

YMCA Basketball Fitness Activities for 6-7-Year-Olds

Key Idea	Description	Page ¹
General Fitness	<p>“In basketball, running makes our hearts beat faster and our leg muscles stronger. Spread out into your own space. Everyone run in place and I will pass the ball to some of you. If you get the ball, pass it back to me and keep running!” Continue for about 30 seconds. “Playing basketball improves our physical conditioning or fitness. We get better at running, jumping, and dribbling the ball, and we can keep going longer before we get too tired. How can I keep from getting too tired when I’m running?” Pacing. “How about dribbling?” Practice at home. “It is also important to take a rest when you need one and to drink water during practice and at home. We will talk more about the different areas of fitness in our Fitness Circles throughout the season.”</p>	81
Flexibility	<p>Bring a rubber band and show it to the children or have them visualize one. “This rubber band is like our muscles. Can you tell me why?” Listen for children’s responses—stretches when pulled, goes back to original shape, and so on. Demonstrate band movement. “Your muscles work the same way. When you reach and stretch, your muscles stretch just like the rubber band. When your body comes back, your muscles go back to their original shape. Everyone reach down to the floor with your arms slowly and then bring your arms back up.” Have children repeat three times. “Your leg muscles need to stretch because we use them the most in basketball. It makes them more flexible. When muscles are flexible, it keeps them from getting hurt and makes the muscles feel good.”</p>	85
Cardio-respiratory Fitness	<p>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. Every time it tightens, or beats, it pumps blood all over your body. When you play basketball, your heart beats faster and you breathe faster. Run in place with high knees. Feel your lungs and feel your heart beating by placing your hands over your chest. Count how many times your heart beats.” Time for 15 seconds. Ask players the number they counted. “Running helps you improve your cardiorespiratory fitness—the heart and lungs working together to get blood to your whole body.”</p>	88

¹ This page number refers to pages in the “Plans for 6- to 7-Year-Olds” document found on the “Season and Practice Plans” page in the YMCA’s **Coaching Basketball** online course.

Key Idea	Description	Page¹
Cardio-respiratory Fitness	Gather children in a group. “Everyone put your hand up in the front of you and make a fist. What did we pretend our fist was at the last practice?” Wait for response—should be the heart. “What do our hearts do?” Wait for responses—pump blood. “Everybody open and close your fist. Put your hand over your chest and feel what is happening. Now, let’s run to the hoop and back. Will our hearts beat faster or slower?” Listen to responses—should be faster. “Put your hand over your chest. Is your heart beating faster or slower? Are your lungs breathing faster or slower? When we run during basketball, the heart beats faster just like the fist opening and closing, and the lungs breathe faster. They slow down when we slow down. Making your heart beat faster helps to improve your cardiorespiratory fitness.”	91
Cardio-respiratory Fitness	Gather children in a group. “Everyone find their own space. Put your fist up in front of you. We pretend our fist is our...” wait for response—heart. “The heart does what things?” Wait for response—pumps blood and beats faster when we run or move faster. “When I say ‘Go!’ run in your own space and make your fist open and close faster at the same time. When I say ‘Stop!’, stop as fast as you can.” Begin activity. “When you run, your heart beats faster. Every time your heart beats faster, it gets stronger because it is a muscle. Muscles get stronger when you use them. Basketball is a great way to keep your heart healthy and strong and improve your cardiorespiratory fitness.”	94
Flexibility	Gather children in a group. Show them a rubber band or have them visualize one. Demonstrate how it stretches. “We pretend this rubber band is...” Wait for response—a muscle. “It moves back and forth, stretching and moving. Let’s move our bodies just like the rubber band. Reach and stretch up and down. It’s important to stretch slowly without bouncing or quick movement.” Have children continue for one minute. “Our muscles help us to move and stretch. We need to stretch muscles to keep them flexible or able to move easily. When muscles can move easily they don’t get injured and our bodies feel good.”	97
Muscular Strength and Endurance	Gather children into a group. “Okay, everyone get down on the ground and do the crab walk.” Continue for 30 seconds to one minute. “Are your arms and legs getting tired? You used many of your arm and leg muscles to do the crab walk. What parts of the body do you use the most for basketball? That’s right—your arms and legs. The more you practice basketball, the stronger your muscles will get. Then you can keep going much longer before you get too tired. What things can we do to get our muscles stronger for basketball?” Let them answer running and dribbling. “Right. Now pretend you have a basketball in front of you. Pretend to dribble the ball in your spot.” Have children dribble for five counts. “Practicing dribbling helps make your arms stronger.”	100

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General Fitness	Gather children into a circle. “What do our bodies need to do every day to keep going?” Wait for their responses. Discuss sleep and rest, eating, and doing regular activities. “There’s one more thing that’s really important—being active and exercising. Let’s pretend it’s a day that you do not have basketball practice. Your body needs to move every day. With no basketball today, what should we do to move our bodies?” Wait for their responses. If a child suggests an activity such as biking or swimming, have everyone act out that activity. Act out three activities. “It’s important to be active when you don’t have basketball practice. Your body needs to move every day.”	103
General Fitness	Gather children into a circle. “Everyone is going to run in place. Let’s start. Pretend that your body is going to run out of energy because you ate too many chips and drank a soda before practice. Start running slower and slower, and now stop! Now let’s pretend that you ate a peanut butter sandwich and drank a glass of milk and a glass of water before practice. Let’s run in place.” Continue for 30 seconds. “See how you’re able to run much longer and keep your energy? Eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of water are healthy habits for every day. You should drink water several times a day and drink even more when you’re exercising. Also make sure to get enough sleep; exercise; brush your teeth; and say no to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Keep your body healthy!”	107
General Fitness	Gather children into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Tell them that each cone represents a different food group. “This cone is healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, meats, milk, and breads. This other cone is special treat foods, such as chips, soda, candy, and sweet snacks. What foods can you eat to keep your body healthy, with enough energy for basketball?” As they respond, have them stand near the cone they choose. “It is important to eat more healthy foods. They give you more energy for basketball and help you grow. Special treat foods should be eaten in small amounts. Can you tell me other examples of healthy foods and special treat foods?”	110