



# Play Your Way Instant Recess Toolkit

## What is Play Your Way Instant Recess?

**Play Your Way (PYW) Instant Recess** is a fun, short (5 to 10 minutes), and organized physical activity break organized during the workday. It can be done anywhere, at any time, and is a great way to get moving and feel energized while breaking up the work day.

## Background:

Employees can experience immediate benefits from Instant Recess including increased energy levels and improved mood. Having Instant Recess as an ongoing resource at the workplace can also lead to long term effects including decreases stress, increased productivity and increased employee morale.

## How to start Instant Recess

Find the right space and time for employees to be active. Then, use the script provided to lead a physical activity break from the PYW activities list. Remember: the most important component of Instant Recess is incorporating movement in the workday in a fun and playful way.

## Instructions

### Consider Logistics:

- **Ask for leadership support:** PYW Instant Recess should be introduced to the workplace as an ongoing resource. Start off with a 6-week pilot to see how participation is. When identifying the space, time and day of Instant Recess—consider allowing Department Leaders to weigh in and ask them to support the activity by encouraging staff to participate and by participating themselves.
- **Choose the right space.** Find a space where staff can safely gather once a week for Instant Recess. Consider break areas, conference rooms, clearings between cubicles, hallways, or going outside for fresh air. The space doesn't have to be large, just large enough for everyone to safely move. Make sure the location you choose for Instant Recess is close in proximity to employees. The farther they have to go, the more likely they may opt out.
- **Schedule Instant Recess:**
  - **Choose a day of the week.** Keep in mind alternative work schedules and heavy meeting/offsite days. Select a day that allows for most people to attend.
  - **Choose a time of day.** It is difficult to find a time that works for all, so aim for a time that works for most. Consider making it in the morning to energize the office for the day or in the afternoon to shake off the post-lunch drowsiness.
- **Who is leading the exercises?** It's ideal to have a dedicated person to help lead the activity. If you can't lead the activities, then ask a colleague to lead them. Make sure to schedule it into your day to avoid having other obligations conflict. You can also consider rotating leaders for each week. Use this [sign up sheet](#) to help schedule leaders and diversify the activities throughout the weeks.

## Advertise & promote:

- Send an email using this [template email](#) to promote Instant Recess.
- [Post flyers](#) in the break area or locations that are highly visible to employees.

## Start Instant Recess!

- **Select Exercises that work for your Employees.** Use the [PLAY Activities deck](#). If employees like being active, pick an activity that gets their hearts pumping. If they prefer lower intensity movement, consider low-impact aerobics or seated moves. Select recess activities that are suitable for your employees.
- **Before Recess: Practice.** Make sure that the leader practices the exercises beforehand to ensure proper posture and help participants if they need assistance. It's important that the person leading the activity feels comfortable with the activity and with providing instruction and guidance for other participants.
- **Start the Activity.** Here is a [guide](#) to help lead activities effectively. It is important to go over safety instructions. Make sure that the leader does not go over the specified time and is ready to provide exercise variations depending on the fitness level of participants.
- **After Recess: Reflect.** What worked and what did not? Were the exercises too difficult, or too easy? Did the leader go over the specified time? Adjust teaching style and exercise accordingly.

## Tips to encourage Participation

- **Send a Reminder Email.** Gather an interest list and send an email to participants with location and time the morning of the activity. Use the [email reminder template provided](#).
- **Provide Personal Reminders.** [Distribute desk signs](#) to employees participating in Instant Recess to encourage others to join in.
- **Music – Let’s Groove!** Having music makes exercise fun and encourages people to keep coming to these sessions. Consider some catchy songs from this [Play Your Way playlist](#). Small speakers or even your phone will do the trick.
- **Get employees involved.** Let employees pick exercises of the day, consider a rotation of employees who will lead instant recess, or let participants choose the songs to play during instant recess.
- **Increase Instant Recess frequency.** If the room is filling up quickly, then adding another session during the week ensures that people have space to move, which makes them more motivated to attend these sessions. Increasing the frequency also accounts for people who were unable to participate in the first session due to conflict.