



## OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER LLOYD L. FIELDS

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# Playgrounds - How Kids Can Make Them SAFE: *A Lesson Plan for Kids*

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify the four key areas of playground safety using the acronym **SAFE**.

**Materials Needed:** **SAFE** background information; stopwatch or timer; flash cards that spell out **S-A-F-E**

### Lead-in questions

**How many of you know someone who has been injured on a playground? What happened?**

**How often do you think a child is taken to the emergency room because they were hurt on a playground?**

**Answer:** Every 2 ½ minutes a child is taken to the emergency room for playground related injuries in the US.

Set the timer every 2 ½ minutes during this discussion to show the kids how often a child is hurt. Choose a child to go to the designated "hospital" area of the room every time the timer goes off.

### Presentation

Because we want you to have fun and be safe when you play outside, we are going to discuss playground safety. There are four different ways to make a playground safe. A helpful way to remember these four areas of playground safety is **SAFE**.

Display four different flash cards that spell out S-A-F-E. This can be altered or discussed if children do not yet know how to spell or read.

**Supervision** Point to the S flash card.

S stands for Supervision. Supervision is one of the ways to make a playground safer. **Does anyone know what 'supervision' means?**

**Why is it important that adults watch you play on the playground?**

**Answer:** Adults realize that you are supposed to run, jump, shout, laugh and explore the playground.

But sometimes, other things happen on a playground that need an adult to help.

**Can you think of a time when you needed help from an adult on a playground? What happened?**

## **Age-Appropriate Equipment** Point to the A flash card.

The second way to make playgrounds safer is making sure that you are using age-appropriate equipment on the playground. One of the reasons so many children are hurt on the playground is because they are playing on equipment that is too big or too little for them.

Smaller children playing on equipment designed for older, bigger kids, don't realize that the handles, railings, and steps are too big for them, so they slip or fall off, and get hurt.

When older children play on equipment that is too small for them, they get bored. When they get bored, what do you think they do? They use the equipment in ways it isn't supposed to be used. And then they get hurt.

**If you need help, who can help you decide what equipment is best for you?**

**Answer:** Adult supervisors -- point back to the S flash card.

**What size of equipment should you be playing on? Why? What can you do to avoid getting hurt?"**

**Answer:** Depending on their age, size, and cognitive level, children within the same class may differ in their abilities.

## **Falls to the Surface Should be Cushioned** Point to the F flash card.

**Has anyone ever fallen on the sidewalk or on the street or road? What happened? How did you feel?** Sidewalks and streets are made of concrete and asphalt. They are great to ride your bike or roller-skate on, but it really hurts when you fall. That's why playground equipment should not have hard stuff – concrete or asphalt – underneath it.

**What do you think it should have underneath it?**

**Answer:** Softer material, like sand, wood chips, rubber or pea gravel. That way, if you do fall, it won't hurt as much as the hard stuff would.

**What should you do if the playground equipment has hard stuff underneath it?**

**Answer:** Avoid playing on it and talk to some adults about it. Look for equipment with soft surfacing underneath it.

**What should you do if the soft surfacing has been displaced underneath swings and slides?**

**Answer:** Make sure no one is using these play structures, push or rake the soft surfacing back to the area that has been displaced.

## **Equipment Maintenance** Point to the E flash card.

**When something gets broken, what should you do with it?**

**Answer:** Fix it!

**If you don't fix it, what happens?**

**Answer:** It won't work and you can't use it.

With lots of kids using the playground every day, sometimes they break down, too. Adult maintenance workers, playground supervisors and parents should all be inspecting the playground equipment you play on to make sure it's in good condition. But sometimes they need your help.

## Is our playground SAFE?

Let's use the following checklist to find out! For a more complete assessment of your playground, use our report card to grade your playground.

- \_\_\_ Is there trash on the ground?
- \_\_\_ How many adult supervisors are on the playground at recess?
- \_\_\_ Is the surfacing underneath the equipment hard (concrete, asphalt, dirt or grass) or soft (wood chips, sand, rubber or pea gravel)?
- \_\_\_ Do the swings and slides have enough soft surfacing underneath them, or is it displaced?
- \_\_\_ Do the swings have twisted or broken seats?
- \_\_\_ Is there anything sticking out of the ground that would trip you when you are running?
- \_\_\_ Does the equipment have any chipped or peeling paint?
- \_\_\_ Does the metal equipment have any rust?
- \_\_\_ Are there any holes or cracks in plastic equipment?
- \_\_\_ Does the wooden equipment have any rough wood or splinters?
- \_\_\_ Are there any nails or bolts sticking out of the play equipment?
- \_\_\_ Is there any place that your fingers might get stuck or pinched when you are playing?

### Closure

Review the four areas of a SAFE playground: Supervision, Age-appropriate equipment, Falls to the surface, and Equipment maintenance.

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