

YMCA Basketball Fitness Activities for 3-5-Year-Olds

Key Idea	Description	Page ¹
Cardio-respiratory Fitness	Gather children into a group. “Everyone hold one hand up and make a fist. Squeeze your fist tightly, then let go. Keep tightening and letting go.” Children continue for 10 counts. “Your heart is a special muscle that tightens and relaxes just like your fist is doing. Your heart is about the size of your fist. Let’s put our fists over our chests. Every time it tightens, or beats, your heart pumps blood all over your body. When you run during basketball, your heart beats faster. The beat slows down when you slow down. Let’s run with high knees for 15 counts while we count together. Stop and feel your heartbeat by putting your hand over your chest.” Model for players. “Running strengthens your heart and lungs and improves your fitness.”	43
Flexibility	Bring a rubber band and show children or have them visualize one. “This rubber band is like our muscles. When I pull it, it stretches; when I let go, it pulls back to its original shape.” Show the action of a band—stretch it out and back; repeat, using a gentle, slow action. “Your muscles work the same way. When you reach and stretch, your muscles are stretching just like the rubber band. When your body comes back, your muscles go back to their original shape. Everyone slowly reach down to the floor with your arms and then bring your arms back up.” Have children repeat three times. “Your leg muscles need to stretch because we use them a lot in basketball; it makes them more flexible. When muscles are flexible, it keeps them from getting hurt and makes the muscles feel good.”	58
General Fitness	Gather children into a group. “Everyone jump 10 times. Our muscles help us jump. When you use your muscles a long time without getting too tired, it improves your <i>endurance</i> , which means you can run longer without getting tired. Now run really fast to the free throw line and back.” Wait for them to return. “Running strengthens your heart and lungs. Now touch your toes; try to keep your fingers down there while I count to 10. Stretching makes you flexible, like a rubber band. When we play basketball, our bodies run, jump, and move. It makes our bodies stronger and improves our fitness, which means we can run and play longer and faster. Having good physical fitness is important for basketball and for being healthy. Every practice we’ll talk about fitness in our Fitness Circles.	39

¹ This page number refers to pages in the “Plans for 3- to 5-Year-Olds” document found on the “Season and Practice Plans” page in the YMCA’s **Coaching Basketball** online course.

Key Idea	Description	Page¹
Healthy Habits	Gather children in a circle. "Do you know that when your body doesn't eat healthy foods and get enough sleep it moves slowly. Let's pretend we have no energy to move because we didn't eat enough healthy foods or get enough sleep." Begin to move slowly and encourage the children to follow. Move extremely slowly. "Everyone stop. Now I am going to fill your bodies up with healthy foods." Act out giving them foods. "Pretend we are sleeping. When I say 'Wake up!' you can move faster because you have enough energy and enough rest. Wake up and move faster. Stop! What are some other healthy habits you have learned?" Examples: daily exercise, brushing teeth, saying no to drugs, no smoking. "It's important for everyone to practice healthy habits."	54
Healthy Habits	Gather children into a group. "When I say 'Go!' we all will run as fast as we can, without bumping into each other, staying in this area." Mark boundary areas for children. "Ready, go!" Have children run for about a minute or until fatigued. "You had enough energy to run. But when you don't take care of your body, you can get tired much faster playing basketball. I am going to say a habit and you shout if it is healthy or unhealthy." Examples: taking drugs, smoking, brushing teeth, drinking plenty of water, getting plenty of sleep/rest, eating a variety of foods. "Can you think of any others? Healthy or unhealthy?"	72
Muscular Strength and Endurance	Gather children into a circle. "Everyone find your own space so that you don't bump your neighbor. You're going to run in your own spot for 30 seconds, then stop. Ready, go!" Time children and verbally let them know the time remaining; stop them at the end of the time. "What part of the body did we just use the most when we ran?" Encourage their responses. "When we play basketball, which part of the body do we use the most?" Wait for their responses. "Muscles in our body help us to move our legs. Playing basketball will help our leg muscles get stronger and grow bigger."	46
Muscular Strength and Endurance	Gather children in a group. Have a ball and show children the differences between a dribble with minimal effort and close to maximum effort. "Watch how the ball moves when I dribble it two different times." Show both dribbles to children. "Let's make a circle and you show me how you would dribble the ball. Show me a slow dribble; pretend you have a ball. Now step back two big steps and show me a fast dribble as you go across the circle." Highlight the ball going farther in the second dribble. "You can dribble the ball farther when the muscles in your arms are strong. The muscles in your arms get stronger when you practice dribbling."	62

Key Idea	Description	Page¹
Muscular Strength and Endurance	Have children spread out in a group. "Put your hand on the front of your thigh, then lift your leg up and set it down. Did you feel the muscle get tight when you lifted it up and then relax when you set it down? Try it again five times." Assist players if needed. "Muscles tighten or contract when you move. You use the thigh muscles or quadriceps when you play basketball. The more you practice, the stronger your thigh or quadriceps muscles will get. That's called improving your muscular strength."	69
Safety and Rules	Gather children into a circle. "What are the easiest ways to get hurt while playing basketball?" Wait for answers (slipping and falling, getting poked in the eye, getting hit in the face with a pass). "What's the best way to keep from getting hurt? How do we prevent these accidents from happening?" Point out that while no sport is injury free, their risks of being hurt are much reduced when they follow the rules and care about each other.	50
Training and Conditioning	Gather children into a circle. "What will you do tonight after you eat dinner?" Wait for their responses. "At the end of the day what do you do?" Encourage children to discuss sleep. "Let's pretend you are at your homes, and you climb into bed to go to sleep. Everyone lie down. Now let's pretend it's morning and a new day. You don't have basketball practice today. Your body needs to move every day to stay in good physical condition for basketball. What should we do to move our bodies?" Wait for their responses. If a child suggests biking, walking, or swimming, and so on, have everyone pretend to do that activity. Then have them "sleep" again, wake up, and choose another physical activity idea.	65