

Today's kids run a lot slower, a study says

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 12.03.13

Word Count **366**



Second-graders at Brookdale Elementary School run laps around the gym during a physical education class instructed by a YMCA staff member in Parkland, Wash., on Jan. 3, 2012. Photo: Janet Jensen/Tacoma News Tribune/MCT

DALLAS — Kids today can't keep up with their parents. Why? Because kids aren't getting enough exercise.

Grant Tomkinson's job is to study fitness.

For 46 years, children around the world have been timed on how fast they can run. They were also measured on how far they could go. Tomkinson gathered all those running times and he and his team compared them.

The results were not pretty: kids today are slower and weaker than kids 30 years ago.

"Kids Are Less Active"

Tomkinson said that for both boys and girls of all ages, fitness levels have dropped.

"It makes sense. We have kids that are less active than before," said Dr. Stephen Daniels. He is a Colorado doctor who treats children.

Children 6 and older should get at least one hour of exercise per day. Right now, only one-third of American kids are getting that much exercise.

There are many reasons why kids today are less fit. Tomkinson and Daniels said that weight might be the problem. Many children in the United States are at an [unhealthy weight \(https://www.newsela.com/?tag=obesity\)](https://www.newsela.com/?tag=obesity). Being very overweight makes it harder to run or do any heart-pumping exercise.

Television and video games may be a problem too. Many kids may be spending time in front of screens instead of playing, they said. Also, some kids live in unsafe neighborhoods. They cannot go outdoors to play, they added.

Heavier And Slower

There's no more gym class at many schools, Daniels said. For some kids, recess is the only chance they get to exercise during school, he added.

Sam Kass is a chef at the White House. He also helps first lady Michelle Obama with her Let's Move program. The first lady started the program to help kids eat more healthy food and exercise.

Kass said schools have to get involved. Today's children are the least active in U.S. history, he said.

American kids are not alone. Young Chinese students have become slower and heavier.

Experts blame China's school system. Getting into college is very hard. They say Chinese students have to spend too much time studying for tests. They also blame the Internet and video games. Such activities take away from outdoor time.

Quiz

- 1 All the following are reasons why children today are less fit EXCEPT:
 - (A) They do not attend gym class.
 - (B) They watch too much television.
 - (C) They spend too much time studying.
 - (D) They spend too much time outdoors.

- 2 Select the paragraph from the article that provides the MOST evidence that too much schoolwork may be to blame for some people not getting enough exercise.

- 3 How long should a child over 6 exercise each day?
 - (A) 20 minutes
 - (B) 30 minutes
 - (C) 60 minutes
 - (D) 120 minutes

- 4 According to the article, how is Michelle Obama trying to get kids fit?
 - (A) She passed a law that all schools must offer gym class.
 - (B) She timed how fast students around the U.S .could run.
 - (C) She is encouraging schools to give kids less homework.
 - (D) She started a fitness program for kids called Let's Move.

Answer Key

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Paragraph 13:

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