

Appendix

Playground Checklist

Note: This checklist is not intended as a research tool but as an aid to planning and evaluating playgrounds.

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CHECK	SECTION I. What does the playground contain?
	1. A hard-surfaced area with space for games and a network of paths for wheeled toys. Strategically placed goals for such activities as basketball and soccer.
	2. Sand and sand play equipment including a variety of toys, blocks, scoops, and containers.
	3. Water play areas with fountains, pools and sprinklers, and water play equipment.
	4. Dramatic play structures (playhouses, cars or boats with complementary equipment such as adjacent sand and water, and housekeeping equipment).
	5. A superstructure with room for many children at a time and with a variety of challenges and exercise options (entries, exits, and levels).
	6. Mound(s) of earth for climbing and digging.
	7. Trees and natural areas for shade, nature study, and play.
	8. Continuous challenge, linkage of areas, functional physical boundaries, vertical and horizontal treatment (hills and valleys).
	9. Construction area with junk materials such as tires, crates, planks, boards, bricks, and nails; tools should be provided and demolition and construction allowed.
	10. A purchased or built vehicle, airplane, boat, or car that has been made safe, but not stripped of its play value (should be changed or relocated after a period of time to renew interest).
	11. Equipment for active play: a variety of overhead apparatus, climbers, slides, balancing devices,

	swings, etc.
	12. A large soft area (grass, bark mulch, etc.) for organized games. A concrete or asphalt area for organized games.
	13. Small semi-private spaces at the child's own scale: tunnels, niches, playhouses, private or special places partially enclosed by trellises, plants, beams.
	14. Fences, gates, walls, and windows that provide security for young children and are adaptable for learning/play.
	15. A garden for flowers located so that they are protected from play, but with easy access for children to tend them. Special nature areas such as butterfly gardens. Gardening tools are available. A greenhouse for plants greatly enhances nature study.
	16. Provisions for housing of pets. Pets and supplies available. Special areas to attract birds and insects. Storage for supplies.
	17. A transitional space from outdoors to indoors. This can be a covered play area immediately adjoining the playroom, which will protect the children from the sun and rain and extend indoor activities to the outdoors.
	18. Storage for outdoor play equipment, tools for construction and garden areas, and maintenance tools. Storage can be separate: wheeled toys stored near the wheeled vehicle track, sand play equipment near the sand enclosure, tools near the construction area. Storage can be next to the building or fence. Storage should aid in children's picking up and putting away equipment at the end of each play period.
	19. Easy access from outdoor play areas to coats, toilets, and drinking fountains. Shaded areas, benches, tables, and support materials for group activities (art, reading, etc.).
	20. Accessibility, materials, and equipment for children of all abilities/disabilities.

CHECK	SECTION II. Is the playground in good repair and relatively safe?*
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	1. A protective fence (with lockable gates) next to hazardous areas (streets, deep ditches, water, etc.).
	2. Ten to twelve inches of non-compacted sand, wood mulch, or equivalent manufactured surfacing under all climbing and moving equipment, extending through fall zones and secured by retaining walls, as needed.
	3. Size of equipment appropriate to age and skill levels served. Climbing heights limited to six to seven feet, or just above standing/reaching height of children. Special attention to reduced heights for preschool children.
	4. Area free of litter (e.g., broken glass), electrical hazards, high voltage power lines, toxic hazards. See CPSC for toxic hazards in wood products.
	5. Moving parts free of defects (e.g., no pinch and crush points, bearings not excessively worn).
	6. Equipment free of sharp edges and broken, loose, and missing parts.
	7. Swing seats constructed of soft or lightweight material (e.g., rubber, plastic). Basketball goal posts padded. Soccer goals secure in ground.
	8. All safety equipment in good repair (e.g., guard rails, padded areas, protective covers).
	9. No openings that can entrap a child's head (approximately 3.5" x 9"). See CPSC/ASTM for measurements and tests.
	10. Equipment structurally sound. No bending, warping, breaking, sinking, etc. Heavy fixed and moving equipment secured in ground and concrete footings recessed under ground at least four inches.
	11. Adequate space between equipment—typically six feet, depending upon type and location of equipment (see CPSC/ASTM).
	12. No signs of underground rotting, rusting, or termites in support members (probe underground).
	13. No metal slides or decks exposed to sun. Use plastic components or place in permanent shade.
	14. Guardrails and protective barriers in place that meet CPSC/ASTM height and other requirements.

	15. No loose ropes, suspended ropes, or cables in movement area.
	16. All balance beams, cables, and chains at low heights—prescribed by CPSC/ASTM.
	17. Signs at entry alerting to appropriate ages of users, need for adult supervision, and any hazards.
	18. No protrusion or entanglement hazards.
	19. No tripping or fall hazards in equipment use areas. For example, exposed concrete footings.
	20. No water hazards—access to pools, creeks. No traffic hazards—streets, parking lots, delivery areas.
<p>*This is an overview of relevant safety items. For details, refer to current issues of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission’s (CPSC’s) <i>Handbook for Public Playground Safety</i> and the American Society for Testing Materials’ (ASTM’s) <i>Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use</i>.</p>	

CHECK	SECTION III. How should the playground and/or the playleader function?
	1. Encourages play:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting, easy access
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, flowing, and relaxed space
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear movement from indoors to outdoors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate equipment for the age group(s)
	2. Stimulates the child’s senses:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes and contrasts in scale, light, texture, and color
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible equipment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse experiences
	3. Nurtures the child’s curiosity:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment that the child can change

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for experiments and construction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plants and animals
	4. Supports the child's social and physical needs:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable to the child
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaled to the child
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically challenging
	5. Allows interaction between the child and the resources:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic storage that defines routines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-enclosed spaces to read, work a puzzle, or be alone
	6. Allows interaction between children:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of spaces
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate space to avoid conflicts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment that invites socialization
	7. Allows interaction between the child and adults:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of spaces to allow general supervision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest areas for adults and children
	8. Supports functional, exercise, gross motor, active play. Children are not denied a range of challenging swings, overhead equipment, and climbing equipment scaled to age and skill levels of children.
	9. Supports constructive, building, creating play. Children are taught safe ways of using tools and materials for construction.
	10. Supports dramatic, pretend, make-believe play. Sufficient time is given during recess or playtime for children to generate and engage fully in pretend play.

	11. Supports organized games and games with rules. Adults and older children teach traditional games then step out of the way, and provide equipment for sports activities.
	12. Supports special play forms (e.g., chase games, rough-and-tumble, sand and water play). Chase and rough-and-tumble are carefully but unobtrusively supervised.
	13. Promotes solitary, private, meditative play. Children assist in preparing nature areas and small built spaces (e.g., gazebos) for semi-privacy.
	14. Promotes group, cooperative, sharing play. Children are encouraged to include new and reticent peers in their play groups.
	15. Involves children in care and maintenance of playground. Adults model and teach maintenance skills—tool use, hazard identification, etc.
	16. Involves adults in children’s play—regular adult/child planning and evaluation. Adults help children learn to solve playground problems through cooperative planning and analysis of problems.
	17. Integrates indoor/outdoor play and work/play activities—art, music, science, etc.
	18. Promotes interaction between children and nature—plants, animals, etc. Knowledgeable adults are identified to lead field trips, provide direct instruction, and interact with children.
	19. Adults are trained in play values, playground maintenance and safety, emergency procedures. Playleaders receive annual workshops to maintain skills.
	20. The play environment is constantly changing—growing in appeal, challenge, and complexity. Good playgrounds are never finished.