active lifestyle leads to having a better attitude, better grades, and a better career as an adult. So just going outside for 90 minutes a day could mean a better future.

**Contention 2: It is important for children to grow further emotionally.**

**World is Bad: Kids are currently struggling to interact and understand.**

* A study from the National Library of Medicine showed kids shut inside during Covid-19 suffered mental stress and loss of social skills. One could only imagine the long-term damages if kids were kept away from friends and the outdoors longer (Nazish Imran, Associate Professor, Jul-Aug 2020, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).
* The previously used Harvard Health article showed kids who grow up without spending time in nature do not understand the importance of saving the environment.
  + They state, “The future of our planet depends on our children, they need to learn to appreciate it.”

**Topic is Good: Kids who spend a lot of time outdoors show maturity.**

* The Child Mind Institute showed once again that spending time outdoors in nature can build confidence in kids’ lives.
  + This goes for school, bonding with friends, and other everyday activities important to a healthy life.
* The Sanford Health’s study also noted that kids learn through trial-and-error outdoors. Kids learn to adapt to different situations.
  + Having outdoor play helps kids learn to take turns and share their toys. They also learn other skills that help later in life.
  + Children usually invent new games as they play with others, gaining communication and planning skills.
  + Those who regularly play outdoors have more curiosity. This includes better task management skills.

**Impact: More emotional growth means a more secured future.**

* Croner-I Health and Safety says having a stable emotional life helps kids deal with problems as they age (Liz Hodgman, Childcare Consultant, April 2012, www. app.croneri.co.uk).
  + Kids can become more willing to make positive choices and deal less with anxiety.

**PRO Response to CON Arguments**

**Answering the argument about human safety**

* Even though studies show that viewing plants is important, it is more important to experience nature in person. When looking at nature versus playing in nature, playing is better. This is because of the positive benefits of physical activity in nature. In time, kids will grow up and have to interact with others and nature. By not giving them time to do this as kids it will make it much harder on them as adults.
* Kids will indeed be safer from unknown dangers indoors. But they will also be unable to test themselves mentally and physically. If you have taken on the responsibility of being a parent, that means you have to make time to spend time with your kids. Some of this time can be spent going out, according to the Australian Parenting Website. Going out, you can teach your kids about road safety, places to avoid, and overall safe practices to engage in while outdoors (The Australian Parenting Website, April 2022, [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au))
* When it comes to the health benefits of looking at a plant, so much more can be achieved by simply going outside and observing the plants while surrounded by the environment. This could be a relaxed stroll or a physically strenuous activity. Studies have shown that being actually outdoors has been linked to reduced cortisol levels, muscle tension and heart rates, which all contribute to heart issues later on in life (Andrew Avitt, Office of Communication, March 2021, [www.fs.usda.gov](http://www.fs.usda.gov)).

**Answering the argument about social adaptation**

* Kids will learn more about caring for plants if they work in an outdoor garden instead of a small plant on their windowsill. Having the garden outdoors promotes access to sunshine. Sunshine is something we have shown to be a key factor to kids’ growth and development.
* Documentaries are mostly meant to be entertaining. Indeed, they sometimes contain information that is relevant and correct, but this information can be pick and choose, where it is attempting to paint a picture in a different way then what is reality. It would be better for a kid to go out and experience for themselves what they think of a subject that is easily accessible to them. This could be looking at observable nature or walking to the library to get a book that is more informative with better primary sources (Mridu Chandra, Writer and Filmmaker, September 2009, [www.cmsimpact.org](http://www.cmsimpact.org)).
* Physical activity outdoors is better than activity indoors. From the importance of fresh air on sleep and the cost effectiveness of just simply running outside versus buying expensive equipment, if you are going to exercise, doing it outdoors is the healthier option (Lappset, [www.lappset.com](http://www.lappset.com)).

**CON**

**1 CON: Case and Contentions** (2nd and 3rd Con Speakers defend these arguments)

**My partner and I are against the resolution: Elementary age kids should spend more time outside.**

**Contention 1: Human Safety**

**World is Good: Viewing nature can be enough.**

* Researchers found that getting a view of green space gives the brain a chance to relax (Louise Delagran, Writer and Web Producer, www. takingcharge.csh.umn.edu).
  + A University of Minnesota study looked at patients having gallbladder surgery. Some were shown images of trees. Those shown the images had fewer bad results from their surgery compared to those who were not exposed to images.
* In another study, researchers found that adults with high anxiety levels lowered their levels by looking at a plant. Most of the adults saw a huge drop in their resting heart rate and blood pressure after being around and interacting with a plant (Min-sun Lee, Department of Horticulture Sciences, April 2015, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).
  + If this is the case for adults, for kids, the benefits could be higher, or just as good as going outside on a regular basis. All you need is an indoor plant.

