



DOES YOUR PLAYGROUND MAKE THE GRADE?

Evaluate the risk factors in your playground using the following format.

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
SUPERVISION		
1. Adults present when children are on equipment		
2. Children can be easily viewed when on equipment		
3. Children can be viewed in crawl spaces		
4. Rules posted regarding expected behavior		
AGE-APPROPRIATE DESIGN		
1. Playgrounds have separate areas for ages 2-5 and 5-12		
2. Signage indicating age group for equipment provided		
3. Platforms allow change of direction to get on/off structure		
4. Platforms have appropriate guardrails		
5. Equipment design prevents climbing outside the structure		
6. Supporting structure prevents climbing on it		
	YES	NO
FALL SURFACING		
1. Appropriate surfacing provided		
2. Six foot use zone has appropriate surface		
3. Appropriate depth of loose fill provided		
4. Concrete footings are covered		
5. Surface is free of foreign objects		

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE		
1. Equipment is free of broken parts		
2. Equipment is free of missing parts		
3. Equipment is free of protruding bolts		
4. Equipment is free of noticeable gaps		
5. Equipment is free of head entrapments		
6. Equipment is free of rust		
7. Equipment is free of splinters		
8. Equipment is free of cracks/holes		

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Scoring: For every **YES**, your playground receives one point. Add up the number of points for each section.

Supervision	
Age-Appropriate Design	
Fall Surfacing	
Equipment Maintenance	
TOTAL	

20-23 = A Congratulations on having a **SAFE** playground. Make sure you maintain this level of excellence.

16-19 = B Your playground is on its way to providing a **SAFE** environment for children. Work on the areas checked **NO**.

12-15 = C Your playground has potential for being hazardous for children. Take corrective measures.

8-11 = D Children are at risk on this playground. Start today and make improvements.

7 and below Do not allow children on this playground. Call **800-554-PLAY** for suggestions.

Explanation of Risk Factor Criteria

SUPERVISION

1. Since equipment can't supervise children, it is important that adult supervision is present when children are on the playground. It is estimated that approximately 40% of playground injuries have lack of supervision cited as a contributing factor.
2. Proper supervision means children need to be seen. There should be no blind spots where children can hide out of the sight of the supervisor.
3. Many crawl spaces, tunnels and boxed areas have plexiglass or some type of transparent material present so the supervisor can see the child inside the space. When blind tunnels are present, children cannot be properly supervised.
4. Rules help reinforce expected behavior. The posting of playground rules is recommended. For children ages 2 to 5, no more than three rules should be posted. Children over the age of five will remember five rules. These rules should be general in nature, such as, "Respect each other and take turns."

AGE-APPROPRIATE DESIGN

1. It is recommended that playgrounds have separate areas with appropriately-sized equipment and materials to serve ages 2 to 5 and ages 5 to 12. Further, the intended user group should be obvious from the design and scale of equipment. In playgrounds designed to serve children of all ages, the layout of pathways and the landscaping of the playground should show the distinct areas for the different age groups. The areas should be separated at least by a buffer zone, which could be an area with shrubs or benches.
2. Signs posted in the playground area can be used to give some guidance to adults as to the age appropriateness of equipment.
3. Platforms over six feet in height should provide an intermediate standing surface where a decision can be made to halt the ascent and to pursue an alternative means of descent.
4. Either guardrails or protective barriers may be used to prevent inadvertent or unintentional falls off elevated platforms. However, to provide greater protection, protective barriers should be designed to prevent intentional attempts by children seeking to defeat the barrier either by climbing over or through the barrier.
5. Children use equipment in creative ways which are not necessarily what the manufacturer intended when designing the piece. Certain equipment pieces, like high tube slides, can put the child at risk if they can easily climb on the outside of the piece. This is a judgment on your part as to whether the piece was designed to minimize risk to the child from injury from a fall.
6. One reason that swings were redesigned (by removing the horizontal bar on the supporting a-frame structures) was that children used that bar to climb up to the top of the structure. Sometimes, support structures such as long poles, bars, etc. become the play activity. The problem is that many times these structures have no safe surfacing underneath and children fall from dangerous heights to hard surfaces.

FALL SURFACING

1. Appropriate surfaces are either loose fill (sand, pea gravel, shredded tires, wood chips, wood mulch) or unitary surfaces (rubber tiles, rubber mats and poured in place rubber). Inappropriate surface materials are asphalt, concrete, dirt and grass. Falls from one foot onto concrete can cause a concussion. Falls from eight feet onto dirt is the same as a child hitting a brick wall traveling 30 mph.
2. Appropriate surfacing should be located directly underneath equipment and extend six feet in all directions, with the exception of slides and swings which have a longer use zone. Swings have a use zone of twice the height from the ground to the crossbar, front and back. The use zone for slides is the height of the slide plus four feet.
3. Proper loose fill surfacing must be at the appropriate depth to cushion falls. An inch of sand upon hard packed dirt will not provide any protection. We recommend 12 inches of loose fill material under and around playground equipment. Proper depth to round equipment.
4. You should not be able to see concrete footings around any of the equipment. Deaths or permanent disabilities have occurred from children falling off equipment and striking their heads on exposed footings.
5. Glass, pop tops, needles, trash, etc. can also cause injury if present on playground surfaces.

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

1. Broken equipment pieces are accidents waiting to happen. If a piece of equipment is broken, measures need to be taken to repair it, and children should be kept off the equipment until it is safe.
2. Missing parts also create a playground hazard. A rung missing from a ladder which is the major access point onto a piece of equipment poses an unnecessary injury hazard for the child.
3. Protruding bolts or fixtures can cause problems with children running into equipment or catching clothing, posing a potential safety hazard.
4. Strangulation is the leading cause of playground fatalities. Some of these deaths occur when drawstrings on sweatshirts, coats and other clothing get caught in gaps in the equipment. The area on top of slides is one potential trouble spot.
5. Entrapment places include between guardrails and underneath merry-go-rounds. Head entrapment occurs when the body fits through a space but the child's head cannot pass through the same space. This occurs because generally, young children's heads are larger than their bodies. If the space between two parts (usually guardrails) is more than three and a half inches, it must be greater than nine inches to avoid potential entrapment.
6. Exposed metal will rust. This weakens the equipment part and will eventually create a serious playground hazard.
7. Wood structures must be treated regularly to avoid weather-related problems such as splinters. Splintering can cause serious injuries to children.
8. Plastic equipment may crack or develop holes due to temperature extremes and/or vandalism. This is a playground hazard.