

FUN AND GAMES FOR HISTORICAL KIDS

School holiday entertainment activities for Australian children have changed significantly over the past 150 years.

This activity booklet invites you to learn about children's schooling and amusements from the past; to be creative using your imagination and enjoy some dynamic historical activities!

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Today children are fortunate to have holiday periods between school terms. However, this was not always the case. In the 1840s for example, students were only permitted to take one week off from school at Christmas time, until a second vacation week was introduced in the 1860s at Easter time.

[Click for more information.](#)

The first 'schools' in the Hawkesbury district began in private homes, usually for children of wealthy families who could afford tutors. Many of the early schools, were paid for by local families and operated by missionaries such as John Youl in Ebenezer in 1810. These private schools often received government assistance to provide basic literacy. In 1805 for example, the government provided a large brick building for a schoolhouse in Bridge Street, Windsor.

[Click for more information.](#)



[Image source 1.]

Governor Macquarie also organised for a two-storey brick building, to be built by John Brabyn in 1819 at Wilberforce to be used by local school children. This building still survives.

[Click for more information.](#)



[Image source 2.]

Following the Public-School Act in 1867, Windsor residents began campaigning for a public school, with public education in the Hawkesbury district commencing soon after. By this time students were familiar with the luxury of school holidays. Occurring during Easter and Christmas, children spent time with their families, helping with chores and preparing for the Holy Days.

By 1930, a three term school year was introduced which continued until the 1980s, when the four term school year replaced it.

So, what did children do during their holidays? As leisure time began to increase how did children enjoy their breaks?

Without the options available for children today, like playing on computers, gaming devices and watching TV, how did they fill in their time?

In the 19th century, children had very few shop bought toys or games, so they would make or invent their own games or toys.



[Image source 3.]

SKIPPING

Jump rope was a popular active game from the 19th and 20th centuries. Both girls and boys enjoyed this activity. Today we refer to it as skipping. Modern skipping ropes are usually made from synthetic fibres with plastic handles but in the past skipping ropes were made from cotton or jute often with no handles, unless you were from a wealthy family then you might have had one with wooden handles.

ACTIVITY

Make a Skipping Rope:

Maybe you have some cord, jute, or strong fibre at home that you could use to jump with? If not, you can purchase rope material from a hardware shop.

To work out the best length to use, stand on the middle of the rope, holding it on both sides almost up to your shoulders. Ask an adult to cut the rope on either side and tie a knot in each end.

Warm Up Exercise:

It's important to warm up our muscles ready for exercise and to stretch. Can you run around the back garden to warm up? If not, try jogging on the spot for 30 seconds. Stand up straight, then bend over and see if you can touch your toes. Making sure those legs are straight! Then stand on tip toes and reach as high as you can. Now you're ready!!!

Skipping Exercise:

If you're new to skipping, you can start off with 10 jumps. Once you have counted 10 jumps have a rest for 10 secs and do 10 more jumps with the rope. Repeat this 3 times.

If you feel you can do more, keep going! See how many jumps you can do in one minute. Maybe an adult can time you? Or join you? See if you can get in more jumps than someone else from your family. You could do this activity every day. Try and increase your jumps to 20!

Let us know how much fun you had! Parents could post your photos and how many jumps you can do and tag us.

Benefits of Skipping for Children:

- Building gross motor strength
- Co-ordination skills
- Bilateral skills
- Balance
- Strengthening leg, arm & core muscles.



[Image source 4.]



[Image source 5.]



[Image source 6.]

HOOPS

During the 19th and 20th centuries children enjoyed playing with hoops. Today you can buy hoops from retail or sports stores in assorted sizes and colours and they are usually made from plastic. Originally hoops were made from cane and children enjoyed them in many ways. The most popular game with hoops, was to roll them and see how far you could keep them rolling by tapping them with a stick and running next to them.

ACTIVITY

Hoops Exercises:

Do you have a hoop? Let's have some fun and see how far you can roll it, before it falls over. Why don't you challenge your family and see who can roll it the furthest!

Other ways we use hoops today is to hula hoop. See who can hold the hoop up while hulaing the longest! Or you could use hoops to create an obstacle course at home. You could run through them or jump with two feet together.

We could strengthen our arms using hoops as well. See if you can throw a ball or bean bag into the hoop. How many can you get to land inside the hoop?

See if you can come up with other ways to play with hoops!

Tag us on Facebook in photos of how you had fun playing with your hoop.

Benefits of Hoops for Children:

- Gross motor skills
- Hand- eye coordination
- Body awareness
- Crossing midline
- Strengthening leg muscles.



[Image source 7.]



[Image source 8.]

Tag us in some pictures of your leapfrog activity. I wonder how many you can do.

Benefits of Leap Frog for Children:

- Jumping skills
- Strengthening arm, shoulder & back muscles (something that is very important to help us with our posture when standing and sitting)

LEAP FROG

Leap frog was a very popular game played by children during the 19th and 20th centuries. There is evidence that leapfrog was even played as early as the 16th century, however it appears to have reached the peak of its popularity amongst children in the 1800s.

This is a fun and active game that you can play with your whole family.

ACTIVITY

Leap Frog:

You can start off easy by asking family members to get down low on the ground and see if you can jump over them. As you get better, ask them to stand and bend forwards so you can attempt a higher jump. If it's easier you could play using cushions, clothes baskets, etc.



[Image source 9.]

IMAGE SOURCE LIST

1. Class at Currency Creek School now Glossodia, 1918. Source : Hawkesbury City Council Library Service.
2. School House adjacent to St. John's Church of England, Wilberforce NSW taken in 1937. Source : Hawkesbury City Council Library Service.
3. Children skipping. British Library.
<https://www.bl.uk/playtimes/articles/skip-ping-games>
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5. Knot handle rope. Kuebler Sport.
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6. Boys playing with hoops, Wythemshawe, Greater Manchester, 17 March 1946.
<https://www.ssplprints.com/image/83939/abell-boys-playing-with-hoops-wythemshawe-greater-manchester-17-march-1946>
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8. Leap frog game 1938. Cocosse Journal.
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