**Topic is Bad: Kids risk injury and sickness by going outside and being with others.**

* Fears over safety and traffic prevent kids from playing outdoors. More than half of parents said their children did not play outside due to fears. (Make Time to Play, June 2013, [www.maketime2play.co.uk](https://www.maketime2play.co.uk/63-of-parents-believe-it-is-more-dangerous-to-play-outside-now/)).
  + Many of the parents stated that their reasoning was that the world is a much more dangerous place now than it was when they were kids.
  + Increase in vehicle usage has been also a main issue noted as a concern by many worried parents. Kids playing on the sidewalk can easily stray into the street and get in harms way.
* Viral droplets are sent out by a person infected with COVID. With concerns of health safety, kids playing outside with other kids can be a risk if COVID cases were to spike again (Brianna Bell, Freelance Journalist, September 2021, [www.singlecare.com](http://www.singlecare.com)).
  + Kids interacting outdoors with others are at risk at getting COVID or becoming exposed to it. If that happens, the entire household of all parties involved becomes at risk.

**Impact: The safety and security of kids is more important.**

* Parents do not always have the time or ability to keep an eye on their children when they are playing outside. They also might not have the money to keep up with the cost of a daycare worker or babysitter to watch the kids while they play.
* Looking back to Min-sun Lee’s study, hospitals use pictures and images of plants due to the large number of studies that exist proving that images will help heal patients who cannot be outdoors. If it is a commonly used practice in health-care settings, then it would only make sense for it to be used in everyday home settings.

**Contention 2: Social Adaptation**

**World is Good: Outdoor activities can be done indoors.**

* Kids can still learn and engage with nature from the safety and comfort of their home without the dirt and danger. Kids can have their own windowsill garden and learn the importance of caring for a plant. According to the article *Take Them Outside*, there are many activities that can be possible (Take Them Outside, February 2022, www.takethemoutside.com).
  + Books can be purchased for gardening or learning activities. Kids can learn about the cool kinds of plants in the world.
  + Even collectibles can be obtained for children, such as pressed leaves, flowers, or branches.
* Documentaries do a good job of showing nature to kids. They continue to educate kids and are used in the classroom.
  + Planet Earth, Disney Nature, and Mission Blue are commonly used nature documentary series. There are hundreds of other examples that have helped instruct kids about the importance and marvels of nature.
* Physical activities that are typically done outdoors can now quite easily be done indoors. According to the MD Anderson Cancer Center, the indoor world contains lots of activities that are the right physical challenge for kids (Markham Heid, Health Reporter and Writer, February 2016, www.mdanderson.org).
  + Examples include having kids do chores, working at workout activity stations, helping out in the kitchen, and encouraging them to take dance lessons.

**Topic is Bad: Pollution issues make it unsafe to go out**

* Due to many technological changes, problems with pollution and other environmental issues are starting to make the outdoors a harmful place.
  + The US Energy Information Administration says that the United States produced 5,130 million metric tons of energy-related carbon dioxide in one year. This has bad effects on the environment and breathing in polluted air.
* Pollution has been associated with many human and animal health issues, including heart attacks, asthma, bronchitis, hospital and emergency room visits, work and school days lost, restricted activities due to pollution warnings, and early death (United States Environmental Protection Agency, May 2019, [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)).
  + The side effects of pollutions and health issues are scarily similar to that of smoking cigarettes, or to being exposed to secondhand smoke.
* According to a recent study in the medical journal The Lancet, the air in China is so thick with pollution that it is unsafe to go about without the use of a mask. Remaining outdoors for long periods of time can be considered unsafe and bad to your health. It was estimated in this study that 1.24 million people died from exposure to air pollution in 2017 (U.S. Embassy Tbilisi, November 2020, ge.usembassy.gov).

**Impact: Society has adapted well without the need for going outside as often.**

* While getting a breath of fresh air here and there is nice, it is no longer considered needed for kids growing up. It is easy to get energy out through means of indoor workouts. Interacting with friends can be easily done through indoor hangouts.
* With air filters and other safe and secure methods found indoors, it only makes sense to do most outdoor activities indoors now. Society has advanced to allow such things.

**CON Responds to PRO Arguments**

**Answering the argument about keeping kids healthy mentally and physically**

* Humans have proven, especially during quarantine, that indoor exercises and activities can be done to maintain and improve the quality of life in kids.
* Mentally, spending time indoors with technology has been shown to actually increase the IQ of kids. Tomoe Kanaya of Cornell University conducted research, that showed the average IQ of kids was actually higher for younger generations in comparison to older generations. This is despite the fact that younger generations spend most of their times indoors (Lauran Cole, MentalUp Writer, January 2022, https://www.mentalup.co/blog/positive-and-negative-effects-of-technology-on-children).

**Answering the argument about the importance for children to grow emotionally**

* The WGU of Washington has shown that while children spend a lot of time in front of a screen, most of that time is spent gaining skills that will benefit them in the future. For example, digital multitasking has led kids to being good at multi-tasking in their everyday lives (WGU Washington, October 2019, https://www.wgu.edu/blog/impact-technology-kids-today-tomorrow1910.html#close).
* Kids being indoors spending most of their time with digital devices has actually led to higher mental skill growth when used with educational tools. Kids learn problem solving and can apply the skills they learn to the real world as they continue to age.