

High levels of physical activity linked to better academic performance in boys

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A recent Finnish study shows that higher levels of physical activity are related to better academic achievement during the first three school years particularly in boys.

The study published in *PLOS ONE* was conducted in collaboration with the Physical Activity and Nutrition in Children (PANIC) Study conducted at the University of Eastern Finland and the First Steps Study at the University of Jyväskylä.

The study investigated the relationships of different types of [physical activity](#) and sedentary behavior assessed in the first grade to reading and [arithmetic skills](#) in grades 1–3 among 186 Finnish children. Higher levels of physical activity at recess were related to better reading skills and participation in organized sports was linked to higher arithmetic test scores in grades 1–3. Particularly boys with higher levels of physical activity, and especially walking and bicycling to and from school, had better reading skills than less active boys. Furthermore, boys who spent more time doing activities involving reading and writing on their leisure time had better reading skills compared to boys who spent less time doing those activities. Moreover, boys with more computer and video game time achieved higher arithmetic test scores than boys with less computer and video game time.

In girls, there were only few associations of physical activity and [sedentary behavior](#) with academic achievement when various confounding factors were controlled for.

The findings of the present study highlight the potential of physical activity during recess and participation in organized sports in the improvement of [academic achievement](#) in children. Particularly boys' school success may benefit from [higher levels](#) of physical activity and active school transportation, reading and writing as well as moderate computer and video game use.

More information: [dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0107031](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0107031)

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